

Pension Application for Joshua Mersereau

S.7224 [This folder is 170 pages long]

B.L.Wt.3792-160-55

Son of Joshua & brother of John L. S.7217

Declaration for a land Warrant. Agreeably to Act of Congress of 3d March 1855.

State of Pennsylvania

County of Tioga SS.

On this 3d day of May AD one thousand eight hundred and fifty five personally appeared before me a Justice of the Peace within and for the County and State aforesaid Joshua Mersereau aged ninety five years a resident of Tioga County and State of Pennsylvania who being duly sworn according to law, declares that he is the identical Joshua Mersereau who served in the War of the Revolution 1st as an assistant Commissary of Prisoners in 1778, and afterwards serv'd as a seaman on board the Frigate "South Carolina in 1782 which service is more fully set forth in his Declaration and evidence now on file, and upon which his pension was granted agreeably to act of Congress of the 7th June 1832.

That he was in active service in the War of the Revolution for many years and was finally taken Prisoner by the Enemy, but the Capture of the "South Carolina" and afterwards released by the Treaty of Peace. For a full statement of which, he refers the Commissioner of Pensions to the papers and evidence now on file in his Department, among the Admitted Claims, for services rendered during the Revolutionary War per act of 7th June 1832.

He makes this Declaration for the purpose of obtaining the Bounty Land to which he may be entitled under the act approved March 3d, 1855. He also declares that he has not received a Warrant for Bounty Land under this or any other act of Congress nor made any other application therefor. (Signed) Joshua Mersereau C.H. Place Justice of the Peace.

Letter in folder dated June 24, 1910, written in response to an inquiry.

In reply to your letter without date, which was received the 14th instant, you are advised that from the papers on; file in this Bureau it appears that Joshua Mersereau was born at Northfield, Staten Island, New York, June 8, 1761, [hand note in margin says *14 years old*] and was living in Elizabethtown, New Jersey, when he entered the service in August, 1775, as a recruiting officer for the New York State troops for Captain Jacob Cheesemen's company; under General Montgomery, and served till the following November. In December 1775, he was under Lord Stirling in an expedition to Long Island for seven or eight days. From April to July 1, 1776, he served under Captain Otho Williams in Major Steven's corps of Virginia Riflemen. He was next employed by General Washington in obtaining information of the enemy's movements; he was in the battles of Trenton and Princeton; the remainder of the winter he purchased horses for Generals Mifflin and Lafayette and in May 1777 was engaged in guarding baggage under Lord Stirling. From October 14, 1777 to April 28, 1779, he was Assistant Commissary of Prisoners under his father Joshua Mersereau who was

Deputy Commissary of prisoners, and General Mifflin Quartermaster general. In the winter of 1780 he was guide to Colonel Hazen's Division, in Lord Stirling's expedition to Staten Island and was in an engagement at a blockhouse. The following February he was under Captain James Patten when he captured Colonel Jones. In the Summer of 1780 he was under Captain John Story in an attempt to capture a British Colonel. In the Fall of 1780 he was engaged on the lines near Elizabethtown. In the Spring of 1781 he was under Colonel Marsh at Rahway. In the Summer of 1781 he aided in the defence of Brunswick. In May, 1782, he was engaged as carpenter and seaman on the ship "South Carolina" under Captain John Joiner and on December 21, 1782, they were in battle with and captured by the British ships "Dimade", "Austrich" and "Quebec", he was wounded in the leg and confined on a prison ship "Scorpion" in New York, until paroled the last of January and remained on parole until the ratification of the Treaty of Peace.

He was allowed pension (Sur. File No. 7,234) [listed as 7,224 above] on an application executed June 5, 1840, while a resident of Lindley, Steuben County, New York. In 1855 he lived in Tioga County, Pennsylvania, with his son James G. and he died January 20, 1857. In 1879 his son Theodore L. resided in Lindley, Steuben County, New York, and at that date he had two widowed daughters living, their names and the name of his wife are not stated. His sons Joshua and John G. are also referred to.

The above noted is the only Joshua Mersereau found on the Revolutionary War records of this Bureau.

Mercereau's Statement

June 5, 1840. Joshua Mercereau Declares that he entered the US Service in Aug 1775 as a recruiting office under the Uniform of an Ensign to enlist men for the N York State troops for Cap Jacob Cheesman and served until the following November.

In December 1775 was a volunteer under Lord Stirling to disarm the Tories on Long Island, served 8 or 10 days.

In April 1776 was a Virginia Rifleman on Staten Island under Cap. Orho Williams (Otho Williams was a Maryland officer) served to 1 July 1776.

Was then employed by Genl Washington to obtain information as to the intended movement of the enemy, so served until the defence of Quackinac Bridge, then joined Genl Washington's Army and (seems to have) continued until the battle of Princeton Jany 1777.

The remainder of the winter he was engaged in purchasing horses for Generals Mifflin and Lafayette.

In May 1777 he repaired to Genl Washington's Camp, and was engaged under Lord Stirling in defence of his baggage against an attack made by Lord Howe.

In October 1777 he took charge of some public stores to be conveyed to Rutland and Boston and continued an assistant Commissary until April 1779.

In the winter of (1780?) he was in Lord Stirling's Expedition to Staten Island and was appointed a guide to Col. Hazens division destined to Fort Richmond.

In Feby 1779 was one of about 20 who captured Col Jones.

In the summer of 1780 he was engaged with Col. Story in an attempt to Capture a British officer on Staten Island.

In the fall of 1780 he was engaged in the lines near Elizabethtown in getting information.

In the summer of 1781 he was engaged in the defence of Brunswick.

In the Spring of 1781 he was engaged in the defence of Rahway.

In May 1782 he was engaged as a carpenter on board the ship South Carolina and continued In that capacity until she was repaired in Sep 1782. He was one of the crew when she sailed in Dec 1782 and was on board when she was captured.

In Jany 1783 he was paroled and was on his parole at the ratification of the treaty of Peace.

May 1840. John L. Mercereau declares that during the summer of 1776, Joshua Mercereau was engaged in various ways in the service of his country, he and deponent retreated from Newark to New Brunswick N. Jersey when the British came to NewArk—there they parted Joshua to remain with the army.

In the Winter of 1778 deponent found Joshua at Rutland acting as assistant Commissary of Prisoners.

In April (1779 I suppose) Joshua quit that Department and started for New Jersey.

In summer of 1779 saw Joshua in Philadelphia and saw him no more until April 1783 when he was informed that Joshua had been taken prisoner and was then on parole

October 1832. Abijah Hunt said that in the summer of 1782 he found Joshua Mercereau on board the ship South Carolina as a carpenter &c (His statement agrees with Merceranus Hunt was pensioned under the Act of 1932 for services on board the ship South Carolina as Mid-Shipman)

Dec. 1778. Warrant issued on Treasury In favor of Joshua Mercereau Commissary of Prisoners In the state of Mass bay for \$4000 also for \$1,600 (Evidence on file at State Department)

Jany 1855. John LaGrange among other circumstances recollects hearing Joshua Mercereau Sen'r say that while he was Commissary of Prisoners his son, who is the present applicant Joshua Mercereau Junr, was his assistant.

Nov 1754. The books at the Register's Office show that Joshua Mercereau was a Deputy Commissary of Prisoners and accounted at the Treasury for certain sums of money amounting to \$8,000. This Settlement was made in 1791.

Jan'y 4, 1855. The books of the Comptroller of South Carolina show that a Jos Miserau was a seaman board the ship S. Carolina 9 months & 26 days (for this he has been pensioned)

Pension Office
Nov. 11th 1854.
Sir:

I have very carefully re-examined all the papers in the case of Joshua Mercereau of N.Y. together with the additional evidence now filed by you, and have to report my convictions of the invalidity of the claim, for the reasons which follows. His whole statement of his service is given a manner remarkably confused for a man of his evident intelligence, if he really did serve as he alledged. From the commencement of his service in 1775 to his appointment in the commissaries Department in 1777, he does not seem to have served in any regularly organized Corps. He enters the recruiting service in 1775, (rather early for recruiting service) in the uniform of an Ensign. In three months he is a volunteer private under Lord Sterling in an expedition which lasted ten days. A few months later he is a Virginia Rifleman. Now he is made a spy by General Washington, after so servicing for a short time, he joins General Washington's army. He does not inform us in what grade or under what subordinate officers, soon after he is purchasing horses for General LaFayette and General Shifflin. Directly he is a private under Lord Sterling. In a few months after he is acting as Deputy Commissary under General Mifflin Q.M. Genl., in which capacity he declares he remained from October 1777 to April 1779, when he again becomes a private under Lord Sterling, and is appointed a guide to lead Col. Hazen's division to Richmond Fort on; Staten Island. Soon after we find him with twenty others capturing a Col. Jones. Then as a volunteer under a Captain Story to capture a British Colonel. He does not enlighten us as to the success of this adventure. Now he is "on the lines" to obtain information. Now he is defending Brunswick and now Rahway, and lastly he is a carpenter on board the Ship South Carolina, where he ends his adventures by being taken a prisoner together with the officers who so ingloriously yielded up that noble vessel without a struggle.

To this narrative there are several objections, to my mind. It is singularly disjointed. He rarely condescends to enlighten us as to the subordinate officers under whom he served. He charges his grad from officers to private and from private to officer ,and his locality from land to sea with as much [fercility?] as though he had been endowed with the wonderful properties of a Proteus, and was ubiquity itself. He was born in New Jersey, entered service in New York, soon joins a corps of Virginia Riflemen, again returns to service in his native north and ends his career upon the sea. Is it not remarkable that history has been silent in relation to the services of a man of such remarkable versatility of talent? This silence on the part of historians would not be so ominous if he had slowly fought his way from rank to rank. But agreeably to his own statements when the Ship South Carolina surrendered and when his services closed, he was still in his minority;, being but 19 years old, having been

born in June 1761. Now I confess that, to my mind, it is almost incredible that a boy of a little over 13 years of age, should have been appointed a recruiting officer in 1775, but that a lad of 16, should be taken from the ranks, and made a commissary of Prisoners, in another state than his own surpasses my power of credulity;--I would also, remark that as far as his statements can be compared with the rolls of this office, they are discredited. We have a complete roll of the men on board the South Carolina when she surrendered, but his name is onto found.—I am bound to conclude that he and the Commissary of Prisoners, shown by the Records furnished by you, are different men. Surely a boy of sixteen years of age could not have been appointed to such a station.

There is not a shadow of proof in support of the service which he alledges he rendered before his appointment in the Commissary Department. I cannot believe that he was the commissary and his alledgations [sic] of service on the South Carolina is discredited by the rolls. The case is, therefore rejected.

I am respectfully

Your Obt Servt

L P. Waldo, Commissioner.