

SERVICE

New Jersey  
Privateer  
Indian War.

Riddle John

NUMBER

R. 8799

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(A)

### MEMOIR OF COL. JOHN RIDDLE.

In the month of April, 1778; I was called out, and entered the service of the United States, at Elizabethtown, on a tour of six weeks. — Also three weeks in the month of June, the same year; when the British retired from Philadelphia, and had passed through New Jersey to Sandy Hook; I was in a skirmish at the Draw-bridge below Trenton, and at the battle of Monmouth.

In the year 1782, I followed privateering under Captain Hiler, (a brave and patriotic man) and sailed from New Brunswick, coasting round Sandy Hook and Long Island as far as Cape May. The first vessel we captured was a sloop of war carrying two guns; having boarded her in the night and ransomed her for \$400. Same night boarded and took a 16 gun Cutter, mounting ten 18 pounders and six 6 pounders, having captured her in the midst of the British fleet, then lying at Sandy Hook; after running the prize past the guard-ship up the bay towards Amboy, we ran her aground on a sand-bar in the night. The next morning took out of her fifty prisoners, and every thing else we could, then set fire to her magazine and blew her up. She was a double decker, fitted out with provisions, ammunition, &c. for a cruise, with the intention of harassing and destroying our vessels. As we understood from the prisoners a hundred men were to have been put on board the day after we captured her; thirty of us boarded her. On another night, the captain and fourteen of us, (who had volunteered our services) sailed up the narrows in York Bay, in a whale-boat, and on our return boarded a schooner, (which we ransomed for \$400) returned to our gun boats in Sossbury river, without injury or the loss of a single life. We had two skirmishes on Long Island; during the contest one man fell backwards in my arms mortally wounded. In one of these affairs, in our attack and defence, we came across a store of dry goods, &c. belonging to the British, the whole of which we carried away. On another occasion, Capt. Story, from Woodbridge, with a gun and whale

boat, fell in with us in Sosbury river—captains Hiler and Story ascending the heights, observed four vessels at a distance, moored close to the highlands, termed London traders—one of them, however, being an armed schooner, carrying eight guns, used as a guard ship to protect the other three; there being a calm and the tide against them, we run out on them, within a short distance of the British fleet, a severe cannonading commenced on both sides; at last the schooner having struck, we captured the other two without much difficulty. The guard ship by this time coming up, poured her shot on us like hail, one shot cutting off the mast of our whale boat, just above our heads; but at last we succeeded in running the schooner on a sandbar, where we burnt her in view of the fleet; the others were bilged and driven on the beach.

Not long after, the commander of the whale boat, myself and another man, in the night, took a craft laden with calves, poultry, eggs, butter, &c. going the British fleet. A prize of this kind at the present day would be considered of small amount; but at that time it was far otherwise to troops in a starving condition. After running out of Sosbury river, we attacked a large sloop and two schooners, one of them armed with two three pounders: they gave us a warm reception: after a running fire of some time, we came up with the schooner, and when about to board her, Capt. Hiler said to the British captain, that if he put the match to another gun, he should have no quarters. No sooner said, however, than the British captain seized the match from one of his men, and directed a shot himself, which, owing to the roll of the sea, did no execution. By force of our oars we soon were near enough to board, when Capt. Hiler springing aboard of the British vessel, aimed a blow at the head of the captain, who, springing backward, escaped, the sword merely passing down his breast. Capt. H. immediately made another, which the other receiving on his arm, saved his life, and then cried for quarter, which was granted him. After taking the sloop and two schooners, we sailed round the Jersey shore; where having discovered another sail out at sea, our Captain cried out, "Men, yonder is another sail, we must have *that*." Springing on our oars as hard as we were able, we came up with her; boarded, and found her to be a prize that the British had taken at the capes of the

Delaware, and were sending her to New-York. Three privateers coming up, which had been despatched from the fleet in pursuit of us, we were compelled to cut and run, carrying with us the schooner last boarded, the others, beaching (loaded with tar and turpentine,) and running her into Sherk river. The next day we returned under British colors, and coming close alongside the fleet off Sandy Hook, we dropped sails and ran into Sosbury river. The same evening we passed through the narrow passage, between Sandy Hook and the Highlands, about sunset; When we spied a craft going across to the guard ship, in pursuit of which our captain immediately sent the whale boat. But perceiving a line of British soldiers marching down the beach, with the intent of way-laying us at the narrows, we rowed to shore, landed fifteen men, who were to attack in rear; The British having in the mean time crossed the beach on the side we lay with our boat. We were but thirty strong, including the fifteen we had landed: the enemy about seventy. While we were looking over the beach for them from our vessel, they came suddenly round a point within pistol shot of us. The first thing we knew, was a volley from a platoon, having come up in a solid column. Twelve of our men fired with muskets, and in such quick succession that the barrels began to burn our hands. The other three managed a 4 pounder, which the captain ordered to be loaded with langrage, cried out, "boys, land—land—we will have them all," when the four pounder went off, accompanied with the fire of our musketry, we raised the yell. An opening by our 4 pounder being made thro' their column, the enemy broke and ran; and the fifteen men before landed, happening to come up, charged and took the captain and nine of his men.

In fact every day while at Sandy Hook afforded a skirmish of some kind or other, either with small arms or cannon. At Tom's river inlet we were twice nearly cast away; once at Hogg-Island inlet. On two occasions we narrowly escaped being taken prisoners by two different frigates, one the Fair American; once in coming up from Sandy Hook to Amboy, with two gun boats and a whale boat, Capt. Hiler commanding, being in chase of a British gun boat, we run in between an enemy's brig and a galley, that carried an eighteen pound-

er in her bow. The gun boat had struck; but before we were able to board her, an eighteen pound ball passed through one of our gun boats, which obliged us to make the best of our way to the Jersey shore: and getting every thing out of the boat, under a continual fire of cannon and small arms, (which lasted until 9 o'clock at night,) we left her to the British, our ammunition being all spent.

After peace I returned home, and followed the trade of a blacksmith until the year 1790. In the spring of that year I sold out, and came, about the close of October, to what is now Cincinnati, but at that time pretty much in woods. Having cleared a four acre lot, situate about a mile from the river, in the year 1791; I was the first that raised a crop of wheat between the two Miamis; and whilst attending church the settlers rested on their guns to be ready on the first alarm from the Indians. In the spring of '91, while occupied with clearing the said lot, I ran a narrow chance of losing my scalp. Joseph Cutter was taken in a clearing adjoining to mine, and a Mr. Vancleaf was killed at a corner of my lot. The Indians were constantly skulking around us, murdering the settlers or robbing the stables.

From Gen. St. Clair I received an ensign's commission; was afterwards promoted to a lieutenant; next chosen captain of the company, then major, and commanded the militia at Cincinnati and Columbia, seven miles up the river, during the time of Burr's campaign; afterwards elected colonel, and had the honor to command the troops at Greenville during the treaty held with the Indians, Generals Harrison and Cass being the commissioners. Soon after the war, I resigned my commission to Gen. James Findlay. The time that elapsed from my appointment as ensign until elected a colonel, was between 20 and 23 years; and during the whole of this period I never failed parading but one day, and that in consequence of sickness.

JOHN RIDDLE.

State of Ohio

County of Hamilton

On the 25<sup>th</sup> day of March, 1837, personally appeared in open Court, before the Court of Common Pleas now sitting, John Kiddle a resident of Mill Creek Township in said County of Hamilton in the State of Ohio, aged seventy two years, who being first duly sworn according to law, made on this oath the following declaration, in order to obtain the benefit of the Act of Congress, passed June 7<sup>th</sup> 1832.

That he entered the service of the ~~United~~ United States under the following named officers, and served as herein stated;

In the month of April in the year 1778, he was called out on a tour of six weeks duty in the New Jersey Militia, by Capt. McCoy of Colonel Fitch's Regiment, and actually served out said term; that he the said applicant then resided in Somerset County in said State of New Jersey; that the capacity in which he served was that of a private, and when he thus served, it was his toward the

Musters roll of said Company, the men be-  
longing to which were so apportioned as to  
be obliged to perform a tour of duty when  
it came to their turn; and when called  
on by the Captain; - that it was in said  
County of Summerset that he was called  
out, and he and other men detached from  
said Mc Coy's and other Companies in Colo.  
Frederickburg's Regiment, marched under  
Command of said Capt. Mc Coy to Elizabeths  
town & there joined a Militia force of several  
hundred, where they remained during said  
six weeks tour; - that he was not engaged in  
any battle or skirmish during said term;  
that at the expiration of said term, he and  
those who served with him, four hundred  
men were permitted to return home, and the  
next in order on the Musters roll called out  
to take their places; - that in the month of  
April of the same year (1778) the aforesaid  
was again called out by Capt. Wm Logan

to join other forces to repel their invasions by  
the British Army which had caused great  
alarm by their sudden March from Phila-  
delphia with the apparent intention of over-  
turning the State of New Jersey; that the tour  
of the said Applicant was of three weeks du-  
ration only during which time he was under  
the command of said Capt. Logan and in the  
Regiment commanded by said Col. Freyling-  
huysen; that in this short tour, he the said ap-  
plicant was engaged in a skirmish with the  
British at the Draw Bridge below Trenton &  
in the battle of Monmouth; that he recollects  
Genl. Lee and Washington commanding at the  
latter place, as well as the shameful retreat  
of the former in disobedience of the orders of  
the Commander in Chief; that at the end of  
said tour, the British having left New Jersey,  
the Applicant and others of his company were  
permitted to return home; - that in the month  
of September 1778, the Applicant was again called  
out on the occasion of an alarm from the apprehension



that the British were about to cross over to New Jersey from ~~the~~ Staten Island, that he served three weeks only in this tour, and was commanded by the said Capt. Logan, and said Col. Freelinghouse, that the said Regiment marched from Somerset County to Elizabethtown, where they remained until the alarm was over, which made ~~the~~ term of three weeks, and was then permitted by the said Captain to return home - that he was in no battle or skirmish during this tour; that about the last of December 1778 or first of January 1779, the applicant again entered the service of the United States in the said County of Somerset, in Capt. Churchwell's Company, to assist in transporting horses, provisions &c to Valley Forge, that the term for which he engaged in said service was two months, which he served out, and was discharged at its close; - that about the first of April 1780, the applicant volunteered on board of a gun boat at New Brunswick under the command of Captain Adam Hylar for a term of eight months as privateer, and served out said term, and at the end thereof was permitted by said Captain

To return home; that said Capt. Pyles command-  
ed forty five men who occupied the said gun  
boat and a whale boat; that the services  
in which said boats & their crews were engaged,  
are mentioned in detail in a printed paper  
marked A. and made part of this declaration.  
(Several matters already detailed by the applicant,  
were however omitted in the paper referred to, by  
the printer's neglect; that after said eight months  
had ended, that and in the Spring of 1783, Captain  
Pyles having died, the applicant again volunteered  
as a private man at New Brunswick, under  
the command of Capt. Jno. Boudouere, for a term  
of two weeks, and served out said term in  
coasting from Sandy Hook around the E. Jersey  
shore, and performed nothing of note, except the  
taking of a British barge & crew; that he has no  
documentary evidence and that he knows of no  
person whose testimony he can procure, who can testi-  
fy to his service.

He hereby relinquishes every claim whatever  
to a pension or annuity, except the present, and de-  
clares that his name is not on the pension roll of  
the Agency of any State whatever.

Sworn to and subscribed, John Riddle Sen  
the day and year aforesaid.

Law. Geo. Chas. E. J. [unclear]

Interrogatories propounded by the Court.

1<sup>st</sup> Where and in what year were you born? -

Answer - I was born in Somerset County, New Jersey, about 1760, from New Brunswick on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of December 1760.

2<sup>nd</sup> Have you any record of your age? -

Answer - My father recorded my age in his family bible, and I have a copy of the original in my file now in my possession taken by myself.

3<sup>rd</sup> Where were you living when called into service, where have you lived since the Revolutionary War, and where do you now live? -

Answer - I was living in Somerset County, New Jersey when called into service at all of the various terms mentioned already, and remained there until the year 1790, and then removed to Hamilton County, Ohio, where I have since resided, to this day. ~~The first time you called into service, were you drafted, did you volunteer, or were you a substitute, and if a substitute for whom?~~

Answer. - When called out by my captain, when my term came, according to the regulations of the company to which I belonged, I considered that it was my duty to go, and went accordingly. My manner of service would be more properly that of a volunteer, for I was never drafted, nor did I ever substitute or serve as a substitute. During my service as a private or man, I was strictly a volunteer, I was a private from first to last.

Q. State the names of some of the regular officers, who were with the troops where you served, such as Continental and Militia Regiments as you can recollect, and the general circumstances of your service.

Answer. - I cannot recollect any thing further than what I have already stated. I have a poor recollection of names, & the great lapse of time has effaced those which might have been familiar to me, at the time of my service.

Q. Did you ever receive a discharge from the service, and if so, by whom was it given, and what has become of it?

Answer. I never did, to my recollection, receive a written discharge. I was merely permitted to return home, when each of my terms of service expired.



The State the names of persons to whom you are  
known in your present neighborhood and who can  
testify as to your character for veracity and their be-  
lief of your services as a soldier of the Revolution.

Witness. - I was known by all or nearly all of the  
old settlers of Hamilton County and I presume that  
all of them would testify as to my veracity and to  
their belief that I was a soldier of the Revolution.

I now refer to a few only - to wit, the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Prot<sup>rs</sup>  
J. Lytle now in Congress, Gen<sup>l</sup> James Findley (a late  
Member of Maryland Cong<sup>ress</sup>), Commis<sup>ioner</sup> of the Seal and  
Office, Nath<sup>l</sup> Gann Esq<sup>t</sup> Judge, Geo<sup>rg</sup> S. Torrance.

Signed & sworn to this John Riddle, sen  
25<sup>th</sup> of March 1834.

I am, Sir, Obedt<sup>ly</sup>

We Oliver McSpencer a Clergyman residing in  
the City of Cincinnati, Hamilton County and State of Ohio,  
and John Wallace residing in the same County and  
State, hereby certify that we are well acquainted with  
John Riddle who has subscribed and sworn to the above  
declarations; that we believe him to be seventy two years  
of age; that he is reputed and believed in the neighborhood  
where he resides to have been a soldier of the Revolution, and that  
we concur in that opinion.

Sworn to and subscribed by  
the day & year aforesaid.

Obedt<sup>ly</sup>  
John S. Wallace

April 18, 1938

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Mrs. Dorothy M. von Kleist  
151 Elm Avenue  
Rahway, New Jersey

JOHN RIDDLE  
R. 8799  
BA-J/KEL:MB

Dear Madam:

Reference is made to your letter of April 5, in which you enclosed \$1.00 to cover cost of the Revolutionary War record of John Riddle, who you state was born in 1761, served in the Revolutionary War and applied for pension March 25, 1834, in Hamilton County, Ohio.

The papers in pension claim, R. 8799, based upon service of John Riddle in the Revolutionary War have been examined very carefully and the following data found:

John Riddle was born December 4, 1761, in Somerset County, New Jersey, within about seven miles of New Brunswick in that county.

While a resident of Somerset County, New Jersey, John Riddle volunteered and served as a private with the New Jersey troops, as follows: from April, 1776, in Captain McCoy's company, Colonel Frelinghuysen's regiment, length of service six weeks; from June, 1776, three weeks in Captain William Logan's company, Colonel Frelinghuysen's regiment, and was at a skirmish at the drawbridge below Trenton and at the battle of Monmouth; from September, 1776, three weeks in Captain William Logan's company, Colonel Frelinghuysen's regiment; from about January, 1779, two months under Captain Churchwell transporting horses and provisions to Valley Forge; from April 1, 1780, about eight months as a privateer under Captain Adam Huxley in the whaleboat and gunboat service; also, in boat service under Captain John Bandoine for two weeks.

In the spring of 1790, the soldier moved to Hamilton County, Ohio, and while residing there, was commissioned ensign by General Saint Clair, was promoted to lieutenant, captain, major and colonel of militia and held those offices for about twenty-two years. During this service, he was in command of the troops at Greenville when the treaty was made with the Indians.

John Riddle applied for pension March 25, 1834, while residing in Mill Creek Township, Hamilton County, Ohio.

His claim for pension was not allowed as he failed to furnish proof of service of six months in a regularly embodied military corps during the Revolutionary War, as required by the pension laws.

There are no data as to soldier's family in the papers in the pension claim.

No charge is made for this service. One dollar, the amount of your remittance, will be refunded in due time.

Very truly yours

A. D. HILLER  
Executive Assistant  
to the Administrator