

David Merrill
Soldier of the Revolution

Widow's Pension
of
Polly/Molly Merrill

Based on documents collected and analyzed
by Sandra Clunies



5794
Polly Merrill
Y^h.
Act 7. July 38
Roly. Cilly -
enlist? 1 March 77 for
3 years - deserted 19 Nov.
78 - joined 20 Apr 79 &
discharged 9 Aug '80
15:2000-
M 82 231.
adoid
15-20. pri
#5222

Who Was David Merrill?

- Private from Derryfield (now Manchester), New Hampshire
- Served in the 1st New Hampshire, in Col. Joseph Cilley's Regiment, a member of Capt. Morrill's Company
 - Enlisted for three years 1 Mar 1877
 - Deserted 19 Nov 1778 and returned 20 Apr 1779
 - Discharged 9 Aug 1780

- In 1800, David Merrill, his wife Polly/Molly, & their 12 children moved to Lower Canada (just 15 miles north of the Vermont line).
- Because he lived in Canada, David was not eligible for a pension during his life. He died 13 Dec 1831.
- The June 1832 General Pension Act allowed pensions for “every surviving officer and soldier” meeting the service requirements, and their widows, with no U.S. residency requirement.

***DAVID'S STORY IS KNOWN THROUGH
HIS WIDOW'S PENSION APPLICATION***

Widow's Pension File - W25,695

- Affidavits confirm David Merrill went AWOL the “second winter” (Nov 1778–Apr 1779), after brutal Valley Forge winter of Dec 1777–1778
 - Many young soldiers deserted that season
 - Implies he was with Washington's Army during the Dec 1777-1778 Winter
- Gen. Washington issued a proclamation granting a pardon to all deserters who timely returned in the Spring and completed their full 3-year commitment in the Continental Army, plus all time they were away
- David Merrill returned, received an honorable discharge in Aug 1780
~ 5 months after he would have been discharged for his 3 years service

I John Jenner of Newport in the County of Orleans and State of Vermont aged seventy nine years and a Revolutionary Pensioner of the United States depose testify and say that I served in the three years service in the War in a company commanded by Capt. Merrill in Col. Gilley's Regiment - that I was well acquainted with David Merrill of Derryfield (now Manchester) who served in said three years service in the same company that I well remember that during said service said Merrill and many others during the second winter of said service went home without permission - and I well recollect that Gen. Washington issued a pardon to all those who had deserted that if ^{they} would return to the Army and then duty within a certain time that they all who had so deserted should be pardoned - I further say that said David Merrill did so return within the time limited by said Pardon (or Proclamation) and served out his enlistment - and I further state that I was with others discharged of the same Regiment who had not left during our three year enlistment discharged by Col. Gilley when our ^{term} ^{expired} but I know that said Merrill was not so discharged but was detained by Col. Gilley and compelled to continue his service until he had made up the time of his absence while at home which was according to my best recollection about six weeks or two months - upon hearing this deposition near the said John Jenner

Affidavit re Capt David Merrill

I John Jenner of Newport in the County of Orange and State of Vermont aged seventy nine years and a Revolutionary pensioner of the United States depose testify and say that I served in the three years service in the war in a company commanded by Capt. Merrill in Col. Gilley's Regiment - that I was well acquainted with David Merrill of Derryfield (now Manchester) who served in said three years service in the same company **that I well remember that during said service said Merrill and many others during the second winter of said service went home without permission - and I will recall that Gen. Washington issued a pardon to all those who had deserted that if they would return to the Army and then duty within a certain time that they all who had so deserted should be pardoned - I further say that said David Merrill did return within the time limited by said Pardon (or Proclamation) and served out his enlistment** - and I further state that I was with others of the same Regiment who had not left during our three year enlistment discharged by Col. Gilley when our times ? out but I know that **said Merrill was not so discharged but was detained by Col. Gilley and compelled to continue his service until he had made up the time of his absence while at home** which was according to my best recollection about six weeks or two months - upon hearing this deposition made by the said John Jenner

Concord N.H. October 16th 1839
Hon. James L Edwards

Sir - your letter of the 9th ult was duly received in relation of Polly Morrill for a pension - In your letter you say "that her late husband died in 1831 and yet did not apply under the Act of 1818 - The New Hampshire rolls show that a David Morrill did enlist in that service for 3 years deserted rejoined and was discharged - If it can be shown that this soldier was her late husband she will be entitled for the time he served after rejoining his Regt."

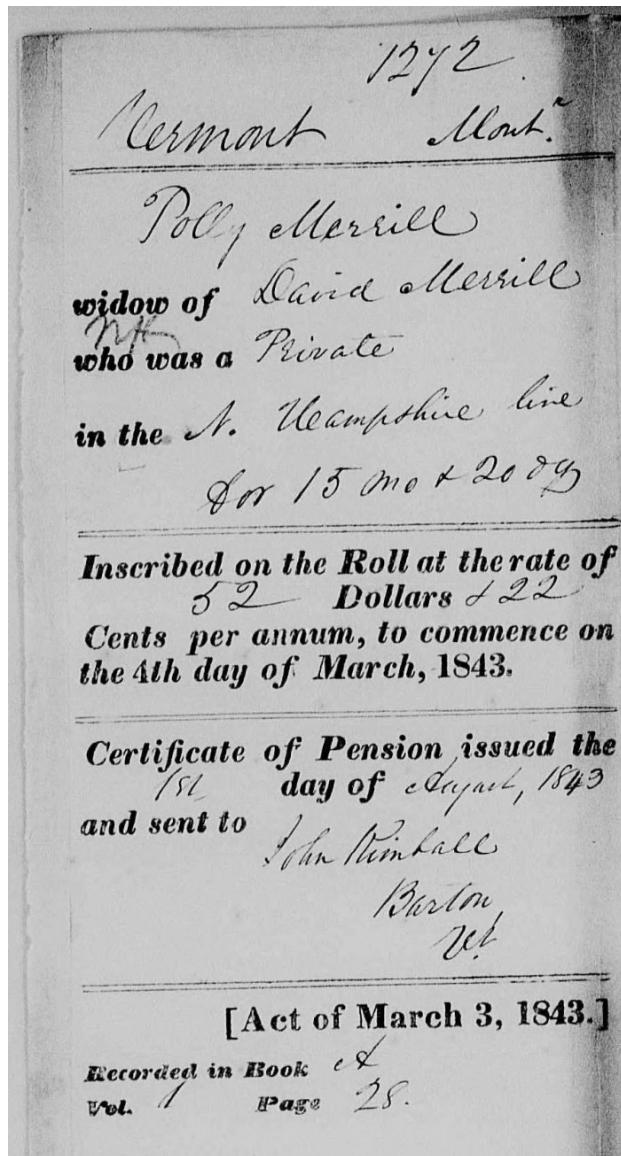
I could not but be surprised that you should give as one of the reasons for denying the widow her pension - that ^{husband} he did not apply under the act of 1818 when no soldier living in Canada was entitled under that law - you also say if it can be shown that this soldier was her late husband she will be entitled for the time he served after rejoining his Regiment - I do not presume to ~~to~~ instruct you but I have ever supposed and still believe that if a soldier deserts and then rejoins his Regiment the offence is pardoned and canceled and that no objection would be made on account of such desertion - I hope the deposition of Ephraim Stevens which is enclosed will be sufficient -

You will please direct to John Kimball Barton
Orlean County Vermont

Respectfully Yours John Kimball

John Kimball's Letter re Polly Merrill's Pension

Concord N.H. October 16th 1839 Hon. James L Edwards Sir you letter of the 9th ult was duly received in relation of Polly Morrell for a pension- In your letter you say that her late husband died in 1831 and yet did not apply under the Act of 1818 - The New Hampshire rolls show that a David Merrill did enlist in that service for 3 years deserted rejoined and was discharged- If it can be shown that this soldier was her late husband she will be entitled for the time he served after rejoining his Regt **I could not but be surprised that you should give as one of the reasons for denying the widow her pension - that he did not apply under the act of 1818 when no soldier living in Canada was entitled under that - have you also say if it can be shown that this soldier was her late husband she will be entitled for the time he served after rejoining his Regiment - I do not presume to instruct you but I have ever supposed and still believe that if a soldier deserts and then rejoin his Regiment the offence is pardoned and canceled and that no objection would be made on account of such desertion - I hope the deposition of Ephraim Stevens which is enclosed will be sufficient**
You will please direct to John Kimball Barton - --- Orlean County Vermont Respectfully yours John Kimball



Widow's Pension Granted

- After much back and forth, the US Pension Bureau approved Molly/Polly's widow's pension, starting Mar 1843, over 12 years after David died
- Despite Kimball's letter, the amount was based only on the second half of his service, after the pardon (15 months, 20 days)
- She could not be paid directly in Canada so her son Isaiah rode down to Derby, Vermont to collect the pension on her behalf

<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/196245288>

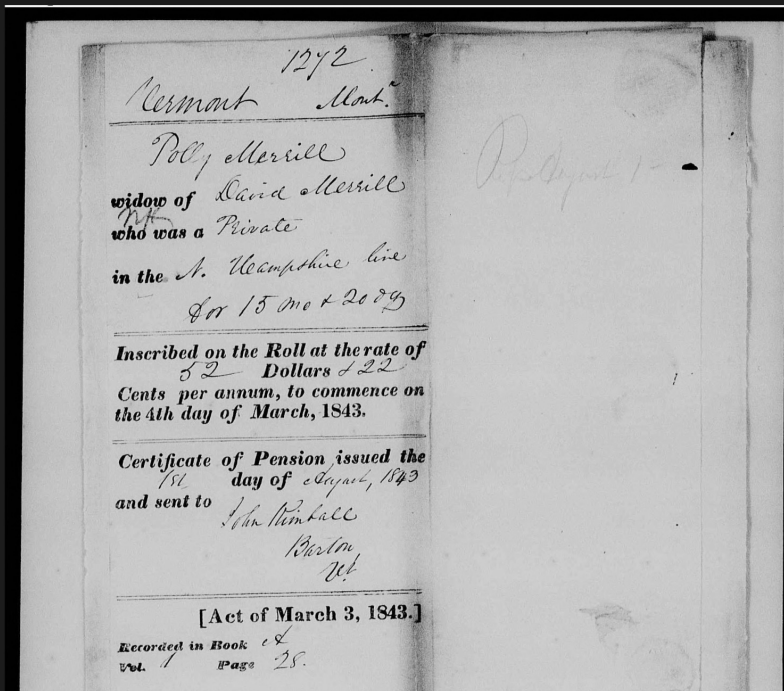
Record Group 15: Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs >> Series: Case Files of Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Applications Based on Revolutionary War Service

File Unit

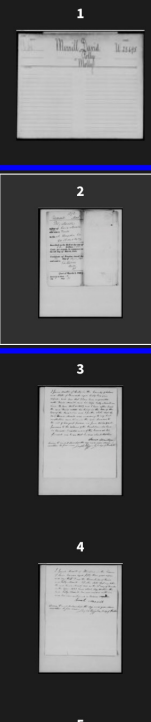
Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application File W. 25,695, for David Merrill, New Hampshire

NAID: 196245288 | Textual Records | 35 Images | 3 / 35 have Transcriptions

Transcription Available | Tags 0 | Comments 0 | Extracted Text 1



+ Show Details

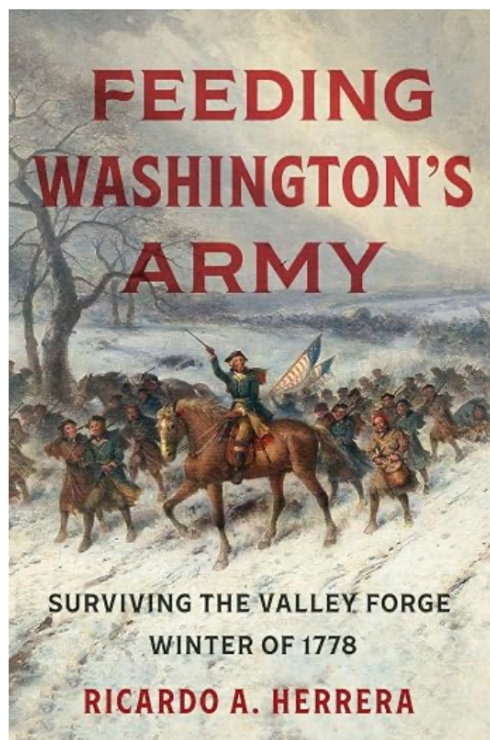


Quality of the digital scans of Pension files made by Fold3 where significantly clearer than copies made from microfilm at the NARA

Familysearch AI transcriptions are also available (not the greatest quality)

Beta transcriptions from Ancestry.com of Gallery images are better for my Patriot Private John Kelty

Sandy's Recommended Reading on Valley Forge



[Read sample](#)

[Audible sample](#)

Feeding Washington's Army: Surviving the Valley Forge Winter of 1778

by [Ricardo A. Herrera](#) (Author) | Format: Hardcover

4.5 ★★★★★ (43)

4.0 on Goodreads 69 ratings

[See all formats and editions](#)



In this major new history of the Continental Army's Grand Forage of 1778, award-winning military historian Ricardo A. Herrera uncovers what daily life was like for soldiers during the darkest and coldest days of the American Revolution: the Valley Forge winter. Here, the army launched its largest and riskiest operation—not a bloody battle against British forces but a campaign to feed itself and prevent starvation or dispersal during the long encampment. Herrera brings to light the army's herculean efforts to feed itself, support local and Continental governments, and challenge the British Army.

Highlighting the missteps and triumphs of both General George Washington and his officers as well as ordinary soldiers, sailors, and militiamen, *Feeding Washington's Army* moves far beyond oft-told, heroic, and mythical tales of Valley Forge and digs deeply into its daily reality, revealing how close the Continental Army came to succumbing to starvation and how strong and resourceful its soldiers and leaders actually were.

<https://allthingsliberty.com/2022/07/feeding-washingtons-army-surviving-the-valley-forge-winter-of-1778/>

VALLEY FORGE



Muster Roll

A LEGACY PROJECT OF THE VALLEY FORGE PARK ALLIANCE

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The Muster Roll Project

The *Valley Forge Muster Roll*, a project of the [Valley Forge Park Alliance](#), is dedicated to those who were at winter quarters from December 19, 1777, to June 19, 1778. The Continental Army used monthly muster rolls to track the army's strength. Each roll contains names, ranks, dates of enlistment, and other notes on soldiers' assignments, activities, or conditions.

New entries are welcomed based on providing the following kinds of primary documentation. You may also contact us to provide additional information about individuals that are currently listed on the Valley Forge Muster Roll.



Detail from General George Washington during the Philadelphia Campaign 1777 by Don Troiani.

David Merrill is honored in the Valley Forge Muster Roll Project

<https://valleyforgemusterroll.org/>



Additional Information ~ Personalized Products Available for Purchase

Additional Information

Last Name: **Merrill**
Last Name Alternate:
Last Name Alternate Alternate:

Suffix:
Rank: **Private**
State: **New Hampshire**
Regiment: **1st New Hampshire**

Regiment: **1st New Hampshire**
Brigade: **New Hampshire**
Division: **1st**
Company:
LifeGuard: **No**
Discharge Date:
Date of Birth:
Spouse First Name:
Comments for DEC 1777:
Comments for FEB 1778:
Comments for APR 1778:
Comments for JUN 1778:

Remarks: **From Derryfield, New Hampshire, Merrill stood at an even 6-0. He had light complexion, dark hair and gray eyes.**

Last Name: **Merrill**
Last Name Alternate:
Last Name Alternate Alternate:

Suffix:
Rank: **Private**
State: **New Hampshire**
Regiment: **1st New Hampshire**

Regiment: **1st New Hampshire**
Brigade: **New Hampshire**
Division: **1st**
Company:
LifeGuard: **No**
Discharge Date:
Date of Birth:
Spouse First Name:
Comments for DEC 1777:
Comments for FEB 1778:
Comments for APR 1778:
Comments for JUN 1778:

Remarks: **From Derryfield, New Hampshire, Merrill stood at an even 6-0. He had light complexion, dark hair and gray eyes.**

First Name: **David**
First Name Alternate:
ID: **NH33466**

Gender:
Rank Type: **Rank and File**
Ethnicity:
Regiment Commander: **Col Joseph Cilley**

Regiment Commander: **Col Joseph Cilley**
Brigade Commander: **BG Enoch Poor**
Division Commander: **MG Charles Lee**
Company Commander:
Enlistment Date:
Reason:
Date of Death:
Spouse Last Name:
Comments for JAN 1778: **Sick**
Comments for MAR 1778:
Comments for MAY 1778:
Reference:

THE MUSTER ROLL PROJECT

Overview

The Encampment

Continental Army

Divisions

Brigades

Regiments

SEARCH THE
Muster Roll

products

Valley Forge Images

Join the Honorary
Muster Roll

History OF THE

THE MUSTER ROLL

SEARCH: Last Name: State: Regiment:

ID	Last Name	First Name	Rank	State	Regiment
NH20266	Merrill	Barnard	Private	New Hampshire	1st New Hampshire
NH20824	Merrill	James	Private	New Hampshire	1st New Hampshire
NH20621	Merrill	John	Private	New Hampshire	1st New Hampshire
NH05443	Merrill	Nahtaniel	Private	New Hampshire	3rd New Hampshire
NH20235	Merrill	Simon	2nd Lieutenant	New Hampshire	1st New Hampshire
NH33467	Merrill	David	Private	New Hampshire	1st New Hampshire

Private David Merrill

Rank and File

State: New Hampshire

Ethnicity:

ID: [NH33467](#)

Division: 1st

Regiment: [1st New Hampshire](#)

Brigade: [Poor's](#)

Company:

DEC 1777
JAN 1778
FEB 1778
MAR 1778
APR 1778
MAY 1778
JUN 1778

Sick

Personalized Products
Available for Purchase

NOTES: From Derryfield, New Hampshire, Merrill stood at an even 6-0. He had light complexion, dark hair and gray eyes.

Support the Muster Roll Project: This project, a fully volunteer operation, needs your support so that all of the soldiers that encamped at Valley Forge will be remembered well into our shared future. We welcome your support to maintain the Muster Roll as a free service so that everyone can discover or add to the legacy of the brave Americans at Valley Forge.

Yours in Service to our Shared Heritage,
The Valley Forge Park Alliance

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