

**Pension Application for John Wiley**  
Donated by Kenneth Lifshitz

S.44223

State of New York SS.

To the Hon. Richard Riker, Recorder of the City of New York and one of the Judges of the Court of Common Pleas, called the Mayor's Court of the City of New York, which is a Court of Record of the State of New York.

The Declaration under Oath of John Wiley—formerly an officer engaged in the Service of the United States during the Revolutionary War, now a Citizen of the United States and resident of the City and County of New York, respectfully sheweth,

That the said John Wiley Sometime in the year 1776, to wit, on the 24 Feby 1776 (1) joined the American Army & accepted & acted as Captain of the first Regiment of New York Forces (2) in the Continental service as appears by his commission for John Hancock President of Congress—That he acted under the said Commission for upwards of Ten Months & accepted an appointment under the New arrangement & volunteered on different occasions in the Revolutionary Army against the common Enemy. And the declaration further sheweth, that the said John Wylie is now a citizen of the United States, resides in the city of New York and is, by reason of his reduced circumstances in life, in need of assistance from his country for support & is now near seventy years of age.

Therefore the said John Wiley conceives himself entitled to the benefit of the Act of Congress of the United States, entitled, "An Act to provide for certain persons engaged in the Land and Naval Service of the United States in the Revolutionary War," approved 18<sup>th</sup> March 1818, and requests your Honor will examine into the truth of the matter aforesaid, certify and transmit the testimony in the case, and the proceedings had thereon, to the Honorable the Secretary of the Department of War, to the end that such relief may be had in the premises, as is by law in such case made and provided. And in support of the facts above set forth, the said, John Wyley refers to the deposition of the Col. Richard Platt, (3) Colonel. (Signed) John Wiley.

City and County of New York SS. John Wiley of the City and County of New York being duly sworn, saith, that the matter by him set forth in the foregoing Declaration, are in all respects just and true.

Sworn before me this first day of April 1818, John Wiley

R. Riker, Recorder of the City of New York

City and County of New York SS Richard Platt of the City of New York being sworn, saith that he is well acquainted with John Wiley above named that he & the deponent served together in the army of the revolution against the common enemy & that the facts by him stated are true as he verily believes.

(Signed Richd Platt

Sworn before me this first day of April 1818. R. Ricker, Recorder.

New York Mayor's Court.

In the Court of Common Pleas, called the Mayor's Court of the City of New York, held at the City Hall, in and for the said City, before the Judges of the same Court of August term, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty.

Present the Honorable Peter A. Jay, Recorder of the City of New York SS. Be it Remembered, that on the second day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty, personally appeared in the Court of Common Pleas, called the Mayor's Court of the city of New York, in open court, the said court being a court of record for the city and county of New York, according to the charter of the said city and the laws of the state of New York, according to the charter of the said city and the laws of the state of New, John Wiley, aged Seventy Two years, resident in the City of New York, in the State of New York, United States of America who being first duly sworn according to law, doth on his oath declare, that he served in the revolutionary war as follows: he received a Captains Commission on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of February in the year 1776 in the Continental establishment in New York signed by John Hancock in the first New York Regiment of Infantry, commonly called hairy Caps, commanded by Colonel Alexander McDougal, in the line of the State of New York and was in the battle of Haerlaem [Harlem] Heights and covered the retreat of the American Army on Long Island when the regiment had some skirmishing the same regiment also covered the retreat of the American Army from New York. Deponent continued in the command of his company in the same regiment for ten months & until December 1776 when his regiment was broken up—Declarant then accepted an appointment as Captain in the first regiment of New York State Artillery commanded by Colonel Lamb (4) but was unable from circumstances to take up his commission—In the beginning of 1777 he served as brigade Major for General McDougal during the sickness or absence of Colonel Platt. In 1778 he acted in the capacity of volunteer as Brigade Major under colonel Henry Sherbourne who commanded the Brigade and was in the battle of Rhode Island after the French fleet left Rhode Island. In 1780 he was appointed Brigade Major by Col. Dayton who commanded a Brigade and was in the battles of Connecticut farms & Springfield still as a Volunteer—and after this headed the Militia as a Volunteer on the New Jersey line against the Common Enemy—In 1780 he was appointed by Governor and General George Clinton a Commissary of Purchases for the troops credited to the State of New York served as a Commissary about six months lost most of he property by the depreciation of the Continental money & all his houses distillery & stables & furniture was burned in the Great fire at New York to which he returned poor and penniless and that his original declaration is dated the first day of April one thousand eight hundred and eighteen and that his pension certificate is No. 2030. (Signed) John Wiley

And I do solemnly swear that I was a resident citizen of the United States on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of March 1818, and that I have not since that time, by gift, sale, or in any manner, disposed of my property, or any part thereof, with intent thereby so to diminish it as to bring myself within the provisions of an act of Congress, entitled, "An act to provide for certain persons engaged in the land and naval service of the United States, in the Revolutionary war," passed on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of March, one thousand eight hundred and eighteen and that I have not, nor has any person in trust for me, any property or securities, contracts or debts, due to me; nor have I any income other than what is contained in the schedule hereto annexed, land by me subscribed, to wit:

Real Estate—None

Personal Estate/necessary clothing excepted having noted, none as follows.—

1 Watch given to declarant by his brother which he has worn upwards of 56 years and which cost exclusive of the case which is a silver one \$5-\$7.00

A family picture 149 years old \$10.00

\$17.00

Declarant has an account against Samuel Lopez of the city of New York amounting to 7.00

The whole amount of his estate is \$24.00

Declarant at present has no occupation, he was formerly a distiller but through unforeseen misfortunes, he has been so much reduced in his circumstances, as to be unable to carry on that business, he has no trade, and is unable to support himself without his pension.

Declarant has no family residing with him, he has theretofore been aided by his son upon whom he is dependant with whom he lives, whose name is Charles Wiley whose age is 39 and who is able to support himself.

Declarant saith that after the War, he went into business and was assisted by his friends, but became unfortunate in business in consequence of misplaced credit and in consequence of the misfortunes which prudence could neither foresee nor retrieve lost his all and has been left deeply involved in debts which he is unable to pay— He saith that he is in such indigent circumstances as to be unable to support himself without the assistance of his country, that is today without the aid of the General Government except by private or public charity.

(Signed) John Wiley

Sworn in open court the 2d day of Sept 1820. Benj. Ferris Clk.

Letter in Pension Application Folder.

May 22, 1913

Hon. William H. Wiley

432 Fourth Avenue

New York city

My dear Mr. Wiley:

In response to your letter dated the 14<sup>th</sup> and received the 15<sup>th</sup> instant, I have the honor to advise you that John Wiley, Sur. File No. 44,223, Rev. War was allowed a pension of \$20 per month from April 1, 1818 on account of the following services in the Revolutionary War.

He stated that he was commissioned February 24, 1776 (5), Captain of the sixth company in Colonel Alexander McDougall's regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> New York Infantry commonly called "Hairy Caps", was in the battle of Harlem Heights, and covered the American retreat from Long Island and New York, and served until December 1776, when the regiment was broken up; he then accepted an appointment as Captain in Colonel Lamb's regiment of 1<sup>st</sup> New York State Artillery, but was unable from circumstances to take up his commission; that in the beginning of 1777, he served as Brigade-Major for General McDougall during the absence of Colonel Platt; volunteered in 1778, as Brigade-Major under Colonel Henry Sherbourne and was in the battle of Rhode Island; in 1780, was appointed Brigade-Major by Colonel Dayton and was in the battle of Connecticut Farms and Springfield and after that he voluntarily headed the New Jersey Militia against the common enemy; in 1780, he was appointed Commissary of Purchases by Governor and General George Clinton of New York, and served about six months.

There are no further particulars of his services.

In 1820 he stated that he was seventy-two years of age and a resident of New York City, and that he had no family residing with him except his son Charles Wiley who was thirty-nine years of age. In 1847 it was stated that soldier died January 29, 1829 and that is daughters Rebecca Ballard and Phoebe L. Osborne survived him.

In 1855, John Wiley of New York City, aged forty-six years, claimed to be one of the heirs of the soldier, but did not state their relationship.

Very respectfully,

J. L. Davenport, Commissioner

#### End Notes by Kenneth Lifshitz

John Wiley is an interesting and colorful character. He was displaced from a fairly well to do existence in New York with the arrival of the British, relocating to Elizabeth New Jersey. In 1776 he was offered and declined a Captain's commission in John Lamb's Artillery regiment (See Chapter "The Declension of Wiley" in "Donderberg's Pumpkin Vine,-Kenneth Lifshitz") citing straightened public circumstances due his personal losses in the great New York fire. This may have been an exaggeration as that same month he declined the commission he travelled to Boston and became part owner of a privateer cargo out of Rhode Island. He eventually became the purchasing commissary for the State of New York and was instrumental in supplying the troops in the Mohawk Schoharie Valley area near Albany. He used his connections in the commissary and quartermaster departments to

set up what appears to be a black market iron trade running from New Jersey to the French Fleet's purchasing agents in Rhode Island, transporting raw iron and other goods through the commissary network. (See "LETTER OF CAPTAIN JOHN WILEY OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMY." *The Historical Magazine, and Notes and Queries Concerning the Antiquities, Hi...* Mar 1869; 5, 3; pg. 199.)

Despite his refusal of the commission in his regiment, he would remain fast friends with John Lamb and would personally help barricade Lamb's residence on Cherry Street defending it from a drunken pro-federalist mob some years after the close of the war. His wife Phebe (Halsted) was a notable beauty who excited the admiration of Lamb and many others before her untimely demise at age 38 (presumably from Yellow Fever contracted while visiting Lamb's son-in-law, Charles Tillinghast). His son would go on to form what would become the publishing empire, John Wiley & Sons. Aside from the letter published in *Historical Magazine*, several of his correspondence are held in the New York Historical Society including his letters to Lamb (see John Lamb collection).

End Notes—John Wiley—S.44223

1. John is listed as a First Lieutenant in Colonel John Lasker's First Battalion of the New York Independents. On January 31, 1776 a memorandum was delivered by Colonel Lasher to the Provincial Congress "of such officers in his Regt as are willing to go into the Continental Service." Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York, ed. Berthold Fernow, Vol. XV, State Archives, Vol. I, Albany, NY, Weed, Parsons and Company Printers, 1887, pp 50-52.
2. In 1775 and 1776 Alexander McDougal was the Colonel of the First New York Continental Regiment. On August 9, 1776, McDougal was promoted to Brigadier General and to Major General on October 20, 1777.
3. Platt was Second Lieutenant in Captain Frederick Weissenfel's Company (First Company) in the First New York Continental Regiment. Brigade Major August 12, 1776 and Aid de camp to General McDougal. Revolutionary War Rolls 1775-1783, Series M-246, Roll 65, Folder 1(McDougal's 1775), National Archives, Washington DC.
4. Colonel John Lamb Commanded the Second Continental Regiment of Artillery.
5. There is a muster roll and billeting roll for Captain Wiley's Company for Colonel McDougal's Regiment in 1776, Revolutionary War Rolls 1775-1783, Series M-246, Roll 65, Folder 2, National Archives, Washington DC.