

WILLIAM DENNEY

IN THE WAR OF 1812

William Denney was born about 1793 in the Nash District of Person County, North Carolina. He was one of the eldest sons of Claiborne Denney and was the only one of Claiborne's sons who remained in Smith County after the elder Denney removed to Madison County, Tennessee. He is the elder brother of the Stanford Denney who moved on to Madison County Arkansas and died there in 1858.

William served three terms in the army during the Creek War and the War of 1812. The first enlistment was in the Company of James Walton early during the war and he was present at the "troop revolt" at Camp Strother in 1813 when Jackson's volunteers threatened to leave him alone in the wilderness when he refused to allow them to return home at the end of their enlistments. His second term was in the company of Captain William Hodges. He was a corporal at this time and was apparently present at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. His brother Jonathan Denney also served in this company.

William's last term of enlistment was in the Company of Bethel Allen and he was a member of John Coffee's Brigade. Often forgotten in the discussion of the Battle of New Orleans, General Jackson was not content to wait on the British to attack his rather weak fortifications near the City. He sent out many companies to fell trees and sink small boats in an attempt to clog passages and slow the progress of the British advance.

The British landed at Villere's plantation on December 22. Upon notification in mid-day of the 23rd, Jackson determined to strike first. That night, Jackson sent almost 2000 men under the command of General Coffee as well as Patterson's gunboats to surprise the British advance forces and attempt to plug or capture a number of cannon. The attack came as a complete surprise to the British, although they remained composed and held their ground. The Americans were forced to fall back after a few hours. American casualties in the battle were 24 killed, 115 wounded, and 74 missing or captured. The British had 46

killed, 167 wounded, and 64 missing. It was a draw but Jackson was able to draw first blood. Allen's company was in the thick of this fight. Josiah Baird (another Smith Countian) was a sergeant in the command and was captured. Baird escaped during the hasty retreat of the British after the main battle on January the eighth.

William Denney was not so lucky. During the night battle was hit by both a cannonball and a musket ball---somehow he survived and did not loose a limb, which seems hard to believe in those days when most army surgeons amputated first and asked questions later. The description of the cannonball wound, which I have included below seems very bad and with the poor medical procedures of the day-plus the fact that the climate around New Orleans even in winter is not particularly healthful-would usually have favored the onset of gangrene even if the doctor had decided on amputation. Denney was apparently disabled to a degree by the wound and would receive a disability pension after the war.

He used the money well, accumulating a large estate with huge acreage and a number of slaves in the Rome-Hiwassee area of Smith County. The farm is now largely in Trousdale County which was form in 1870. William Denney died in 1852. He is mentioned in the Census records of 1830 as a military pensioner. I believe this is why so many people (including Worth S. Ray in Tennessee Cousins) have thought that there was a William Denney in Smith County who was a Revolutionary War soldier.

State of Tennessee, Smith County:

On this day personally before me Nelson Thornton one of the acting Justices of the Peace in and for said county and made oath in due form of law that he was placed on the roll of Invalid Pensioners of the Untied States at the rate of six dollars per month and after remaining at that rate of Pension he was reduced to four dollars per month from some cause of which he never could ascertain. This affiant was examined and was told that his Pension would be increased to what it was at first—Six dollars but never received it. This affiant is now getting in years being about forty five years of age and feels and knows that his disability increases faster as age advances. This affiant having already described the nature of his wounds and where they were

received before the two Surgeons whose certificate is hereto annexed deems it unnecessary here to repeat the same but makes their certificate in every particular as regards the wounds, part and parcel of this his affidavit and ____dapts it as his own.

me

Sworn to and subscribed before

on this 27th day of February 1839
William (his X mark) Dennie

W. Thornton

Justice of the Pease [sic]

State of Tennessee, Smith County:

It is hereby certified that William Dennie formerly a private in Captain Bethel Allen's company of volunteers mounted Gunnmen in the Brigade of Tennessee Militia Commanded by General Coffee in Service of the United States who it appears by the accompanying certificate was placed on the Pension roll at the rate of six dollars per month on account as he states of having received two wounds one in the left thigh from a musket ball passing from the inside of the right thigh and passing near the bone so as not materially to injure the bone of the femoral artery.

The other wound was by a cannon ball which lacerated his left thigh so as to leave an escar of four by six inches materially injuring the tendons and muscles of that thigh both thighs being thus wounded and although one of them does not appear to be materially injured yet as age increases the disability of course increases also. The wound by the cannon ball is considered a serious one from its passing by the left side tearing the muscles and tendons behind the thigh bone and probably left the bone naked when first done. This also increases the disability of the applicant as age increases. These wounds as he states were received while in the line of his duty and in said service on or about the 23rd of December 1814 at the battle below New Orleans with the British forces and that he is not only still disabled in consequence of said wounds and injury but in our opinion is entitles to two dollars per month more than he now receives which will increase his pension from four to six dollar per month. This seems to be the rate of Pension he was first paid but seems to have been reduced to four dollars from some causes not known to these affiants.

Their opinion however is that the disabilities at first might have been

greater and by arriving at the meridian of life might be lessened or not so seriously felt and it is possible the reduction took place at that time with propriety. But now as the invalid has arrived at the age of forty five years or thereabouts The disability has increased and will still continue to increase as old age increases in a greater degree perhaps than they were at first. They are fully of opinion therefore that he should be restored to six dollars per month being disabled to a degree amounting to three fourths of total disability.

**Don C. Dixon
Wm. Robinson**

**Sworn to and subscribed before me this 2nd April 1839
Isaac Bradley JP
Justice of the Peace**

Carthage April 2, 1839

Sir,

I am well acquainted with Don C. Dixon and William Robinson who have signed the foregoing certificate they are each physicians of respectability and excellent standing in their profession, and worthy honorable men. Very Respectfully

WB Campbell

**Col I.S. Edwards
Commsr. of pensions**

From the above statement of Hon. W.B. Campbell I fully believe that Don C. Dixon and William Robinson are surgeons & physicians respectable in their profession.

**Nashville, Ten
June 11, 1839**

**Jno M. Bass
Pension agent**

State of Tennessee, Smith County

**I John I Burnett, Clerk of the County
Court of Said Smith County hereby certify that Isaac Bradley and Nelson Thornton are acting Justices of the Peace as above and here at the time of their attestation to the forgoing certificate of Doctors Dixon**

and Robinson also the affidavit of William Dennie and that the signatures purporting to be theirs are genuine.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal of office at Carthage this 3rd day of April 1839

John J. Burnett Clerk
Of Smith County Court

Nashville 29th Sept 1819

[to] The Hon J.C. Calhoun, Secy. War

Sir State of _____ the rejected Proof in the Case of Aaron Lewallens lost discharge and also further proof relative to his enlistment &c which I hope may be sufficient as he sais it is not now within his power to procure any better or further proof.

In the month of Sepr 1815 Wm Denny a private in Capt Bethell Allen's Compy Tenne mounted gun men 1st Regt Dyer Colo was placed on the pension list Roll and also John Bruce of the same Compy and Rgt. neither of them have Recd a Certificate from the war department to that affect. They request that you will be so good as to forward said Certificate to S. Cantrell Pension Agt of this place or to me.

I have the Honor to be yr obt svt.
Washington Perkins

Mr Cantrell generally refuses to pay without the certificate.

[in a different hand at the bottom of the page is a notation]

W.D. p @ \$6 act 30 Apr. 1816
com 16 Sept 1815

J.B. Do Do Do

I do Certify that William Denny a Private in my company of Volunteer Mounted Gun Men Col. Robert H. Dyers Regt of Genl John Coffees Brigade in the Service of the United Sates Received a Wound on the night of the 23rd of December 1814 in Battle with the Enemy below New

**Orleans which would Renders him incapable of Labour. Given under
my hand this 2nd day of July
1814 [undoubtedly a mistake]**

Bethell Allen Captn.

District of West Tennessee: Nashville

**This may certify that William Denny came before me and
desired to produce documents and proofs in support of his claim to be
placed on the pension list of the United States and did produce John
Bruce and Josiah Smith both reliable witnesses, who after being duly
sworn deposed and saith that they both belonged to the same company
with William Denny, to wit, Capt Bethel Allen's company of the first
Regt of mounted gun men, which was commanded by Colo Dyer, and
that on the 23rd of December 1814 at the battle below New Orleans the
said William Denny was wounded by a cannon ball on the left thigh and
in the right thigh by a musket ball.**

**John Bruce
J.R. Smith**

Sworn to & subscribed before me the 16th day of September 1815

**John McNairy
District Judge**

**Unites States of America
West Tennessee District**

To Doctor Francis May and Doctor Felix Robertson of Nashville

**In Virtue of the authority vested in me by law. I do by these
presents appoint and authorize you to examine William Denny, a citizen
of Smith County in my District touching a wound he says he received in
the service of the United States at the Battle of the 23rd of December
1814 below New Orleans and upon said examination and your
inspections you will report in writing and upon oath the nature of said
wound and in what degree the said Denny is disabled, so as to prevent
him from obtaining a subsistence by manual labor which report**

together with this commission you will return to me as soon as may be.
Given under my hand this 16th September 1815.

John McNairy
District Judge

State of Tennessee Smith County

On this day personally appeared William Denny before me Nelson Thornton one of the acting Justices of the Peace in and for said county and made oath in due form of law that he was placed on the roll of Invalid Pensioners of the United States at the rate of six dollars per month and after remaining at that rate of Pension he was reduced to four dollars per month from some cause of which he never could ascertain. This affiant was examined and was told that his Pension would be increased to what it was at first-Six dollars but never received it. This affiant is now getting in years being about forty five years of age and feels and knows that his disability increases faster as age advances. This affiant having already described the nature of his wounds and where they were received before the two surgeons whose certificate is hereto annexed deems it unnecessary here to repeat the same but makes their certificate in every particular as regards the wounds part and parcel of this his affidavit and adopts it as his own.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 27th day of February 1839.

William

(X) Dennie
Nelson Thornton
Justice of the Peace

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