

**Transcription of William McMillan to William Clark, ca. October 1828, Pension of William McMillan, National Archives and Records Administration, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, NARA M804, S 2806, p. 33-35.<sup>1</sup>**

To the honorable Secretary of the Treasury.<sup>2</sup>

I am happy to hear of the appointment you have. I had heard that Colonel Savage<sup>3</sup> was appointed. I never knew you were appointed till Mr. Joseph Moris came lately and brought his little family with him to Mercer<sup>4</sup> to [see] my daughter and myself and he informed me of your appointment. I am in hopes lest either of them be appointed that you would be continued as secretary. I have no man in the United States I would wish before your honor. You have in several cases showed your friendship. I need not mention any one in particular, but you have done it when ever I required it. We have been acquainted 30 years or more and our friendship has remained pure and [genuine] and I hope will so to the close of life. I am gone in 73 years of age and I always had good state of health but about a year ago I was thrown off my horse and was dead for some time, broke three of my ribs off. Twas a long time before I got well. I was not able to scarcely to do anything.

I began to think about my Revolution services. I joined the Revolution War [in] 1775 in the last of December in Maryland to serve nine months. I was appointed sergeant and Brother of mine<sup>5</sup> was appointed [at the] same time. The British came to New York and part of our Regiment lay in Annapolis and part in Baltimore. Hand bills were sent out in every direction for volunteers and our regiment turned to a man that was fit to march. We had about twelve hundred men in the regiment and we marched to New York. I believe we arrived there about the first of August 1776. The British army consisted of about 40,000 and they had Hessians to the [amount of] 15,000. On the evening of the 26 August, we left New York and landed at Long Island and the next day was August 27: Battle.<sup>6</sup> Lord Sterling<sup>7</sup> commanded [the] right wing and General Sullivan the left wing.<sup>8</sup>

My Captain was killed, first lieutenant was killed, second lieutenant shot through the hand, two sergeants were killed, one in front of me. Same time my bayonet was shot off my gun. Two corporals killed, all belonged to our company. Captain's name was Daniel Bowie<sup>9</sup> from Annapolis. General S. Smith,<sup>10</sup> your oldest senator in Congress, was with us

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<sup>1</sup> Spelling and grammar have been standardized for clarity.

<sup>2</sup> William Clark was the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury from June 4, 1828 to November 1829.

<sup>3</sup> John Savage was appointed to be Secretary of the Treasury but declined the position.

<sup>4</sup> McMillan lived in Mercer County, Pennsylvania when he wrote this letter.

<sup>5</sup> [Samuel McMillan](#) joined the Fourth Company of the First Maryland Regiment alongside his brother.

<sup>6</sup> The Battle of Brooklyn.

<sup>7</sup> William Alexander, Lord Stirling, Major General.

<sup>8</sup> John Sullivan, a general who was captured during the battle and later went on to become governor of New Hampshire.

<sup>9</sup> [Daniel Bowie](#), captain of the Fourth Company. Bowie had previously been the First Lieutenant of the Fourth Company, but was promoted when the former captain, Thomas Ewing, was promoted.

<sup>10</sup> [Samuel Smith](#), captain of the Eighth Company during the Battle of Brooklyn.

that unfortunate day. He remembered me the day of the Battle and give [me] a certificate of that afternoon.

My brother and about 50 or 60 of us was taken. We had a pretty severe fight with Jägers<sup>11</sup> and it was a draw battle. There was a good many on each side killed. They retreated and we did not pursue them.

And we were surrounded by healanders<sup>12</sup> on one side, Hessians on the other. The Hessians broke the butts of our guns over their cannon and robbed us of everything we had, lit their pipes with our money, carried us into meetings,<sup>13</sup> gave us nothing to eat for five days and then [illegible] biscuits from board ships, blue, moldy, full [of] bugs, rotten.

And the British put [us] aboard prison ships and sent us to Halifax,<sup>14</sup> [where] we were till the next spring. Ten of us run away from Halifax and had likely to been taken two or three times by the British once at Saint John<sup>15</sup> at Passamaquoddy.<sup>16</sup> Several times we had likely to been killed by the Indians if we had not had a man that could speak the Canadian language<sup>17</sup> several times. Once they were baynt<sup>18</sup> their guns at us and this Canadian spoke their language well and kind Providence saved us in that way. We were ten weeks in the wilderness, sometimes nothing to eat for days but [illegible] that grows on the rocks<sup>19</sup> in the Bays, sometimes shellfish and snails. We got so poor we could hardly [make] a trill.<sup>20</sup> It would take a quire<sup>21</sup> of paper to give a correct account of our suffering that we underwent. We suffered everything but death. I would not undergo the same for the United States, but I could not stand it.

I arrived in Boston some time before General Burgoyne was taken<sup>22</sup> and I stayed there until I got hearty and well. In the First of June 1778 I acted as a quarter[master] to provide lodgings for troops 350 commanded by Major Scot. I had [a] horse to ride from the appointment I was offered<sup>23</sup> but I expected to get a good one when I joined the Maryland Line. When Jackson's Regiment<sup>24</sup> lay at the Gulf Mills<sup>25</sup> and I went with them there and the<sup>26</sup> British army was leaving Philadelphia. We got word at night and we marched all night. Got to the city at breakday<sup>27</sup> and General Scot<sup>28</sup> marched by the sound

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<sup>11</sup> A regiment of Hessian mercenaries employed by the British.

<sup>12</sup> Scottish highlanders.

<sup>13</sup> Meeting houses, churches, and other buildings.

<sup>14</sup> Halifax, Nova Scotia.

<sup>15</sup> Saint John, New Brunswick.

<sup>16</sup> Passamaquoddy Bay, which lies between New Brunswick and Maine.

<sup>17</sup> Probably referring to French.

<sup>18</sup> The meaning of this word is unclear.

<sup>19</sup> This may refer to algae or moss.

<sup>20</sup> A weak "quivering" or "warbling" sound.

<sup>21</sup> A unit of measurement for paper, usually defined as 25 pages.

<sup>22</sup> This is a reference to General John Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga on October 17, 1777.

<sup>23</sup> McMillan may have been offered an officer's appointment by the Massachusetts Line but declined.

<sup>24</sup> Henry Jackson's Sixteenth Massachusetts Regiment.

<sup>25</sup> Gulph Mills, Pennsylvania, where an American supply depot had been set up.

<sup>26</sup> McMillan repeats himself here in the original text, writing "and the and the and and the British."

<sup>27</sup> Daybreak or break of day.

[of the] horn close to the British. I intended to join before we marched so many months but had no chance. The troops I was in marched to Englishtown<sup>29</sup> and [the] British [marched] to Monmouth. At morn after we came there, General Lee came and chose the regiment and informed Colonel Jackson about this. We Lay at Monmouth till the orders [came] up for the men to lay with their arms and bayonets were to be ready in a minute. That he had pushed five thousand troops to catch the British in play till our grand army marched up [and] went into field without cannon and commanded battle and had to retire till our cannon came on.<sup>30</sup> General Washington came into the field. We flogged them and on the second day after the battle we rejoined with the 23,000 troops with laurels in our hats. My brother Samuel, he went on with Jackson.

I went shortly after to where the Maryland Line lay in White Plains<sup>31</sup> and I went to General Smallwood<sup>32</sup> to [know] what appointment he would give me. I told him I had [suffered] a grate<sup>33</sup> in prison and out of prison and lost nearly three years prime of life, and that there was privates that commanded companies.<sup>34</sup> He said there was several that did and I joined [the] service as sergeant. He [said] the officers would be taken out of the line and I would have now<sup>35</sup> duty to do. When the weather got cold, they would move to Bound Brook<sup>36</sup> and then would build barracks.

I told him I would want a discretionary furlough if I joined the Line [until] April next. And I [wanted] my appointment before I went as I was to be away four months and when I returned I was to go to Baltimore to recruit there, and December would make four years I had been away from home. General Smallwood got for me the appointment of Lieutenant<sup>37</sup> when he gave me the discretionary furlough and I joined the Third Maryland Regiment for three years, or during war. In the Spring, he performed his word for me and I recruited in Baltimore. The Maryland Line was away in South Carolina. I stayed and recruited till the surrender of Lord Cornwallis<sup>38</sup> and I quit and [illegible]. The war was over after [it] was established [that the] King<sup>39</sup> acknowledged us Independent.

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<sup>28</sup> Charles Scott, a Virginian Continental Army general, Kentucky Militia general, and the governor of Kentucky between 1808 to 1812.

<sup>29</sup> Englishtown, New Jersey. Charles Lee stationed his headquarters here prior to the Battle of Monmouth, and Washington set up his own headquarters there following the battle.

<sup>30</sup> This sentence is mostly presented as is because it is difficult to make out what McMillan is saying in his stream of consciousness writing.

<sup>31</sup> White Plains, New York.

<sup>32</sup> William Smallwood.

<sup>33</sup> McMillan likely meant “greatly” or “a great deal.”

<sup>34</sup> McMillan is referring to privates who had been promoted to the rank of captain.

<sup>35</sup> Possibly meaning “no” or “new.”

<sup>36</sup> Bound Brook, New Jersey, where part of the Maryland Line camped in 1779.

<sup>37</sup> There is some uncertainty over McMillan’s rank, which is why he decided to write to Clark. McMillan claimed that Smallwood had given him a lieutenant’s commission, and McMillan wanted his annual pension to reflect that.

<sup>38</sup> McMillan is referencing the surrender of Charles Cornwallis in October of 1781.

<sup>39</sup> King George III.

Yours very respectfully and sincere friend, I have to trouble your honor if you please——  
in regard of the election I wish to know your mind [illegible] I am [illegible] send me a  
few lines at all.<sup>40</sup>

Wm. McMillan

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<sup>40</sup> This closing statement is crushed at the bottom of the letter, making it very difficult to read.