

## **Jabez Pottage, Native Connecticut Soldier, Redding**

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Jabez Pottage (alias Pottage) may have been a Nipmuck, Pequot, or “mixed” Native blood. He was recruited by General Putnam (from Redding) in Windham and he returned there after the war. Numerous census and pension data link him to northeastern Connecticut throughout his lifetime.

He served in a number of regiments all over the Northeast, including the [Indian Company of Stockbridge](#), and he was even taken prisoner.

Who was this remarkable man and why did General Putnam specifically request that this soldier, the Native person, be released from prison? If we look at his pension application, we see that he fought in a number of very important battles, like the capture of Fort Ticonderoga; he was part of [Benedict Arnold](#)'s company in the far north; he was soldier in the battle of Monmouth, and he was one of the few survivors of the massacre at [Kings Bridge](#). How did he do it? His pension records help one to understand his bravery and exceptional service to the Patriots.

According to his pension record, he “enlisted into the revolutionary war in the year 1775 and in Col. Ethan Allen’s Regiment,” where he “assisted in taking Shrewsboro, Ticonderoga, and Crown Point and served against

the common enemy.” Then he enlisted Capt. Sharp’s company and again served under the command of Gen. Arnold. There were several other enlistments, including one in 1777 as a private soldier for three years with the Continental Army in the company commanded by Capt Vine Elderkin in Col. Herman Swift’s Regiment in the Connecticut Line [Middle Encampment, Redding]. He stayed until the spring of 1779 when he was in the State of New Jersey. He was at the battle of Monmouth and afterwards “while in a scouting party and near Kingsbridge he was taken prisoner by the enemy and carried into New York and there kept in the sugar house four months and two days and was then exchanged and again joined said company and served out the whole term of three years as aforesaid.”

(see <https://ctstatelibrary.org/revolutionary-war-pension-applications-index/>)

Jabez’s remarkable military history and heroism was on display at Kingsbridge. Historian Richard Walling

(<https://www.americanrevolution.org/ind3.php>) provides the background to this battle. “By early July [1778], the British were ensconced in and around Manhattan while the American forces were camped at White Plains, just several miles north. The area between the two armies, present-day Bronx and Yonkers, was indeed a dark and bloody ground, as patrols

skirmished and ambushes laid.” The Patriots were fighting the Queen’s Rangers and Hessian troops—not faint-hearted forces, for sure. The Native forces, led by Stockbridge Indian Company and chiefs, Daniel Nimham and his son, Abraham, were ambushed by the British on August 31, 1778. The Natives fought bravely, but they were outnumbered, out gunned and the British were closing in from all sides. Jabez survived. David Naumec (personal communication) suggested that Jabez and another Native , Joseph Reed, were not killed, but taken prisoner because they might have been wearing Connecticut Regiment uniforms and not the typical “Native style” clothing that Captain Ewald, a Hessian soldier, mentioned after observing the slain on the battlefield:

Their costume was a shirt of coarse linen down to the knees, long trousers, also of linen down to the fee, on which they wore shoes of deerskin and the head was covered with a hat made of bast. Their weapons were a rifle or a musket, a quiver with some twenty arrows and a short battle-axe which they know how to throw very skillfully. Through the nose and in the ears they wore rings, and on their heads only the hair of the crown remained standing in a circle the size of a dollar-piece, the remainder being shaved off bare (Capt. Johann Ewald as quoted in Walling 2006: 21).



**A Stockbridge Warrior, Circa August, 1778**

Jabez was taken prisoner for at least two months before being released.

The British prisons were called sugar houses after their first use as storage houses for sugar and molasses from the West Indies. Why was Jabez

exchanged after only two months in prison? We suspect that General Putnam specifically requested Jabez's release. Jabez had a long history of invaluable service to the Americans; he must have been an excellent marksman who was quick on his feet; after all, he ended up in the elite fighting force of Sheldon's Light Horses in 1781.



The Old Sugar House (1858)

From December 1778 through May 1779, he was General Putnam's Waggoner in "Reading" (Redding encampments) (Fold 3:M881, NARA

Record Group 93, Roll 0321), meaning he drove the wagons that were hitched to oxen to provide supplies to the encampments. Jabez also served as a soldier in Colonel Sheldon's Light Dragoons, an elite fighting force that raided enemy sites on Long Island. He continued to serve in that regiment until the end of the war when he was discharged at Danbury in 1783 (Fold 3: Pension Application). Jabez was one of the best and his service to this country should never be forgotten.

*The Connecticut Courant* published his death notice: "At Ellington, Mr. Jabez Pottage, 80, a revolutionary pensioner."

### **Further Reading:**

Morrison, Bethany A., et al. *Historical Archaeology of the Revolutionary War Encampments of Washington's Army*. University Press of Florida, 2019. *Project MUSE* [muse.jhu.edu/book/66214](https://muse.jhu.edu/book/66214).

Naumec, David J. "Connecticut Indians in the War of Independence." *Connecticut History Review*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2008: 181–218. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44369867>.

Walling, Richard. "Death in the Bronx: The Stockbridge Indian Massacre." <https://www.americanrevolution.org/ind3.php>

Revolutionary War Pension Applications Index – Connecticut State Library  
(ctstatelibrary.org) <https://www.fold3.com/collection/us-revolutionary-war-us>