

Finding the Maryland 400

A Maryland State Archives research project

FEATURED

Welcome to Finding the Maryland 400



- The American stand led by Lord Stirling at the Battle of Brooklyn, which included the men of the Maryland 400. Detail, *Battle of Long Island*, by Alonzo Chappell (1858)

Welcome to **Finding the Maryland 400**, an effort to discover and explore the lives and stories of Maryland's first war heroes, led by the Maryland State Archives in partnership with the [Maryland Society of the Sons of the American Revolution](#).

Raised in early 1776, the First Maryland Regiment joined the rest of the American troops that made up the Continental Army in New York City in August, on the eve of the Battle of Brooklyn. That battle, also called the Battle of Long Island, was the first major engagement of the war, and was an overwhelming British victory. Only the heroic stand by a small group of Marylanders—now known as the Maryland 400—held the British at bay long enough to allow

the Continental Army to escape total destruction, at the cost of many Maryland lives.

Learn more about the Marylanders at the Battle of Brooklyn, beginning with the [British landing on Long Island](#) a few days before the battle, and moving forward.

There are many ways you can learn more about the First Maryland Regiment:

- View the [roster of all known First Maryland Regiment soldiers](#) present at the Battle of Brooklyn, including information about their fates, as well as [the regiment's strength](#).
- Follow the movements of the Marylanders from their [departure in July 1776](#) through the American victories at [Trenton](#) and [Princeton](#) that winter.
- Learn about the other battles where the Marylanders fought around New York in 1776-1777, including [Harlem Heights](#); [White Plains](#); [Fort Washington](#); [Trenton](#); and [Princeton](#).
- Explore topics like [desertion](#) and [defection](#), the difficulties of [feeding](#) and [supplying](#) an army, and the hardships of the Continental Army's [1776-1777 winter camp](#).
- Read [biographical profiles](#) and notes about the lives of some soldiers, in addition to the those listed in the [Biographies section](#).
- Check out our [interactive view of the Maryland troops](#), and our [interactive map](#).

You may support this project through a donation to the [Friends of the Maryland State Archives](#); indicate "Maryland 400" under Additional Comments. If you have questions or suggestions, please get in touch with us at msamaryland400@gmail.com.

Scroll down to read our latest posts!

Posted in [Maryland 400](#)

The British Come Ashore

Posted on [August 22, 2014](#)

Follow

On August 22, 1776, the British began setting the stage for battle by landing troops on Long Island. The Continental Army had been present in varying numbers on Long Island for nearly four months, since General Nathanael Greene was ordered to encamp there on May 1, and with the arrival of additional Hessian troops to aid the British on August 25, only five days remained until the forces would finally clash at the Battle of Long Island on August 27.

[Read more...](#)

Posted in [Maryland 400](#) | [Leave a reply](#)

In Their Own Words: An Oral History of the Battle of Brooklyn, Part II

Posted on [August 21, 2014](#)

This is Part II of our compilation of personal accounts of the Battle of Brooklyn by members of the First Maryland Regiment. If you missed Part I, you can read it [here](#).

Around midday on August 27, 1776, the British troops who had been firing on the Marylanders pulled back. Major Mordecai Gist, the commander on the ground, judged that "Our men behaved well, and maintained their ground." As the British withdrew, the Marylanders felt they had weathered their first test as soldiers.

In truth, however, the attack the Maryland troops had faced was only a diversion. The rest of the British army, including a large number of Scottish troops, was in the process of slipping around the left end of the American lines, attacking them from the rear.

Unnamed Soldier, 5th Company

The main body of their army, by a route we never dreamed of, had entirely surrounded us, and...scattered all our men, except the *Delaware and Maryland* battalions.

Follow

William McMillan

We were surrounded by Healanders [Scottish Highlanders] on one side, Hessians on the other.

Mordecai Gist

Being thus surrounded, and no probability of a reinforcement, his Lordship [Lord Stirling, American general] ordered me to retreat with the remaining part of our men, and force our way through to our camp.

Unnamed Soldier

We were ordered to attempt a retreat, by fighting our way through the enemy, who...nearly filled every field and road between us and our lines. We had not retreated a quarter of a mile before we were fired upon by an advanced party of the enemy, and those upon our rear were playing upon us with their artillery. Our men fought with more than *Roman* courage, and I am convinced would have stood until [we] were shot down to a man. We forced the advanced party, which first attacked us, to give way.

Samuel Smith**Captain, 8th Company, 24 years old**

When the Regiment mounted a hill, a British officer appeared...and waved his hat, and it was supposed that he meant to surrender. He clapped his hands three times, on which signal his company rose and gave a heavy [fire].

Gist

We soon fell in with a party of the enemy, who clubbed their firelocks [turned their guns upside-down, a sign of surrender], and waved their hats to us, as if they meant to surrender as prisoners; but on our advancing within sixty yards, they...fired.

Unnamed Soldier

They entirely overshot us, and killed some men away behind in our rear. I had the satisfaction of dropping one of them the first fire I made. I was so near I could not miss. I discharged my rifle seven times that day as deliberately as I ever did at a [target], and with as little perturbation.

As the Marylanders fought their way back, they arrived at the swampy Gowanus Creek (now the Gowanus Canal).

Unnamed Soldier

We got a passage down to the side of a marsh, seldom before waded over, which we passed, and then swam a narrow river, all the time exposed to the fire of the enemy.

William Smallwood

There then remained no other Prospect but to surrender or attempt to retreat over this Marsh and Creek at the Mouth, where no Person had ever been known to Cross.

Smith

I took my company through a marsh, until we were stopped by the dam of a ...mill...that was too deep for the men to ford. I and a Sergeant swam over and got two slabs [of wood] into the water, on...which they ferried over all could not swim.

Half the regiment was able to escape through the swamp, including the 5th and the 8th companies, before more British soldiers returned and attacked. Five companies were left to contend with the British: the 3rd, 4th, 6th, 9th, and 7th Independent.

Gist

We were then left with only five companies of our battalion, when the enemy returned... After a warm and close engagement for near ten minutes, our [troops] became so disordered we were under the necessity of retreating to a piece of woods on our right...

We formed and made a second attack, but being overpowered with numbers, and surrounded on all sides, by at least twenty thousand men, we were [pushed back in] much...confusion.

McMillan

My captain was killed, first lieutenant was killed, second lieutenant shot through the hand, two sergeants was killed; one in front of me...my bayonet was shot off my gun.

The Marylanders twice charged the British near the Old Stone House, trying to get through to the American camp on the other side, before scattering.

Gist

The impracticability of forcing through such a formidable body of troops, rendered it the height of rashness and imprudence to risk the lives of our remaining party in a third attempt, and it became necessary for us to endeavor to effect our escape in the best

manner we possibly could. A [portion of us] immediately retreated to the right through the woods, and Captain [Benjamin] Ford [of the 9th Company] and myself, with twenty others, to the left, through a marsh; nine only of whom got safe in.

Many of those who could not escape with Gist were captured.

McMillan

My brother and I and 50 or 60 of us was taken... The Hessians broke the best of our guns over their cannon and robbed us of everything we had, lit their pipes with our money... gave us nothing to eat for five days, and then [only] moldy biscuits... blue, moldy, full of bugs and rotten.

More than 80 percent of William McMillan's company was killed or captured. All told, the Marylanders lost 256 men, captured and killed. The five companies who did not go through the Gowanus Swamp were decimated. The 3rd Company lost 60 percent of its men, the 6th lost 78 percent, the 9th lost 54 percent, and the 7th Independent Company lost 69 percent.

The charge by the Maryland troops against an overwhelming British force allowed the rest of the Continental Army get away. The Battle of Brooklyn was an absolute disaster for the Americans, with failures of logistics, intelligence, and leadership. The Marylanders fought with courage that belied their inexperience, and suffered mightily.

Sources:

Spelling and grammar have been altered in places for readability. Smith's account comes from his autobiography, which he wrote in the third person; it has been converted to first person here for purposes of uniformity.

William McMillan

Letter to "Secretary of Treasury," 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.

Note: It is unclear exactly when or where during the McMillan was captured. It was likely after the Marylanders initial retreat towards the swamp, probably during the stand at the Old Stone House.

William Smallwood

[Letter to Matthew Tilghman, President of the Council of Safety, 12 October 1776](#). Printed in *Journal and Correspondence of the Maryland Council of Safety, July 7-December 31, 1776*. *Archives of Maryland Online*, vol. 12, p. 338-343.

Mordecai Gist

[“Extract of a letter from an officer of the Maryland Battalion: giving a short account of the late engagement on Long-Island,” 30 August 1776](#). *American Archives*, 5th series, vol. 1, p. 1212.

Note: Although the letter was published anonymously, it has long been ascribed to Gist, since it is worded as if written by the commanding officer.

Unknown Soldier of the 5th Company

[“Extract of a letter from New-York: Account of the Battle on Long-Island,” 1 September 1776](#). *American Archives*, 5th series, vol. 1, p. 1232

Note: Attribution of this letter to a member of the 5th Company comes from Mark Andrew Tacyn, “To the End:’ The First Maryland Regiment and the American Revolution” (PhD diss., University of Maryland College Park, 1999), 56, 58-59; fn25.

Samuel Smith

[“The Papers of General Samuel Smith. The General’s Autobiography. From the Original Manuscripts.”](#) *The Historical Magazine*, 2nd ser., vol. 8, no. 2 (1870): 82-92.

Posted in [Maryland 400](#) | Tagged [American history](#), [American Revolution](#), [battle of brooklyn](#), [Battle of Long Island](#), [Brooklyn](#), [Maryland 400](#) | [4 Replies](#)

In Their Own Words: An Oral History of the Battle of Brooklyn

Posted on [August 20, 2014](#)

Next week marks the 238th anniversary of the Battle of Brooklyn. Beginning Friday, we will be provide updates of the battle as it unfolded.

Follow

In preparation for that, over the next two days, we are publishing a compilation of several personal accounts of the battle by members of the First Maryland Regiment. These accounts offer unique insight into the terrible defeat the American suffered, and the heroism of the Marylanders. This is the first part; part two will run tomorrow.

The Battle of Brooklyn (also called the Battle of Long Island) was fought on August 27, 1776. After being forced to withdraw from Boston in May, the British spent the summer preparing to push the Americans out of New York. By August, both side had assembled large armies near the city, preparing for a battle they knew would happen soon. The Continental Army included about 1,000 Marylanders, few of whom had ever been in combat before, and most of them had seen only a handful of small skirmishes.

This is the story of that battle, as told by some of the Marylanders who fought in it.

William McMillan

Sergeant, 4th Company, 23 years old

The British came to New York, and parts of our Regiment lay in Annapolis and parts in Baltimore. Hand bills was sent in every direction for volunteers and our Regiment turned [out] to a man that was fit to march. We had about twelve hundred men in the Regiment and we marched for New York, I believe we arrived there about the First of August 1776...On the evening of the 26 of August we left New York and landed on Long Island.

On the eve of the first full-scale battle of the American Revolution, General George Washington convened a court martial to try Lt. Col. Herman Zedwitz, who had been caught trying to sell American information to the enemy. Washington insisted that a number of high-ranking officers serve as the jury.

William Smallwood

Colonel, 1st Maryland Regiment, 44 years old

Lt. Col. [\[Francis\] Ware](#) and myself were detained on the Trial of Lt. Col. Zedwitz, and tho' I waited on General Washington and urged the Necessity of attending our Troops, yet he refused to discharge us, alleging there was a Necessity for the trial...after our dismissal from the Court Martial it was too late to get over [to the battle].

With Smallwood and Ware hearing the case against Zedwitz, command of the Maryland troops fell to Major Mordecai Gist, a 33 year-old Baltimore merchant who had led revolutionary activities for several years, but like the Marylanders he now led, had never seen combat.

Mordecai Gist

Major, 1st Maryland Regiment, 33 years old

We began our march to the right [side of the battlefield], at three o'clock in the morning, with about thirteen hundred men [from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware], and about sunrise... discovered the enemy.

The Marylanders were positioned at the far right of the American lines, across the Gowanus Road, which ran from the coast where the British had landed to Brooklyn. Facing them was a regiment of Jaegers, part of the contingent of feared Hessian mercenaries fighting for the British.

Unnamed soldier

5th Company

The enemy then advanced towards us, upon which [American General] Lord Stirling... immediately drew us up in a line, and offered them battle in the true English taste. The British army then advanced within about three hundred yards of us, and began a very heavy fire from their cannon and mortars, for both the balls and shells flew very fast, now and then taking off a head.

Our men stood it amazingly well; not even one of them showed a disposition to shrink. Our orders were not to fire until the enemy came within fifty yards of us. When [the British] perceived we stood their fire so coolly and resolutely, they declined coming any nearer, although treble our number. In this situation we stood from sunrise to twelve o'clock, the enemy firing upon us the chief part of the time.

McMillan

We had a pretty severe fight with Jagers and it was a draw battle. There was a good many on each side killed. They retreated and we did not pursue them.

Gist

Our men behaved well, and maintained their ground until...the

enemy retreated about two hundred yards and halted, and the firing on each side ceased.

To the Marylanders, it seemed as if they had demonstrated their discipline and skill in combat: they had faced the enemy, and the enemy had backed down.

Next: [The British afternoon response](#)

Posted in [Maryland 400](#) | Tagged [American Revolution](#), [battle of brooklyn](#), [battle of long islan](#), [Brooklyn](#), [Maryland 400](#) | [1 Reply](#)

A History of Service

Posted on [August 12, 2014](#)

By May of 1776, 28 year old David Congleton enlisted as a private in the Fifth Company of the First Maryland Regiment, where he would serve during the Battle of Brooklyn. Following his initial one year service agreement, Congleton reenlisted for three years under Colonel [John Hopkins Stone](#) and Captain Nathaniel Ewing.[1]

Following his reenlistment, Congleton's exact service history becomes hazy. Records and muster rolls recorded his military activity through the end of 1779, after which point he is listed as having deserted the army on January 13, 1780. This claim was refuted by Congleton, however, in his 1818 pension application. According to his petition for a federal pension, Congleton served under Stone and Ewing from "the spring of 1778 until the peace in 1783." [2]

While it was not unheard of for soldiers to be misreported as deserters on muster rolls, this does not seem to be the case with Congleton. In addition to a lack of service records after Congleton's alleged desertion, his pension application is oddly vague about his service after 1779. While he went into great detail about his service during the first half of the war, Congleton's pension offered next to no information on his service during the second half other than a mere mention of Yorktown.[3]

Based on the information available, it appears that Congleton deserted in early 1780, and falsified his pension application.

Follow

Congleton's pension paperwork is incomplete, however, and it is unclear whether or not he was granted a veteran's pension.

To read more about David Congleton, check out his recently posted biography [here](#).

-Taira

[1] Muster Rolls and Other Records of Service of Maryland Troops in the American Revolution, Archives of Maryland Online, vol. 18, pg 640 (hereafter cited as AOMOL, vol. 18); To read more about the experience of the Fifth Company at the Battle of Brooklyn see "The Fate of the Fifth Company," on the Finding the Maryland 400 blog; David Congleton, Compiled Service Records of Soldiers Who Served in the American Army During the Revolutionary War, NARA M881, 0397, fold3 (hereafter cited as Service Records); Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775-1783, NARA M246, 0033, fold3.

[2] Service Records; AOMOL, vol. 18, p. 92; David Congleton, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, NARA M804, S.34243, fold3 (hereafter cited as Pension Application).

[3] Pension Application

Posted in [Biographies](#), [Maryland 400](#) | [Leave a reply](#)

Demographics in the First Maryland Regiment

Posted on [August 7, 2014](#)



A former member of the Fifth Company who fought at the Battle of Brooklyn, John Burgess was described as a slender, 42-year-old man, with light brown hair, a "swarthy" complexion, and a height of five feet eleven inches, who was born in England, according to his military service record from 1782.

Follow



- Military service record of John Burgess. John Burgess, Compiled Service Records of Soldiers Who Served in the American Army During the Revolutionary War, NARA M881, 0399, fold3.

in America.[2]

At five feet eleven inches, Burgess would have immediately stood out among Veazey's troops. The height disparity is even more notable since Burgess was a foreign-born soldier. When comparing native and foreign-born soldiers in Veazey's company for example, American soldiers had a median height of five feet seven inches while their foreign-born comrades were under five feet six inches. Only one soldier recorded on Veazey's roster, Marylander Solomon Slocome who stood six feet two inches, was taller than Burgess.[3]

Burgess was not however, representative of the typical soldier of the Maryland Line.[1]

One of the best demographic records from the First Maryland Regiment in the early stages of the Revolutionary War comes from a muster roll of Edward Veazey's Seventh Independent Company in 1776. This muster roll indicated the height, age, and country of origin of 54 men, about half of the company. From these descriptions, we are able to ascertain an image of the average soldier in the Maryland Line. A typical soldier was in his early to mid 20s, under five feet eight inches, and born

Name	Height	Age	Country of Origin
John Burgess	5'11"	21	Foreign
John Smith	5'8"	22	Virginia
John Doe	5'7"	23	Virginia
John Brown	5'6"	24	Virginia
John White	5'5"	25	Virginia
John Black	5'4"	26	Virginia
John Green	5'3"	27	Virginia
John Grey	5'2"	28	Virginia
John Gold	5'1"	29	Virginia
John Silver	5'0"	30	Virginia
John Copper	4'11"	31	Virginia
John Iron	4'10"	32	Virginia
John Lead	4'9"	33	Virginia
John Tin	4'8"	34	Virginia
John Zinc	4'7"	35	Virginia
John Nickel	4'6"	36	Virginia
John Cobalt	4'5"	37	Virginia
John Cadmium	4'4"	38	Virginia
John Mercury	4'3"	39	Virginia
John Bismuth	4'2"	40	Virginia
John Antimony	4'1"	41	Virginia
John Arsenic	4'0"	42	Virginia
John Selenium	3'11"	43	Virginia
John Tellurium	3'10"	44	Virginia
John Iodine	3'9"	45	Virginia
John Bromine	3'8"	46	Virginia
John Chlorine	3'7"	47	Virginia
John Fluorine	3'6"	48	Virginia
John Oxygen	3'5"	49	Virginia
John Nitrogen	3'4"	50	Virginia
John Phosphorus	3'3"	51	Virginia
John Sulfur	3'2"	52	Virginia
John Silicon	3'1"	53	Virginia
John Magnesium	3'0"	54	Virginia

- The 7th Independent Company's descriptive roster. MARYLAND STATE PAPERS (Revolutionary Papers) Descriptions of men in Capt. F. Veazey's Independent Comp. MdHR 19970-15-29/01 [MSA S997-15, 01/07/03/013]

When he initially enlisted in 1776, Burgess was about 36 years old, almost twelve years older than the average soldier in Veazey's company. While Burgess was older than Veazey's average soldier, this was typical of foreign-born soldiers. In 1776, the foreign-born soldiers in the Seventh Independent Company were an average of 26 years old and the American-born soldiers 24.[4]

By the end of the war, the disparity between the ages of native and foreign-born troops had grown, with a median age of 21 and 29 years old respectively. All of the soldiers in Veazey's company under the age of 22 for example, were American-born. Foreign-born soldiers may have been older on average than their native-born counterparts due to the necessity of completing indentures prior to enlistment, or immigration to America as an older adult.[5]

Also indicated in Burgess's military service records was his place of residence at the time of his enlistment. Burgess, like many other immigrants who enlisted in the First Maryland Regiment, was a resident of Baltimore. By this time there was little available farm land in Maryland, and what was available sold for a premium, which made land ownership extremely difficult for immigrant families. Baltimore however, was a booming urban center with a job market open to immigrants, which may have drawn men like Burgess into the city.[6]

To read more about John Burgess, check out his recently posted biography [here](#).

-Taira

[1] John Burgess, Compiled Service Records of Soldiers Who Served in the American Army During the Revolutionary War, NARA M881, 0399, fold3 (hereafter cited as Service Records).

[2] MARYLAND STATE PAPERS (Revolutionary Papers) Descriptions of men in Captain Eward Veazey's Independent Company, MdHR 19970-15-29/01 [MSA S997-15, 01/07/03/013] (hereafter cited as Veazey's Independent Company).

[3] Veazey's Independent Company.

[4] Veazey's Independent Company.

[5] Edward C. Papenfuse and Gregory A. Stiverson, "General

Smallwood's Recruits: The Peacetime Career of the Revolutionary War Private," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (1973): 120; Veazey's Independent Company.

[6] Service Records.

Posted in [Biographies, Maryland 400](#) | [Leave a reply](#)

So We Meet Again

Posted on [July 31, 2014](#)

During the Battle of Brooklyn, the First Maryland Regiment lost approximately one third of their total troop strength.[1] Casualties were substantially higher in the Third, Fourth, Sixth, Seventh Independent, and Ninth Companies who were forced to make a last stand at Old Stone House. Some of these companies lost over eighty percent of their men.[2]



- List of prisoners, including William Basford, from the First Maryland Regiment. MARYLAND STATE PAPERS (Revolutionary Papers) Account of cash paid to soldiers. Late 1776-Early 1777, MdHR 19970-06-25/01 [MSA S997-6-59 01/07/03/011].

Though the First Maryland sustained catastrophic losses as a result of their bravery, their motivation did not flag and many survivors of the Battle of Brooklyn went on to reenlist at the end of 1776 and beginning of 1777, even men like William Basford who was take prisoner. Throughout the war and after, veterans of the Maryland 400 continued to cross paths in military service and private life. This trend is exemplified through

Follow

Basford's life.

Following his service in the Fifth Company at the Battle of Brooklyn, Basford reenlisted in the newly reformed First Maryland Regiment on December 10, 1776, where he would serve for the next three years.[3] During this time, Basford served under Colonel [John Hopkins Stone](#) and Captain Nathaniel Ewing, both of whom were fellow veterans of the Battle of Brooklyn.[4] Stone had been a captain in the First Company, which like Basford's Fifth Company, escaped through the swampy Gowanus Creek. Ewing was a first lieutenant in the Sixth Company, which was forced to make a stand at Old Stone House, and took heavy casualties.[5] He was one of fewer than two dozen soldiers who returned from the battle out of a company of 74 men.

After the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, Basford returned to his family in Anne Arundel County. At the time of his death in 1785, the Register of Wills for Anne Arundel County who handled Basford's estate records was another veteran of the Maryland 400, [John Gassaway](#). [6] John Gassaway and Basford had fought alongside each other in the Fifth Company at the Battle of Brooklyn, and successfully beat back a British ambush which enabled them to retreat across the Gowanus Creek.

The heavy losses sustained by the First Maryland Regiment at the Battle of Brooklyn did not temper the resolve of the many men who reenlisted, illustrating their deep commitment to the American cause. This core contingency of Maryland 400 veterans often crossed paths during their military service, and continued to do so as civilians after the war.

To read more about the life and service of William Basford, check out his recently posted biography [here](#).

-Taira

[1] Mark Andrew Tacyn "' To the End:' The First Maryland Regiment and the American Revolution" (PhD diss., University of Maryland College Park, 1999), abstract.

[2] To read more about the troop strength totals following the Battle of Brooklyn, see "Company Strength" on the First Maryland Roster.

[3] William Basford, Compiled Service Records of Soldiers Who

Served in the American Army During the Revolutionary War, NARA M881, 0397, fold3 (hereafter cited as Service Records).

[4] Service Records

[5] To read more about the experience of the Fifth Company at the Battle of Brooklyn see "The Fate of the Fifth Company," on the Finding the Maryland 400 blog.

[6] ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY REGISTER OF WILLS (Administration Bonds) Bond of William Basford, 1785, MdHR 4848-1 [MSA C31-2, 01/03/14/017]; ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY REGISTER OF WILLS (Wills, Original) Will of John Basford, 1818, box B, folder 12, MdHR 4869-2-1 [MSA C155-2, 01/04/13/007]; ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY REGISTER OF WILLS (Wills, Original) Will of Thomas Basford, 1782, box B, folder 13, MdHR 4869-2-1 [MSA C155-2, 01/04/13/007].

Posted in [Biographies](#), [Maryland 400](#)

Brothers in Arms

Posted on [July 28, 2014](#)

During the Revolutionary War, it was not uncommon for multiple men of the same immediate family to enlist. Some brothers, like [Samuel](#) and [William McMillan](#), enlisted in the same company, while other sets of siblings dispersed and entered separate companies or regiments. The latter was the case with Robert, William, and John Bruce of Charles County.

All three brothers entered the army in the early stages of the Revolutionary War. Robert enlisted in one of the rifle companies formed in Maryland and Virginia in July of 1775, while William and John both joined the First Maryland Regiment in early 1776, John as a corporal in the Fifth Company, and William as a sergeant in the Ninth Company.[1]

During his enlistment with the Maryland Rifle Regiment, Robert participated in the Siege that drove the British from Boston in March of 1776.[2] At the end of his enlistment, Robert reenlisted as a private in the Fourth Continental Light Dragoons for the duration of

Follow

the war. During this time, Robert served alongside [David Plunket](#), a former member of the Fifth Company who fought with his brother John at the Battle of Brooklyn.

While in the Dragoons, Robert was taken prisoner by the British and held for fifteen months before being exchanged in 1779. Although he had enlisted for the war, Robert was discharged shortly after his release. Since Robert was a private during his captivity, and therefore more likely to be mistreated or neglected, it is possible that he was discharged due to deteriorated physical condition or illness. In 1818, Robert applied and received a federal pension on account of his Revolutionary War service.^[3]

As part of the First Maryland Regiment, both William and John saw action at the Battle of Brooklyn, earning each a place of distinction among the Maryland 400. At the battle, about half of William's Ninth Company was killed or captured, after they skirted the Gowanus Creek and were forced to make a stand at the Old Stone House.^[4] William reenlisted in December of 1776, and received a commission as second lieutenant in the First Regiment. By the end of the war, he had risen to the rank of captain. William applied and received federal pensions as a result of his service during the war. In addition, William received 200 acres of bounty land in Western Maryland in return for enlisting for the duration of the war.^[5]

Unlike his brothers, John Bruce left the army at the end of his one-year enlistment at the end of 1776 or beginning of 1777. Following his service in the army, John served for a period of time on the Maryland naval galley *Independence*, defending Baltimore against potential British naval attacks, which never materialized, before retiring to his home in Charles County.^[6]

John is the most recent addition to the biographies on the Finding the Maryland 400 website. To read more about the life of John Bruce, check out his biography [here](#).

-Taira

^[1]Veterans Pension of Robert Bruce, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, NARA M804, S. 34666, fold3 (hereafter cited as Pension of Robert Bruce); Veterans Pension of William Bruce, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, NARA M804, S. 34668, fold3 (hereafter cited as Pension of William Bruce); Muster Rolls

and Other Records of Service of Maryland Troops in the American Revolution, *Archives of Maryland Online*, vol. 18, p. 639 (hereafter cited as Volume 18).

[2] Tucker F. Hentz, "Unit History of the Maryland and Virginia Rifle Regiment (1776-1781): Insights from the Service Record of Capt. Adamson Tannehill, 2007, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, E259. H52 2007, p. 2.

[3] Pension of Robert Bruce; Service Records of Robert Bruce, Compiled Service Records of Soldiers Who Served in the American Army During the Revolutionary War, NARA M881, 0046, fold3.

[4] To read more about the experience of the Fifth Company at the Battle of Brooklyn see "The Fate of the Fifth Company," on the [Finding the Maryland 400 blog](#).

[5] Pension of William Bruce; COMMISSIONERS FOR RESERVE LAND WESTWARD OF FORT CUMBERLAND (Bounty Land Soldiers) 1789, MdHR 17,301-1 [MSA S162-1, 01/27/01/031]; LAND OFFICE (Lots Westward of Fort Cumberland) 1793-1903, p. 235, MdHR 17,302 [MSA SE1-1]; LAND OFFICE (Military Lot Plats) 1787-1935, Map of Military Lots, Tracts, and Escheats, MdHR 50,823 [MSA S451-1, OR/04/18/000].

[6] Volume 18; MARYLAND STATE PAPERS (Red Books) A List of Men Belonging to the Independence, MdHR 4570 [MSA S989-14, 01/06/04/002]; Ernest McNeill Eller, *Chesapeake Bay in the American Revolution* (Centerville: Tidewater Publishers, 1981), 224-234, 247; Widows Pension of Martha Logue, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, NARA M804, W.1441, fold3.

Posted in [Biographies](#)

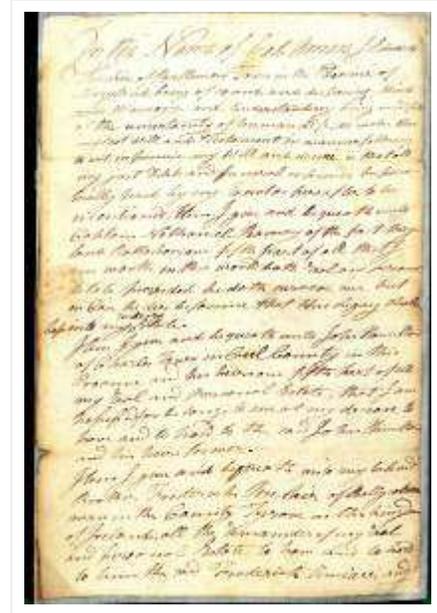
The Last Will and Testament of Edward Sinclair

Posted on [July 18, 2014](#)

Follow

As a sergeant in the Fifth Company during the Battle of Brooklyn, Edward Sinclair was among those men who heroically covered the retreat of the Continental Army, thus saving the American forces from destruction.[1]

Little is known about the life or service of Sinclair following his participation at the Battle of Brooklyn, but he did leave behind a will which provides some insight. In early October of 1776, Sinclair was moved to write his will in light of “the uncertainty of human life.”[2] The timing of his will was significant, coming after the disaster in Brooklyn, and the ever looming presence of the British Army.



— Edward Sinclair’s will. Click to view the entire image.

Sinclair’s ominous outlook however, did not prevent him from reenlisting in late 1776 or early 1777. It is likely that Sinclair died while serving at the Continental Army’s Middlebrook encampment in New Jersey in early January of 1779.

To read more about Edward Sinclair, check out his biography [here](#).

-Taira

[1] To read more about the experience of the Fifth Company at the Battle of Brooklyn see “The Fate of the Fifth Company,” on the Finding the Maryland 400 blog.

[2] BALTIMORE COUNTY REGISTER OF WILLS (Wills, Original) 1778-1780, MdHR 8892-16-1 [MSA C437-19, 2/33/08/015].

Posted in [Biographies](#)

Francis Reveley: Insults and Injury

Posted on [July 15, 2014](#)

Francis Reveley, the subject of our most recent biography, served the entirety of the Revolutionary war, beginning in 1776, when he enlisted as a sergeant in [Nathaniel Ramsey's](#) Fifth Company. It was there that Reveley saw action at the Battle of Brooklyn, earning him a place of honor among the Maryland 400. In February of 1777, Reveley received a commission and reenlisted as a second lieutenant. By the conclusion of the war, Reveley had risen to the rank of captain.

While Reveley's war time service is well documented, there is very little information on Reveley following the war aside from a few anecdotes. One in particular is quite riveting. On Saturday June 9, 1787, Reveley became engaged in a confrontation with a man named William Thomson in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Although we do not know the specifics of the dispute, Reveley believed himself "injured by some publications and assertions of Mr. Thomson," and met Thomson at a town store to confront him.

The altercation turned violent when Reveley took a horse whip to Thomson. Thomson threatened Reveley with a pistol and "lodged the contents of the pistol in[to] his[Reveley's] breast." Reveley was initially believed to have been mortally wounded, but later reporting indicated that he was "in a hopeful way of recovery."^[1] Thomson was immediately arrested. Subsequent to his release, Thomson was involved in another duel later that fall in which he "had his arm taken off."^[2]

To read more about Francis Reveley, check out his biography [here](#).

-Taira

^[1] "Fredericksburg, June 13," *Maryland Chronicle*, July 4, 1787.

^[2] "Fredericksburg, Sept.13," *Pennsylvania Packet*, September 24, 1787.

Posted in [Maryland 400](#)

Follow

John Brady: Sergeant Turned Fifer

Posted on [July 10, 2014](#)

On this day in 1776, the First Maryland Regiment began its trip to New York. Among the men leaving from Baltimore was John Brady, the subject of our most recent biography.

Like many noncommissioned officers, there is little known about John Brady other than what is found in his military service records. Brady served through the entire Revolutionary War. Brady began his service as a sergeant in [Nathaniel Ramsey's](#) Fifth Company where he saw action at the Battle of Brooklyn.[1] During his time of service, Brady moved back and forth between the ranks, spending much of his time as a fifer.[2] By the conclusion of the war, he had resumed the position of sergeant.

Following the war, Brady was awarded fifty acres of bounty land in Western Maryland near the border of modern day West Virginia, which he never claimed.[3] While there were several John Bradys in the Baltimore and surrounding areas, there is not enough evidence to provide a clear indication as to which man was the John Brady who earned a place among the heroic Maryland 400 at the Battle of Brooklyn.[4]

To read more about the military service of John Brady, check out his biography [here](#).

-Taira

[1] Muster Rolls and Other Records of Service of Maryland Troops in the American Revolution, *Archives of Maryland Online*, vol. 18, p. 369 (hereafter cited as AOMOL vol. 18)

[2] John Brady, Compiled Service Records of Soldiers Who Served in the American Army During the Revolutionary War, NARA M881, 0399, fold3.

[3] LAND OFFICE (Military Lot Plats) 1787-1935, Map of Military

Lots, Tracts, and Escheats, MdHR 50,823 [MSA S451-1, OR/04/18 /000]; COMMISSIONERS FOR RESERVE LAND WESTWARD OF FORT CUMBERLAND (Bounty Land Soldiers) 1789, MdHR 17,301-1 [MSA S162-1, 01/27/01/031]; LAND OFFICE (Lots Westward of Fort Cumberland) 1793-1903, p. 140, MdHR 17,302 [MSA SE1-1].

[4] There was a John Brady of Baltimore serving in the artillery during the Revolutionary War who died in 1784. This is not the same John Brady whose biography is written above. BALTIMORE COUNTY REGISTER OF WILLS (Wills) Will of John Brady, 1784, Box 19, Folder 10, MdHR 8892-19-10 [MSA C437-23, 2/33/8/17]; AOMOL vol. 18, p. 564, 567, 569, 574, 579, 582, and 583; John Brady Matross Second/Third Maryland Artillery, Compiled Service Records of Soldiers Who Served in the American Army During the Revolutionary War, NARA M881, 0408, fold3; John Mullin, Cornelius William Stafford, and William Fry, *The Baltimore City Directory for 1799* (Baltimore: Warner & Hanna, 1799), 9.

Posted in [Biographies, Maryland 400](#)

[Older posts](#)

