



The denial of Daniel Williams's pension, despite credible and diverse witnesses, contrasts with the approval of Jacob Banks's claim (S8056) and demonstrates how African American veterans needed not only to anticipate possible bias but also errors in the interpretation of the pension acts, which could masquerade as seemingly neutral technicalities to justify rejection.

Daniel Williams (R11569) – Revolutionary War Wagoner and free Black man was born in 1757 in Accomack County, Virginia. He served nearly five years as a wagoner in the Continental Army, participating in major campaigns including Brandywine, Germantown, Monmouth, and Yorktown. His duties involved driving a wagon with two horses, transporting supplies, and supporting the army's logistics—a vital, though non-combat, function.

At the end of the war, Williams was issued a discharge and bounty certificate, which were later destroyed in a house fire decades before he applied for a pension under the Act of June 7, 1832. His application was strongly supported by two Black witnesses, John and Hester Blake, who attested to his service in Accomack and later Philadelphia, and by Alexander Moore, a white Revolutionary War veteran. Moore confirmed Williams's presence and duties during the same campaigns and also noted that he knew Williams personally in Philadelphia, where both resided for many years. This long-term association demonstrates Moore's respect for Williams and strengthens the credibility of his testimony.

Despite this testimony and the historical record, Williams's pension was denied because the Pension Office concluded his wagoner service was "not of a military nature." His case highlights the uneven treatment of Black veterans: even when evidence and witnesses matched that of white soldiers, claims could be rejected on narrow technical or interpretive grounds.

On the other hand, Jacob Banks, a free Black man of Goochland County, Virginia, served as a wagoner for 18 months at Albemarle Barracks, supporting the Convention Army prisoners. Like Williams, Banks never had formal discharge papers. Unlike Williams, his pension was approved with testimony from Robert Mims, a white veteran who served alongside him, along with attestations from local officials confirming Banks's reputation and service.

Both men were Wagoners, both had lost or never had papers, and both had white witnesses. The contrast in their outcomes highlights inconsistency in the administration of the 1832 Pension Act: Banks's claim succeeded because a white witness verified his service, while Williams's longer service—corroborated by multiple witnesses, including Moore, who knew him personally in Philadelphia—was rejected due to an erroneous interpretation of what qualified as military service.

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