

Aaron Carter's Pension Application

Aaron Carter, the son of enslaved parents, served in the Third Connecticut Regiment, enlisting on May 29, 1777 and was present at the Redding winter encampment, along with his two brothers. His parents were documented as slaves of Jonathan Kellogg of Colchester. Carter's enlistment records state he was "exchanged for Salmon Root," and while there is no record indicating for certain that Salmon Root enslaved Aaron Carter prior to the Revolution, this is a likely scenario explaining Carter's substitution for Root.

On August 24, 1780 the Continental Congress passed an act offering pensions to widows and orphans of Revolutionary War soldiers. Pensions worked as a form of incentive to encourage men to serve through the end of the war, and as a historical source these applications can provide a tremendous amount of information as the application process was often extensive.

The following is the application for Aaron Carter's pension, filed by his wife Rachel Carter, and includes a number of letters verifying Carter's service. Carter served from May 29, 1777 through the duration of the war until 1783 as a Private in the Connecticut Third Regiment. Rachel Carter received the pension in 1837.

“State of Connecticut County of Middletown On this 28th day of April A.D. 1837 before the Court of Probate for the district of Middletown in said County, the same being a court of Record by the Laws of the said State of Connecticut by which it was created personally appeared Rachel Carter a resident of the Town of Middletown in the said County of Middletown and State of Connecticut aged eighty two years and upwardly who being first duly sworn according to law doth on her oath make the following declaration in order to obtain the benefit of the provision made by the Act of Congress passed July fourth 1836. That she is the widow of Aaron Carter late of Windsor in the County of Hartford in said State of Connecticut deceased who was a Private in the Army of the Revolution: that said Aaron Carter served in the said Army several years, and so far as the recollection which she now has of facts, will enable her to state she thinks that said Aaron entered the Army in the year 1777 and that he was discharged in the year 1783. His brother Edward Carter was in the Army during the same time: That the honorable discharge of the said Aaron was in her possession a few years ago, and that she delivered it to Joshua Stow Esquire for the purpose of endeavoring to obtain a land warrant, since which time she has not seen it and presumes it is lost: that it is impossible for her at this distance of time to mention the names of the officers under whom the said

Aaron served: that she thinks she remembered the name of a Lieutenant by the name of Amasa Ransom, a Captain by the name of Eells, and Colonel Deerkee, and Colonel Dyer; but that her recollection on this point is imperfect: She further declares that she was married to the said Aaron Carter in the year One thousand seven hundred and seventy at Colchester in the County of New London in said State by John Watrory Esquire then a Justice of the Peace for said County of New London, but having no record she can not state the precise date of the marriage; that her husband the aforesaid Aaron Carter died at Windsor in the County of Hartford in said State of Connecticut in the year One thousand seven hundred and ninety seven according to the recollection of her the deponent, having no memorandum of the precise date; and that she has remained a widow ever since that period as will more fully appear by reference to the proof hereto annexed. Sworn to and subscribed on the day and year above written before } Rachel Carter + her mark

Stillman K. Wightman, Judge of Probate for the District of Middletown. I further certify that the deponent is a respectable and credible witness.

Stillman K. Wightman, Judge of Probate for the District of Middletown State of Connecticut County of Middletown

One who makes a deposition under oath, or gives written testimony to be used as evidence in court

I Abigail Caples of said Middletown being duly sworn depose and say that I am fifty eight years old; that I am the daughter of Aaron Carter who was a soldier in the Army of the Revolution; that the said Aaron died when I was about eighteen years old at Windsor in the County of Hartford in said State; and that my mother Rachel Carter has remained his widow and unmarried ever since the decease of the said Aaron, and has resided for more than twenty years last past in said Middletown; and further I say not.

Dated at Middletown the 28th day of April, - A.D. 1837

Witness J. Barnes Abigail + Capples, her mark

Subscribed and sworn to this 28th day of April A.D. 1837 in due form of law by the said Abigail Capples before me the undersigned Judge of the Court of Probate for the District of Middletown in said State.

I further certify that the deponent is a respectable and credible witness.

Stillman K. Wightman, Judge

Instead of a signature, the court had Abigail make a t-shape as her mark

I James Freeman of Colchester in the County of New London State of Connecticut, living now about seventy four years of age, do testify and say that I was a soldier in the Army of the Revolution, and am now on an United States Pension and that previous to the revolution I lived in Colchester and was well acquainted with Aaron Carter several year previous to the War he was married to Rachel Bolles, and lived with her, and had several children before the War, that about the year 1777 he enlisted as a soldier in the Army and was in a Regiment commanded by Col. John Durkee in Parson's Brigade that I know said Carter [illegible] soldier for three years or more; and according to my best recollection he was enlisted for during the War and served till he was regularly discharged at near the close of War, that I myself was one of the last discharged and A. Carter, being enlisted for during the War, was discharged a few months before I was that I know him living in Colchester after the close of the War with his said wife Rachel, who is still living as his widow.

James + Freeman his mark

Pension application for Aaron Carter's widow Rachel Carter, 1837, M804, roll 483, U.S., 5 Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, 1800-1900. Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15. National Archives, Washington, D.C.