

**Pension Application for Francis DeWitt**

(Donated by Mark Hendrickson)

New York (R.2,919)

Widow: Harriet. Abraham died December 14, 1837 in Onondaga.

State of New York

County of Onondaga ss. On this twenty seventh day of May in the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty four, personally appeared in open Court before the Court of Common Pleas in and for the County of Onondaga now sitting at the Court House in the village of Syracuse in the said County, Francis DeWitt, a free man of color, and a resident of the town of Skeneateles in the said County and State, aged eighty seven years, who being first duly sworn according to law, does on his oath make the following declaration in order to obtain the benefit of the act of Congress passed June 7, 1832, viz.

That in May and he thinks in the third year of the Revolutionary war, he entered the service of the United States as a Ranger under Captain Jacob DeWitt, then of Ulster County in the said State, and served in a company of Rangers for about three years thereafter. That their duty was to scout on the back frontier then harassed by the Indians and tories. That James Bull was Lieutenant and he believes John English the Ensign.

In that year, he believes 1777, a fort was built of pickets around Capt. Jacob DeWitt's house, which was at a place called Peen Pack on Neversink River in the precinct of Mamakating to protect the neighborhood from the incursions of the Indians and tories, and Capt DeWitt's Rangers when not called out were engaged in protecting and defending this fort and other forts of a similar kind on the Neversink and this deponent at such time was stationed at Fort DeWitt.

The first season he enlisted he and his company went up to Cochection on the Delaware on a scouting expedition and were there two or three weeks. Also the same season encamped at Mongaup on the Delaware.

They were also ordered out and went the same season to Ramapo and Katyack and were gone till winter set in.

The next year this deponent with the Rangers was out in the back country lying on the Delaware and our troops then had a battle with the Indians and tories at the Beaver Brook. Deponent was present Daniel Van Vleet now of Owasco in the County of Cayuga was there, and the father of James Terwilliger hereinafter named, was killed. Several companies were engaged, among others he remembers Capt. Jones and Wood's, and Capt. Wood was taken prisoner. Col. Thurston commanded our troops, who were defeated and fell back to the Neversink.

In 1778 Capt. afterwards Col. Newkirk of the militia commanded Fort DeWitt, which was attacked by the Indians & tories while this deponent was stationed there. This deponent was wounded in the leg with a bullet at this attack.

This deponent remembers lying a while on Croton River while ordered out with the Rangers, and also of lying between Newburgh and New Windsor while Gen Washington was there

He was on constant duty while at Fort DeWitt as guard or scout. When the Rangers were at the forts, they were ordered out frequently in squads of 10 to 15 as scouts and spies to look out for and follow the tracks of the Indians. And this deponent was sent out very often as one knowing the woods. In 1779, Capt. Wood commanded Fort DeWitt & the troops there

The company of Rangers was broke up and the men turned into other companies in the month of October, He thinks three years after he commenced with them. This deponent then went into a militia company and served in that till the war closed. Capt. Abraham Cuddeback commanded it. King and Harden were Lieutenants and Samuel DePuy was ensign.

This deponent further declares that his name is not on the pension roll of the agency of any State. That he is unable to take any witnesses to the Court now sitting, & can produce none but those who volunteer to attend for him; that he resides 20 miles from the place where the Court is now sitting.

In answer to interrogatories propounded by the Court, pursuant to the instructions of the War Department, the deponent says;

1. That as he has always heard & believes, he was born eighty seven years ago last December on the fifteenth day, old style, at the Napenaugh Kill in the County of Ulster and State of New York.

2. A record of his age was made in the Dutch family bible of Capt. Jacob DeWitt in whose family deponent was born & lived. That bible he is informed & believes is in Marbletown, Ulster County.

3. When he first enlisted in the war he was living at Peen Pack in the then precinct of Mamakating and County of Ulster & State of New York. He also lived there after the war. About 35 years ago he came to Onondaga County, and then lived in Manlius about four years. He then lived about three years in Genoa, Cayuga County and has ever since lived where he now lives in the now town of Skaneateles.

4. He entered the service as a volunteer.

5. Of the regular officers who were with the troops where he served, he recollects Gen. James Clinton, Col. Van Cortland, Major afterwards Col. Fish, Col. James McCloughry. Recollects McCloughry's regiment well. He has above stated, he says, the general circumstances of his services.

6. He received a Certificate of his faithful service which his second wife burnt up some years ago in a quarrel where he now lives.

7. He says he can name many persons to whom he is know in his present neighborhood, & who can testify as to his character for veracity & their belief of his services as a soldier of the revolution. He names David Van Vleet of Owasco (adjoining Skaneateles.) Widow Van Auken of ditto, (whose life deponent saved when Fort DeWitt was attacked by the Indians in 1778.) Mrs. Jane Cuddeback of Skaneateles, who was the daughter of Capt. Jacob DeWitt. He also names John DePuy, Benjamin DePuy, Cornelius Wallace, James Terwilliger. He says they all know of his services in the Revolutionary War. He also names Solomon Davis, Richard Tallcot, Augustus Kellogg, Lewis H. Sandford of Skaneateles

The deponent further says he is unable to procure the attendance of any clergyman who can testify respecting him on account of the distance and his poverty And further says not.

his  
Francis X DeWitt  
mark

Sworn and subscribed the day year first aforesaid, The names "Solomon Davis, Richard Tallcot, Augustus Kellogg & Lewis H. Sandford" first inserted, and "his Francis DeWitt mark"

crossed out, before signing as Witness Lewis H. Sanderford  
R. S. Hess clerk of Onondaga County

State of New York

Onondaga County ss. Benjamin De Puy of the town of Salina in the said County, being duly sworn, deposes and says as a witness in the said Court of Common Pleas above mentioned, that he is in his seventieth year. That at the beginning of the Revolutionary War, he knew Francis DeWitt, colored man, above named, who then resided at Peen Pack ~~now~~ in the then precinct of Mamakating, in the then County of Ulster, and State aforesaid. That this deponent then lived about a mile from him. That the said Francis DeWitt helped to defend Fort DeWitt, erected as stated by him, and deponent knows that he served in thee Rangers under Captain Jacob DeWitt. The Rangers were gone a considerable time to Ramapo when Francis DeWitt went with them as he heard That he was frequently out on scouting parties, and as deponent then heard and believed and still believes, the said Francis DeWitt from early in 1777 to the end of the war was constantly in the service. Deponent lived at Fort DePuy till October 1778 when it was burnt by the tories & Indians, & our people retreated to Fort DeWitt, & deponent went from there to Fort Gumaer which was below both the others. In that year the Indians & tories destroyed that country on the Neversink and attacked Fort DeWitt then under Captain Newkirk who had some of the nine months militia with him. The attack was kept up four or five hours and deponent saw the said Francis De Witt there as a soldier and fighting bravely the whole time. Deponent heard at the time and have no doubt of it, that the said Francis DeWitt and another man, while stationed at Fort DeWitt, turned out and with great difficulty and danger rescued from the Indians a soldier who was passing between Forts DePuy and DeWitt.

That the country where those forts were, was the frontier, and thinly peopled and for several years of the war, was much distressed by the incursions of the Indians and tories, and depended principally upon themselves for protection in their forts aided by the Rangers and occasionally the nine months militia.

That this deponent has received a Certificate for a pension the present year.

Sworn to and subscribed the day and year first aforesaid, “in the then precinct of” interlined & “now” struck out. Also “above” struck out and “below both the others inserted. Also “on the Neversink” interlined before signing. Also “as he heard”

R. S. Hess Clerk of Onondaga County

Benjn. DePuy

State of New York

Onondaga County ss. Cornelius Wallace of the town of Pompey in the said County, being duly sworn as a witness in the said Court of Common Pleas above mentioned does depose and say, that he is in his seventieth year. That during the Revolutionary war he was a soldier in the Forts on the Neversink River at a place called Peen Pack in the precinct of Mamakating in the County of Ulster, which was then on the frontier of the settlements West of Hudson River. That during the year 1777, the inhabitants of that neighborhood put up three Forts on that River and went into them for their safety, and all the male inhabitants who were old enough, while there were engaged for several years in defending them against the Indians and tories. The upper fort was called Fort DeWitt. This deponent was brought up in the neighborhood, and has known Francis DeWitt, a colored man, now of Skaneateles in the said County of Onondaga, a colored man, ever since deponent was a boy. That he knows that the said Francis DeWitt served under Capt. Cuddeback in the militia in defending the said Forts for the two or three last years of the revolutionary war and was constantly engaged in the service during that time, being mustered in the company and standing guard like the others. And this deponent who was at Fort Gumaer (the lower fort,) and was a boy in the early part of the war, heard and has no doubt that the said Francis DeWitt previously to his being under Capt. Cuddeback was in the Rangers under Capt. Jacob DeWitt. And that this deponent has received a pension for his services in said war. And further this deponent says not.

Subscribed & sworn the day

& year first aforesaid.

R. S. Hess clerk of Onondaga County

his

Cornelius X Wallace

mark

State of New York

County of Onondaga ss. James Terwilliger of the town of Skaneateles in the said County, being duly sworn in the said Court of Common Pleas, deposes and says, that he knew the above named Francis DeWitt, colored man, before the Revolutionary War, and then lived at the same place. Knew him during the whole of the war, and knew that he went out with the scouts and Rangers several times, and in the intervals was standing sentry at the Forts above mentioned on the frontier. Knows that from the year 1777 till near close of war the said Francis DeWitt was nearly all the time engaged at the Forts, in the Rangers and as one of the militia; and heard and believes he served constantly during all that time.

Deponent heard of the above circumstance stated by Benjamin DePuy, of the said Francis DeWitt’s rescuing a man from the Indians, and also heard of his saving

the life of Esther Van Auken now of Owasco in Cayuga from the Indians and tories with great hazard when Fort DeWitt was attacked in 1778.

Deponent was some of the time at Fort DeWitt during the war.

Deponent's father was killed in a battle between the tories & indians, & the militia and rangers, in the back country on the Delaware; and he then heard and has no doubt the said Francis DeWitt was engaged in that battle

Sworn to and subscribed the  
day and year first aforesaid.

R. S. Hess clerk of Onondaga County

“and was wounded” struck out  
his  
James X Terwilliger  
mark