

Zephaniah Steelman's¹¹⁰ declaration on his 1832 pension application.
(Atlantic County Historical Society Yearbook 2017)

On the 15th day of October AD 1832, personally appeared in open court before the honorable Judges of the Court of Common Pleas for the said County of Gloucester now sitting, Zephaniah Steelman, a resident of the said County of Gloucester and the State of New Jersey aforesaid, aged 72 years on the 25th of December last, who being duly sworn according to law, doth on his oath, make the following declaration in order to obtain the benefits of the Act of Congress passed June 7, 1832 called: "An Act Supplementary to the Act for the Relief of Certain Surviving Officers and Soldiers of the Revolution".

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

In the month of June 1776, I was drafted in Captain Nathaniel Sipple's ¹¹¹ company (listed as an ensign in Stryker) and Col. Richard Somers Battalion. We paraded at Somers Point at the mouth of the Great Egg Harbor River in the County of Gloucester in the State of New Jersey. We were quartered in the guard house at that place in which service I continued one month and was discharged.

In September 1776 I volunteered in the service of the state militia under the command of Captain William Price and Col. Richard Somers. We met at Mays Landing in the said County of Gloucester and marched from there to Woodbury in the same county. Served one month and was discharged. In January 1777 I entered in Captain John Scull's ¹¹² company and Col. Hillman's regiment. We paraded at Mays Landing and marched from there to Haddonfield in the County of Gloucester¹¹³. After a few days I was sent to Burlington with prisoners under Sgt. William Beaston. On our return at Moorestown, we fell in with Gen. Wayne's men, from whom we learned that the Hessians were in Haddonfield. We went with Gen. Wayne¹¹⁴ to Mount Holly in Burlington County. Stayed at Mount Holly until we were joined by an attachment of horse, I think part of Gen. Pulaski's¹¹⁵ troop, which came from Trenton. Marched together to Haddonfield. At Kay's Mill¹¹⁶, near Haddonfield, an advance guard shot one of the Hessians picket guards, whereupon they ran and gave the alarm in Haddonfield. As they evacuated the place, we pursued them to Cooper's Ferry. We saw their fires which they had left burning. Near Spicer's Bridge, now called Cooper's Creek Bridge, some of our troops had arrested their progress and brought them to an engagement. The battle had commenced before we arrived. It was a pretty smart action while it lasted (about two hours), and a considerable number of the British and Hessians were killed. We lost but few, either in killing or wounded. We marched back to Haddonfield that night. We were relieved by fresh troops from Egg Harbor and were discharged after a month service.¹¹⁷

In May or June 1778, I again served a month under Captain Samuel Snell and Col. Richard Taylor. During this tour we had a long chase after a company of Refugees who had landed from two boats and were plundering the inhabitants. We took twenty or thirty prisoners and their Captains - Turner and Howlings, very notorious characters. We took them a mile or more to a house where we left them under a guard and went in pursuit of the boats. During our absence

they rose on the guard but did not succeed. We tied them and marched them to Mays Landing. From there they were sent to prison at Philadelphia.

In August 1778 I again entered the service under Captain William Price. We met at Chestnut Neck on the Little Egg Harbor River in the County of Gloucester. Some of us were stationed at Leeds Point about two or three miles farther down the river. I was at the latter place. We were joined by four hundred or five hundred troops under Col. Proctor¹¹⁸. The British lay with 6 heavy vessels within the Little Egg Harbor River inlet and a number of smaller vessels. They lay there about a month, as near as I recollect; during which time their crews were frequently engaged in plundering the inhabitants. They burned houses, vessels and haystacks, and carried off a great deal of plunder – more particularly on Bass River and in the neighborhood of Burlington County, when we had the opportunity of opposing them. From there we marched to Somers Point, but not till after the ships had passed out of the inlet. One of them stuck on the outer bar in going out and they set her on fire and she blew up¹¹⁹.

Col. Proctor was directing two small forts to be built. I stood by when Col. Proctor drew the lines to make the works and forts by. I assisted in throwing up the outer section and when we finished them, Col. Proctor had a brass piece. I think four or six pounder charged and fired in order to try how far they could throw a ball. The ball struck the ocean about three miles from the Fort. This service lasted two months.

In October 1778 I entered the service under Captain Samuel Snell¹²⁰ and Col. Robert Taylor¹²¹ in "the Egg Harbor Guard". We in that neighborhood were informed by Col. Richard Somers that those who enlisted in the guard service would not be called out elsewhere and that he had procured an arrangement to that effect to be made with the commander in chief and made this assurance. I enlisted and served 3 years.

Our service in the guard was hard, exposing and often dangerous service involving in it the duty of guarding the whole line of the seacoast of the state of New Jersey, and the frequent descent of the British or Refugees on some part or other of the Coast kept us almost constantly on the alert without the possibility of often bringing them into a regular action, and was replete with small actions and skirmishes of which I have now little recollection.

I recollect a skirmish in June, I think, of 1779 with a Captain Perry from New York; he commanded one of the boats called True Blue. It had captured a United States boat mounting two brass six pounders and eight four pound howitzers commanded by a Captain Alan. They had come out of the Delaware and were captured by Captain Perry off Cape May. After which they came into Great Egg Harbor Inlet when we attacked and took both boats and prisoners. We sent them to prison at Philadelphia.

In one of our excursions I remember we took a Refugee trading boat on the north end of Squan Beach with cranberries and tar in her. We saved the articles but burned the boat.

At another time one Bacon, a noted refugee, had killed Captain Andrew Steelman¹²² of a lookout boat¹²³ and wounded Lieut. David Scull¹²⁴ so that he never recovered from it and had done much other mischief.¹²⁵ Captain Snell sent a company in pursuit of Bacon. We went as far as Barnegat,

obtained a pilot to direct us to his father-in-law's house and we surrounded it in the middle of the night. It was full of Tories¹²⁶, but Bacon was not there nor did we obtain any tidings of him¹²⁷. So we returned. I have been on duty all along the coast as far as Sandy hook and at the intermediate breakers.

After being discharged from the Egg Harbor Guard, I was not out again during the war. I was born in the Township of Egg Harbor in the year 1760. I have no record of my age. I was living when called into service in the same Township where I was born and I have lived there ever since. I was drafted the 1st time and after that volunteered whenever I was in the service.

I saw Col. Proctor at Leeds Point [and] in Somers Point, who was with the troops there where we served. Saw Genl Wayne at Cooper's Creek Bridge called Spicer's Bridge. I saw Genl Newcomb¹²⁸ at Woodberry, Col. Ellis¹²⁹ at Haddonfield. I saw Col. Proctor's Regiment of artillery at Leeds Point and Somers Point, and General Wayne's troops, or some of them, at Cooper's Creek Bridge, a company of Pulaski was also there, three of them were killed. I never received a written discharge. I am acquainted with Daniel Baker Esquire, Jesse Smith Esquire, sheriff of this county, Jacob Glover Esq, surrogate of this county, Dr. Mahlon D. Canfield, Gideon Leeds, Maj. John Scull in my neighborhood.

He hereby relinquishes every claim whatever to a pension except the present and declares that his name is not on the pension rolls of any state.

Sworn and subscribed in open court 15 October 1832 before Ephraim Miller.
{Zephaniah Steelman signed this with his mark.}

¹¹⁰ Zephaniah Steelman was awarded a pension of \$200 per year. He received no arrears payment. There is no "Zephaniah Steelman" listed in Stryker as a private; there is however a Captain in the 3rd Battalion by this name on page 412. It may be that Zephaniah was first a private, and later promoted to Stryker thus shows his commission date as September 18, 1777.

¹¹¹ Stryker has Sipple an ensign in Captain Covenover's company, 3rd Battalion, Gloucester County militia, commissioned September 15th, 1777.

¹¹² Stryker lists Scull as 2nd2nd Lieutenant, Captain Price's company, 3rd Battalion, Gloucester County militia, commissioned September 18th, 1777.

¹¹³ It is evident from the incidents recounted that this latter movement took place in late February 1778, when the militia were called out to counter a massive foraging operation in Gloucester and Salem Counties by 3,000 British troops who crossed the river from Philadelphia.

¹¹⁴ Brigadier General Anthony "Mad Anthony" Wayne, commander of the Pennsylvania Line regiments of the Continental Army.

¹¹⁵ Count Casimir Pulaski, Polish nobleman, brigadier general in the Continental Army, created the Pulaski Cavalry Legion and reformed the American cavalry as a whole.

¹¹⁶ John Peebles, captain lieutenant of the 42d Regiment of Foot, wrote in his diary: "yesterday evening the Coll. got some intelligence of a great Body of the Enemy coming towards us & some shots being fired at the Rangers Picket across the Creek at Keys Mill the Compys. order'd under arms, & soon after desir'd to go into the Barns & be ready to turn out at a moments warnng. it then came on to snow; about an hour or two after we were turn'd out again & march'd off by the left to Coopers ferry where we arrived about two oclock in mornng." [Ira D. Gruber, ed. John Peebles' American War: The Diary of a Scottish Grenadier, 1776-1782. Mechanicsburg, Pa., 1998. , 167]

¹¹⁷ General Anthony Wayne's report to General Washington on these actions appears in the appendix.

¹¹⁸ Colonel Thomas Proctor commanded "Proctor's Continental Artillery Regiment", a unit of the Continental Army composed of artillery companies from eastern Pennsylvania.

¹¹⁹ The sloop-of-war HMS "Zebra".

¹²⁰ Snell commanded a company in the 3rd Battalion, Gloucester County militia. He was also a privateer captain during the war.

¹²¹ Taylor's service as listed in Stryker: Captain, Colonel Neilson's battalion, Minute Men;" Captain, 3rd Battalion, Gloucester; Captain, Colonel Somers' battalion, State troops ; Major, First Battalion, Gloucester; Colonel, ditto, February 5th, 1777; resigned September 16th, 1777.

¹²² Stryker lists a private of this name in the Gloucester militia. He was also apparently a privateer.

¹²³ A privateer, a private armed vessel licensed to attack enemy vessels; in this case it appears from the following footnote to have been a large whaleboat, propelled by oars.

¹²⁴ Scull served in the 3rd Battalion, Gloucester County militia.

¹²⁵ This became known as the "Massacre on Long Beach." As recounted in The Refugee John Bacon" by Ben Ruset, June 24, 2011 at <http://www.njpinebarrens.com/the-refugee-john-bacon/> :

"On October 25, 1782 the privateer galley Alligator discovered a cutter from Ostend, Holland, bound for St. Thomas, abandoned on the north end of Long Beach Island. It is not known exactly who commanded the Alligator. A contemporary Tory newspaper puts Lieutenant Andrew Steelman of Cape May as captain, while others claim that David Scull was master. Captain Joseph Covenhoven was also on board. The wrecked cutter had a costly load of Hyson tea and other "valuable articles" worth £20,000. Steelman went ashore to round up some locals to help transfer the cargo to the Alligator.

The locals rounded up included William Wilson who, upon seeing the beached vessel and the crew of privateers unloading her, ran to Bacon and told him about the situation. Bacon and nine of his men arrived later that night after the exhausted (and likely drunk) privateers had fallen asleep on the beach. Under the cover of darkness and moving silently across the sand, the Refugees snuck up to the sleeping crew, drew their knives, and murdered most of the crew. Those who awoke to the noise were at a disadvantage and secured their rescue only when Scull, aboard the Alligator, led reinforcements ashore. Scull's men managed to scare off the Refugees, who withdrew back into the night. Scull, for his part, suffered a wound in the thigh. Steelman was dead, and, according to a British report of the incident, Bacon and the Refugees killed or wounded all of the party except for four or five."

¹²⁶ Loyalists.

¹²⁷ Bacon evaded capture until 1783, when he was finally cornered in a tavern north of Tuckerton by the Burlington County militia, and was killed while trying to escape.



Headstone of Zephaniah Steelman, Old Zion Graveyard
Egg Harbor Township, NJ