

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Pension Application of Benjamin Biggs W1366

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris

Virginia Ohio County Court April Term 1849

This day Priscilla Biggs of this County appeared in Court by Daniel M Edgington her attorney and submitted to the inspection of the Court a declaration by her made before John Brady Esqr one of the Justices of this Court on the 6th day of December 1848 in order to obtain the benefits of the provisions made by the act of Congress passed the twenty ninth day of July 1848 entitled "an act for the relief of certain surviving widows of officers and soldiers of the Revolutionary Army" in the words and figures following to wit "State of Virginia Ohio County Sct On this Sixth day of December Anno Domini One thousand eight hundred and forty eight personally appeared before me John Brady a justice of the peace and one of the Justices presiding in the County Court of the said County of Ohio the same being a County of Record Priscilla Biggs widow and relict of Benjamin Biggs deceased and a resident of the said County aged seventy years who being duly sworn according to law doth on her oath make the following declaration in order to obtain the benift of the provisions made by the act of Congress passed the twenty ninth day of July one thousand eight hundred and forty eight entitled "an act for the relief of certain surviving widows of officers and soldiers of the Revolutionary Army" as the widow of the late Benjamin Biggs who was a captain in the Virginia line Seventh Regiment to which he was promoted on the first day of December One thousand Seven hundred and Seventy eight from a Lieutenant in the 13th Regiment on the Sixteenth of April One thousand Seven hundred and Seventy Seven when he entered the Service and continued in Service as a Captain until the 15th of of November One thousand Seven hundred and eighty three the end of the Revolutionary war as appears by the records of the Treasury Department agreeably to a letter from Peter Hagner Esqr Third Auditor dated November 17th 1848 herewith sent marked No 1 and submitted as a part of this declaration She further declares that she was married to the said Benjamin Biggs on the twenty sixth day of August One thousand Seven hundred and ninety five and that her husband the aforesaid Benjamin Biggs died on the second day of December One thousand eight hundred and twenty three; that she was not married to him prior to his leaving the Service, but the marriage took place previous to the Second of January eighteen hundred viz; at the time above stated, She further swears that she is now a widow and that she has never before applied for a pension except that since the passage of the act of the 7th of July One thousand eight hundred and forty eight she through her agent petitioned Congress to be placed on the list of pensioners under the act which was for the relief of widows of Revolutionary officers who had been married before the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety four under the advice of others and her own belief that although married subsequent to said year of One thousand Seven hundred and ninety four she was under the peculiar circumstances of her case entitled to a pension – which application as she has been informed and believes was rejected by Congress – and she further says that she has never received any pension from Government nor did her husband so far as she knows and as she verily believes

Priscilla Biggs

Commonwealth of Virginia

Ohio County Sct.

This day [6 Dec 1848] personally came before the undersigned a Justice of the peace in and for the said County of Ohio John Brady Esqr. who being duly sworn deposes and says – I am now fifty eight years of age since the 24th day of May last. I was born in that part of what was originally the said County of Ohio that now composes the County of Brooke, but was removed at a very early age into what is the present County of Ohio by my father Samuel Brady who was a Captain in the Revolutionary war & I have continued to reside therein thence hitherto continually except about two years commencing

in 1807 during which I resided in the State of Ohio. I was well acquainted with Benjamin Biggs and his family since my earlier recollection until his decease which occurred to the best of my recollection in the year 1823. My fathers plantation was situated within less than two miles of that of said Biggs, and from the fact that they had served together as Officers in the Revolutionary War and were also neighbors their families were always on the most intimate terms. During all the time stated I was well and intimately acquainted with Mrs. Priscilla Biggs the wife, and who is now the widow, of said Benjamin Biggs. She has always resided in the said County since my earliest recollection until the present time and has never married since the death of her said husband. I was too young to be present at their marriage which I am informed & believe was solemnized in the year 1795, but I well recollect of hearing it spoken of frequently in my fathers family in my boyhood. Said Biggs and wife had a family of ten children, seven of whom are still living. I have always understood as well from the said Biggs in his life time as from numerous others of his cotemporaries when living that he had served as an officer in the Revolutionary war and that he had been a Captain in the Virginia Line. He was always spoken of by those who had known him in the time of the Revolutionary War as a gallant, efficient & meritorious Officer. In the after part of his life said Biggs was elected by the Legislature a Brigadier General of the State Militia of Virginia which office he held for a number of years until about the close of the late war with Great Britain when as I am informed and believe he resigned.

Jno. Brady

[The following six transcripts are from original letters. See endnotes for annotations.]

Sir Pittsburgh Dec'r. 1 1779

You'l. Please to employ Horses to transport Provisions from this place to your Post not to engage the Horses for any time but as the service requires and you may assure the Persons who will furnish Horses for that they shall receive ten Shillings a day for their Horses on producing Sertificate from under your hand – you will also please to agree with some person to hale wood for the use of your garrison and they most proper way would be to engage two Horses with a sled for two days in a week in which time they can draw enough to serve the whole week (except the weather is very sevear). The two horses that are employed to hale wood shall be allowed as much as half a Team on your Sertificate Your Compliance with the above requests will greatly oblige

Yr. Ob't H'ble Serv't

David Duncan/ ADQM

Capt. Benj Biggs

[Addressed to] Capt. Benjamin Biggs/ Pr Express at Fort Henry

Dear Sir Fort McIntosh 26th Dec'r 1779

I receiv'd your favour by the Express & am sorry to hear your men are so sickly as it is out of my Power to send the Doc'tr. down for a Horse Cannot cross the River and there is no such thing as Traveling by water. as for sending men to supply the place of those Discharg'd I must wait for instructions from head Q'rs. for that purpose. I have wrote the Comd't for instructions how to act in that mater as the Mens Times Expire you will send them to pittsburg for their Discharges as Both Colo. Gibson & Colo Campbel are there tho they had best call here, you will be so good as to take the names of all such as are at your post as have not received the Six month gift & send it me by some of the men who are comein also my Comp's to Mr Thomas & if he has got any Tannskins[?] for me ask him to send up with the [illegible word] as I fear I shall not be able to come to Fort Henry if he has none he need not put himself to the trouble of getting as they will be too late coming to hand my Comp't to Mr. Mills & believe me to be Dear &c. with Esteem your most Ob't Serv't

R Taylor

Head Qur's. Fort Pitt May 16th 1780.

Dear Sir

Lieut't. Harrison writes from Hollidays Cove that he has no provissions for his Garrison and that

you informed him you could not spare him any I intended his garrison should be supplied with meat from the magazine at Fort Henry, and the Commissary informs me there is a great quantity of the best kind Meat cannot be spared from hence[?] and he will be compelled to send to you again and I expect you will send him a supply at least to serve three weeks.

It will be necessary to furnish me with a return of all kinds of public stores at your post likewise of the strength of your Garrison. And I wish you to engage some Artists at the current wages to repair the Boats you have there. If Pitch tar or oakum cannot be had let them be otherwise be repaired untill the materials can be sent from hence.

I am with Regard D'r Sir your most Obed't. Serv't.
Capt'n Benj'a Biggs Daniel Brodhead. Colo. command. grod[?]

[Addressed to] Capt. Benj'm. Biggs commanding/ per Express Fort MacIntosh
Sir,

I Rece'd. your letter this morning by Express, and immediately applied to Colo. Brodhead to have you relieved, Capt Tannehill is ordered for that purpose, and will set of in a day or two. I am in some hopes the whole of the Officers and men will soon Be relieved. No news from Below. please present my Compliments to the Gentlemen of your Garrison and Believe me to be yours sincerely

Jno. Gibson Co'l.
Fort Pitt Nov'r. 1st 1780 9th Vir. Reg't.

[Address] Capt. Benjamin Biggs 7th Virga Reg't. Cont'l/ honoured by/ Lt. Neily Fort Henry
Head Quarters Fort Pitt June 23^d 1781.

Dear Sir,

I have at last Been able to send Lt. Neily and a party of men to relieve you and the Garrison of Fort Henry. You will please to deliver him all the orders you may have rece'd. from Col. Brodhead or any other person respecting it.

You will repair with the officers and men under your command with all possible Dispatch, to this post Bringing with you every thing Belonging to the reg't., and as many Boats as your men Can work.

as I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you soon I shall defer saying any more than to assure I am, Dear Sir, your most Obd't. Humble Serv't.

Jno. Gibson Colo./ Comd't F Pitt

Sir

James Gordon, having repeatedly transgressed the Law of God, and his Country. and tho he has long escaped Justice, he has at length been caught, tried and sentenced to die by a General Court Martial, which sentence I have approved, you will therefore cause him to be taken from the place of his present confinement to the usual place of Execution, this day immediately after Troop beating – where he is to be Shot to Death, for so doing this shall be your Warrant – Given under my hand.

To/ Captain Biggs/ Officer of the day
at Fort Pitt May 26th 1782
Wm. Irvine B. Gen'l.

NOTES:

Notes for the six letters to Biggs:

David Duncan was Assistant Quartermaster at Fort Pitt at present Pittsburgh PA.

Fort Henry was located at present Main St. in Wheeling WV.

Fort McIntosh was at present Beaver PA.

“Colo. Gibson” was John Gibson.

“Colo. Campbel” was Richard Campbell.

“R Taylor” was probably Maj. Richard Taylor.

The garrison at Hollidays Cove was called Fort Holliday.
Col. Daniel Brodhead commanded the 8th PA Regiment.

“Troop beating:” Will Graves has found the following quotation suggesting that “troop beating” refers to a morning assembly of troops: “The Regiment is to parade at Troop beating o’clock in the morning, at noon, and at Retreat every day till further orders.” Col. Otho Holland Williams, Camp Hillsborough, 14 September 1780, *Brigade and Regimental Orders*. Transcribed by John Beakes.

“Wm. Irvine” was Brigadier General William Irvine of Pennsylvania.

The file includes a copy of the record of marriage of Benjamin Biggs to Priscilla Metcalf by Rev. Dr. Joseph Dodridge in Ohio County on 26 Aug 1795.

The file includes an obituary of Benjamin Biggs written by Rev. Dr. Joseph Dodridge and published in the 17 Dec 1823 issue of the *Wellsburgh Gazette*. The following excerpts relate to Biggs’s military service: “His military career commenced with war of the Earl of Dunmore in the year 1774, and ended with the peace which concluded the revolutionary war.... An anecdote which he related to me goes to shew on what apparently trivial events life and death frequently depend. At the commencement of the investment of Fort Lawrence [sic: Fort Laurens near present Bolivar OH] by the Indians, and before it was known to the garrison that they had done so, they formed an ambuscade in the night, for cutting off the fatigue party in the morning. Gen. then Captain Biggs was the officer of the day, and requested the commandant’s permission to go out with the fatigue party. “No, said col. Gibson; when I shall have occasion for a Captain’s command, I will thank you to command then; at present you must attend to your duty in the fort.” The fatigue party, consisting of sixteen, fell in the ambuscade [23 Feb 1779], and with the exception of two who were made prisoners, were killed on the spot.”

A letter dated 9 Feb 1926 to the pension office from Daniel E. Biggs of Parkersburg WV, grandson of Benjamin Biggs, contains additional biographical information, including a list of names, dates of birth, and spouses of the ten children of Benjamin Biggs, said to have been copied from a family Bible.