

# The Revolutionary War Pension Papers of the Vrooman Family

## Presented by:

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## Overview:

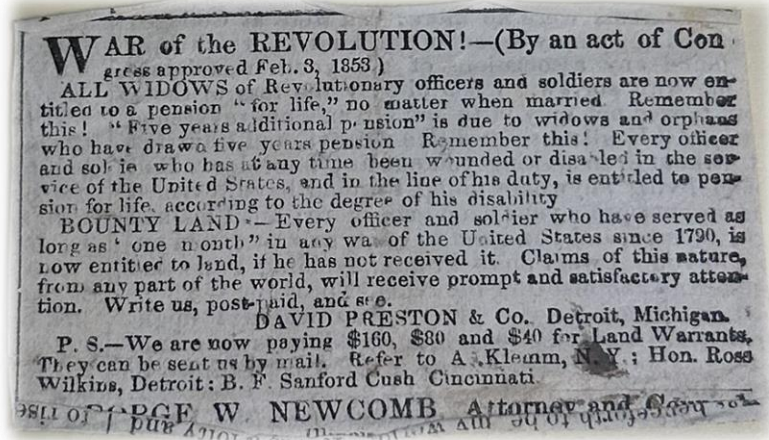
“Are you the widow of a Revolutionary War soldier who was collecting on a verified pension? If so, you may be entitled to compensation!” Much like the ads of today, Sally Vrooman, widow of Revolutionary War soldier Simon J. Vrooman, was bombarded by newspaper articles, calling cards, and correspondence from attorneys and pension agents urging her to employ them to help her navigate the challenging process. This new challenge that Sally faced in 1848 was the result of a newly passed Federal Pension Act that changed the rules for qualifying widows. This session will follow the Vrooman family's pension journey, from the qualifying soldier, to missing records, depositions, a new Clerk's rescinding status, payment increases, banking complications, powers of attorney, an unfinished application, and the children's final struggle to obtain their mother's rightful pay in 1853 as her legal heirs.

## U.S. Revolutionary War Pension Acts – It's important to understand the timeline of Acts passed, as well as the qualifying or exclusionary conditions:

- **1806:** Passed for those with disabilities obtained due to military service - For those who fought in Militia **and/or** the Continental Army. This act superseded all previous acts established from 1776 to this new 19th century act.
- **1818:** Pensions granted to those who served 9 months in the Continental Army or Navy and who were poverty stricken or “indigent”. But no process established for documenting this financial qualifier.
- **1820:** Amendment to 1818 Act requiring financial income and asset documents to accompany the application and allowed Secretary of War to remove those from the rolls who he deemed not in dire financial circumstances.
- **1828:** Reinstated legislation passed in 1778 that took care of all Continental servicemen who remained throughout the war - regardless of financial or physical hardships.
- **1832:** Available to those who served in either the Continental or Militia units for at least 6 months - but in a tiered payout structure - 2 years' service for full pay benefits - 6 months service for a reduced amount. Financial or physical requirements were also removed from the qualifying factor list.

*The earliest pensions were granted in the 18th century for those who were disabled in the war or for the widows and/or orphans of those men who died during that time - or later as a result of wounds suffered during the conflict. Sadly, most of these records were lost in a fire - which is why we focus so much attention on the 19th century Acts.*

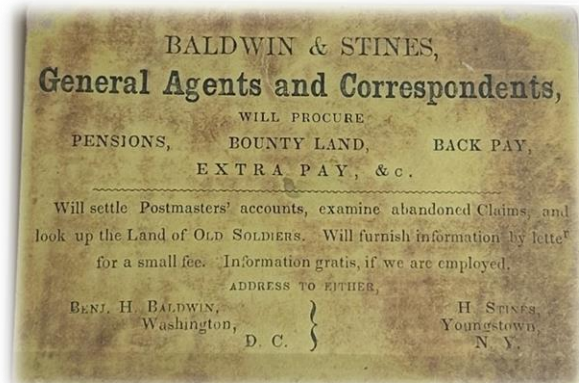
- **1836:** Widows now qualify (outside of the earliest legislation for those whose husbands were killed in the War) if they were married to the Veteran prior to the end of the War - and never remarried. Which would be anytime up to September 1783 (approximately).
- **1838:** Widows who were married before January 1, 1794 (well after the War) now qualify.
- **1848:** Widows who were married prior to January 2, 1800, now qualify. *Note - Marriage date restrictions were removed through legislation passed in 1853 and 1855.*
- **1878:** All widows now qualify if their husbands served at least 14 days - regardless of when their marriage took place.



Vrooman Family Collection, SAR Archives, MSS 1

#### Notes For Vrooman Family Process:

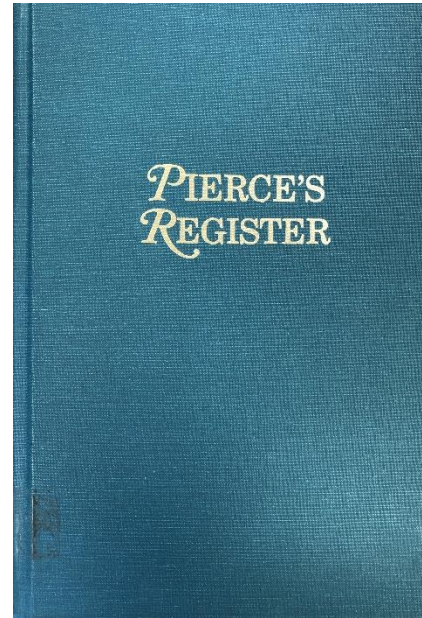
- Once the Acts were passed, notices were distributed via newspaper ads, calling cards, and circulars.
- The process was cumbersome: Involving depositions of multiple witnesses to establish a person's qualifying status or service. Most enlisted the assistance of an attorney or pension agent to navigate the process.
- Despite record loss during or just after the War, new records were periodically discovered by clerks, agents, and/or attorneys – thereby helping Veterans qualify for a pension – sometimes years after the qualifying Act was passed.
- Always examine the associated pension documents closely – many contain detailed family information, such as family Bible images or transcriptions that have long since been lost!



Vrooman Family Collection, SAR Archives, MSS 1

### Resource Tips:

- Look for published family and local histories, as well as archival collections from the family's place of origin to find hints of Revolutionary War service.
- Land records/grants may also link back to pension paperwork.
- Pay close attention to other soldiers from the same unit. Their pension applications may contain unit histories, depositions that were given by your ancestor, or cluster information that identifies several soldiers fighting alongside each other – including your ancestor.
- Some details may be discovered in probate documents – heirs fighting for remaining pension monies owed to the deceased.
- Fold3 website <https://www.fold3.com/> and local/state militia records for determining service.
- DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) website and publications: Member applications ordered via <https://www.dar.org/> or books - *Forgotten Patriots* and *Pierce's Register* (Final payout for Continental soldiers).
- Southern Campaigns Revolutionary War Pension Statements & Rosters website <https://revwarapps.org/> - a free site with transcriptions of pension application files for those who fought from the southern Colonies.



A photograph of a handwritten document on aged, slightly stained paper. The text is written in a cursive script. At the top, the word "Directions" is written. Below it, a list of numbered instructions (1-14) is written. At the bottom, there is a paragraph of text starting with "Next obtain the Bounty Co..." and ending with "...Then mail them to me,". The paper is placed on a light blue background.

### Directions for Widow Vrooman

- 1- Widow Vrooman will sign her name
- 2 & 3 – The Judge will sign officially
- 4 – Elizabeth Vrooman will sign her name
- 5 & 6 – The Judge or Justice will sign officially
- 7 – Walter E. Vrooman will sign officially
- 8 & 9 – The Judge or Justice will sign officially
- 10 – Insert the name of the person that will make the affidavit
- 11 – The year he became acquainted with the parties
- 12 – Witness will sign
- 13 & 14 – The Judge or Justice will sign officially