

Pension Application for William Frederick Lenss, Leans, Lince, etc.

A German Mercenary under Lt. Gen. John Burgoyne

R.6300

Declaration in order to obtain the benefit of the act of Congress passed June 7, 1832:

State of New York

St. Lawrence County SS

On this nineteenth day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty two – Personally appeared in open Court, before the Judges of the Court of Common Pleas in and for the County of St. Lawrence now sitting William Frederick Lenss, a resident of Oswegatchie in the County aforesaid and State of New York, aged eighty five years the eleventh day of April last past, an applicant for a pension under the act aforesaid, being unable to appear in Court by reason of God, who being first duly sworn, according to law, doth on his oath make the following Declaration in order to obtain the benefit of the act of Congress passed June 7th 1832.

That he entered the service of the United States under the following named officers, and served as herein stated. That he the said William Frederick Lenss—Sometime in the fore part of the month of April 1782, (1) at Nobletown, in the County (now) of Columbia and State aforesaid enlisted in the company commanded by Capt. Pierce in Col. John McKinstry's (2) Regiment for the term of three years or during the war, and received a bounty of forty dollars in money.

That he was immediately thereafter ordered to march to Albany in said State, to which place he accordingly marched under the immediate command of Lieut. Richardson (3) of the said company where he was mustered. That shortly after, he and his said company were assigned and attached to Colonel Willett's Regiment, and was marched up the Mohawk River to a place called Fort Plain, where the said company and Regiment aforesaid, remained until sometime in the month of September.

In the same year the company was ordered to march to Oswego, (4) on Lake Ontario to which place they commenced their march and had proceeded to some distance on the River and Lake towards Oswego, and did not arrive there, by reason of bad weather and storms, and returned to Fort Plain on the Mohawk aforesaid, for winter quarters, and then he the said William Frederick remained doing duty as a soldier in the said company, in the United States service until sometime in the month of October 1783, (5) when he was "furloughed", by a written furlough, for the term of one month, and on the back thereof was written an honorable discharge, subject however, if required further to serve, to hold himself in readiness, and he the said William Frederick Lenss saith that he was not called upon thereafter—that he was discharged by Colonel Willett.

And the said William Frederick, further saith that during the times he was so stationed at Fort Plain, he and his company were almost continually in active in skirmishes with the Indians and Tories; that one battle was fought at French Creek near Fort Plain in which he was and in which Butler, (6) the Indian Commander, it was said was killed; and further that he was well acquainted with almost all the

officers of Colonel Willett's Regiment, to wit; Colonel Willett—Major Wright, (7) Adjutant Moore (8)—Capt. Pierce, (of his Company), Capt. Tierce, (9) Capt. Newell, Capt. Cannon, and Capt. Harris.

And the deponent further saith that he verily believes and supposed that those Regiments of which Col. John McKinstry and Col. Willett were commanders, were on the Continental establishment, until by an abstract from a letter from the pension office hereunto annexed it appears that Col. Willett's Regiment in which he served was not in that service, but State Troops of the State of New York;--

And this deponent further says that he was born in Germany in the year 1747, as appears by the record of it in his Bible and Day Book at his place of Residence, which is all the records of the record there of to his knowledge; That at the time of his enlistment he resided in Great Barrington in the State of Massachusetts and after he was discharged as aforesaid, he returned to Great Barrington and resided there about two years. That he removed from that place to Philipstown, now in the County of Rensselaer and State of New York, where he resided for the space of three years—hence he removed to Arlington in the State of Vermont, where he resided for the space of ten years, and from thence he removed to Grindstone Island in the River St. Lawrence, on the United States side, where he has resided principally since the Revolutionary War, until lately, and lastly in the town of Oswegatchie aforesaid, partly on the charity of a connection of his at that place. And this deponent saith unto the seven Interrogatories propounded by said Court.

Firstly---That he was born in Germany.

Secondly--That he knows of no other record of his age than what is noted in the Bible and Day book at [sentence is incomplete]

Thirdly—That he was living at Great Barrington in the State of Massachusetts adjoining Noblestown in the county of Columbia and State of New York when he was first called into service as aforesaid, and that since the Revolution he has lived at Great Barrington aforesaid—at Philipstown aforesaid—at Arlington aforesaid—at Grindstone Island aforesaid, and at Oswegatchie in the County of St. Lawrence aforesaid.

Fourthly—That he enlisted into Capt. Pierce's company in the United State Service.

Fifthly---The name of the regular officers of the State Troops under which he served, were Col. John McKinstry, Col. Willett, Major Wright—Adjutant—Moore, Captain Pierce—Tierce, Newell, Cannon and Harris, and the circumstances of my said services are as near as I can recollect as above stated.

Sixthly—That he had received a discharge from the services but the same is lost or destroyed.

Seventhly---That he this deponent is known in his present neighborhood by Ira Butler, James Harrington & Arthur Lenss—Who can testify to his character for veracity and their belief of his services as a soldier of the Revolution.

And this deponent doth hereby relinquish every claim whatever to a pension or annuity, except the present, and declares that his name is not on the pension roll of

the agency of any state and that he is unable to write his name. (Signed with his mark) William Frederick Lenss (10)

Sworn the day and year aforesaid. A. C. Sorr Clk.

End Notes—R.6300—William Frederick Lenss

1. Captain Jonathan Pearse (Pearce, Pierce, etc.) in Colonel Marinus Willett's Regiment of New York State Levies. According to the Descriptive Book No. 4 for Willett's Regiment, Doc. No. 11105, Special Collection and Manuscripts, New York State Library, Albany, N.Y. the following was extracted: *Frederick Leans, Residence Barrington, Berkshire County, Massachusetts, born in Germany, Class enlistment for 2 years on June 1, 1782, age 28, size 5 ft. 11 in.; Complexion Dark, Hair Brown, Eyes Black, Occupation Farmer.*
2. John McKinstry served as a major under Colonel Willett in 1781. He was later appointed colonel to raise levies but it appears from what records exist that enlistment quotas were never fulfilled.
3. Lieutenant Joseph Richardson of Captain Pearse's Company in Willett's Regiment.
4. Frederick has the Oswego Expedition in the wrong year and season. Willett led the expedition in February of 1783.
5. According to Captain Pearse's 1783 Muster and Pay Roll, Frederick deserted June 11, 1783. He was credited for 5 months and 10 days. He had been paid £26 . 0. . 60 and was owed £8. . 0. . 80. FROM: Revolutionary War Rolls 1775-1783, Series M-246, Roll 78, folder 173, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
6. Captain Walter Butler was killed in the Skirmish at West Canada Creek on October 30, 1781. Frederick was not in the Mohawk Valley until 1782 and Captain Pearse was not in Willett's Regiment until April of 1782.
7. Job Wright served only as a captain in Willett's from 1781 to 1783.
8. Pliney Moor was a lieutenant in Captain Wright's Company when Adjutant Jellis A. Fonda was appointed captain on November 1, 1782; Lieutenant Moor was appointed Adjutant of Willett's Regiment.
9. Captains Peter B. Tierce, Simeon Newell, James Cannon and Joseph Harrison all of Willett's Regiment.
10. One thing that William Frederick Lenss leaves out of his application is that he was a German deserter from Lieutenant General John Burgoyne's Convention Army on October 25, 1777. William enlisted 11 November 1776 in the Erbprinz Regiment of the Hessen Hanau Troops as a private. Her was mustered in on 11 March 1777. The Erbprinz Regiment arrived in Canada about July 11, 1777. William also brought his wife and daughter along as part of the regiments' "Camp Followers". During the Battles of Saratoga of September 19, 1777 and October 7, the Erbprinz Regiment was part of the Second Brigade of the Left Wing commanded by General Johann Specht. When Burgoyne surrendered his army on October 17, 1777, William and his family were part of the surrendering army. When William deserted from what became called the "Convention Army" of prisoners, he took his wife and daughter with him. There are two articles on

William Frederick Lenss of interest: *Profiles—Linss*, prepared by M. A. Schwalm, pp 37-39, Journal of the Jonannes Schwalm, Historical Association, Inc., Vol. 5, No. 1, 1993. *The Last Expedition of the Revolutionary War; Fort Oswego* by Elmer D. Lince (a descendant of William), pp 40-44 in the same source as above.