

The Pension Application of Samuel Weaver

One of the thousands of people who applied for a pension under the Pension Act of 1832 was an elderly man named Samuel Weaver. In 1836 he presented himself to the county court in Laurel County, Kentucky. He reported that he was born in Cumberland County, Virginia, in 1755, but had moved to Surry County, North Carolina, where he was called up for militia service in the spring of 1780. His militia unit marched to the relief of Charleston, but Weaver explained that he was detached to guard baggage before reaching the city and thus avoided capture when Charleston surrendered on May 12, 1780. He returned home, but immediately volunteered for a second three-month tour and was marched from Hillsborough, North Carolina, to join Francis Marion.

Weaver claimed that during his service “he saw General Washington and General Francis Marion,” and that he once remembered other colonels and generals but confessed that “his memory is almost gone.” Weaver was over eighty years old when he gave this statement, and was describing events of 1780-1781 that had taken place as much fifty-six years earlier. When the Pension Office reviewed this first statement, it decided not to give Weaver a pension.

Weaver returned to the court in November 1839 to renew his application, providing more details about his service in the hope that the Pension Office would change its mind. In his second statement, Weaver provided details of his service guarding baggage outside of Charleston during the siege. He added to his account of his second three month’s service by explaining that he volunteered as a substitute for his father, who had been drafted, and told the clerk how his unit had wound up joining Marion, “he does not now where but thinks it was on the Pedee River or some of its waters.” It was in the context of this account that Weaver told this story. Note that the statement is written in the third person, because it was written down by a court clerk. Weaver was unable to sign his name to the statement, which indicates that he could neither read nor write. He wrote the letter S on the document in place of a signature. Here is what he said:

During the time he was with Genl. Marion, a British officer as he was told came into camp, but for what he does not know, he was roasting & baking sweet potatoes on the coles – Genl. Marion stepped up with the British officer and remarked he believed he would take up Breakfast, he felt proud of the request, puled out his potatoes, wiped the ashes off with a dirty handkerchief, placed them on a pine log (which was all the provision they had) and Genl. Marion and the British officer partook of them. He has been told by some that this has been recorded in the life of the Genl. as dinner but this was a breakfast.