



37 of 39: Ned Streater (S7645), a free man of color, declared in his pension application (Nov. 2, 1833) that he served 12 months in the Virginia (VA) militia during the Revolutionary War. He first saw action at the Battle of Great Bridge and fought in a skirmish at Pip Pot Swamp in Nansemond County, where he was deformed and disabled for life by a musket ball through his leg.

After the war, he sued for freedom under VA's 1783 law (see 26 of 39 and statute), which emancipated enslaved soldiers. Streater won and sued again for what he was owed for the years he remained in bondage after the law had taken effect.

Born in Nansemond County, VA, Streater was 77 when he applied for a pension in 1833. He had "always lived in Nansemond County" and entered the militia at 24 in 1780 as a substitute for his enslaver, Willis Streater. He served primarily in Nansemond and Norfolk Counties. He did so "agreeably to his direction and request." He served under Capt. Elvington Knott in the VA militia.

He was present at the Battle of Great Bridge, witnessed the death of British commander Charles Fordyce, and engaged in the skirmish at Pip Pot Swamp. He could not remember having a formal written discharge, but he completed his full term of service, which was later verified by witnesses appearing in Nansemond County Court in 1814.

After his enslaver's death, Streater petitioned for his freedom, citing VA's Oct. 1783 act granting liberty to enslaved soldiers of that war. He won and was declared free. He sued again to recover back wages for the years he had been unlawfully enslaved after the law was passed.

In 1814, a jury ruled in his favor: "the plaintiff is not a slave, but free, having by the appointment and direction of his owner Willis Streater then enlisted in a Corps raised within the State of Virginia...in the year 1780 and received as a substitute for his owner whose duty or lot it was to serve in said corps, having faithfully served during the term of his enlistment." The court awarded him \$165 in damages for his continued enslavement.

A decade later, in 1824, he sued James Wright and Augustus Saperouse for unpaid wages. The jury determined that he was owed \$105 for the period between Oct. 20, 1783, and July 20, 1792, and an additional \$210 for the years between July 20, 1792, and Jan. 20, 1810. The defendants argued that Streater had been treated well and, at times, had been allowed to live as a free man. The court ruled such testimony irrelevant, focusing solely on what constituted fair compensation for his labor.

By 1833, Ned was old and infirm. He stated that he was unable to travel the 15–20 miles to the courthouse to make his pension declaration in person. He was awarded a pension of \$40 per year, with arrears of \$120 covering the period from Sept. 4, 1833, to Mar. 4, 1834.