

Questioning the Revolutionary Service

of George Summers

Oxford, Sussex, New Jersey

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Introduction

Several DAR/SAR-approved applicants claim they are descendants of George Summers of Oxford, Sussex, New Jersey, 1721-1785, who served for New Jersey in the American Revolution. While the genealogy of these persons is not in question as far as I know, there is a question in my mind as to which George Summers is the person who served for New Jersey in the Revolution. This article is meant to explore that question.

Note that because George Summers of Oxford, NJ had a son who was also named George, this article refers to the older man, 1721-1785, as George Sr., and the younger man, 1747-1825, as George Jr.

The Brief Story of My 6th G-Grandfather

To give some context, I give here a timeline summary of the significant life events of George Sr. who was my 6th great-grandfather.

- He was baptized as Johann Georg Sommer at the Lutheran church in Freistett, Baden, Germany on 11 February 1722. Freistett is a village located on the German side of the Rhine River across from Strasbourg, which is today in France, and has long been part of the area known as Alsace (in German, Elsas).
- Georg was married to Anna Barbara Rub¹ in Freisett on 19 January 1745.² The church records in Freistett show that Georg and Anna Barbara had four children from 1745-1751: one infant who died in childbirth, Georg, b. 1747, Maria Magdalena, b. 1749, Anna Barbara, b. 1751.³
- The ship Brothers, which arrived in Philadelphia on 22 September 1752, included among its passengers, Hans Georg Sommer, as well as his brothers, Johannes and Martin Sommer (also documented in the Freistett church records).⁴
- From 1752-1773, Georg was recorded in tax lists in Lower Dublin, and in Lutheran church records in Philadelphia, Germantown, and Trappe, PA. Additional children born to Georg and Anna Barbara during this time were: Anna Margaretha, b. 1753, Maria Catharina, b. 1755, Anna Barbara, b. 1756, Eva, b. ca. 1757, and Johannes, b. 1759.⁵ Georg Sommer was naturalized in 1765.⁶
- On 25 August 1775, George Summers purchased 414 acres on Scott's Mountain near Oxford, Sussex, New Jersey.⁷ At that time, he was 53 years old.

1 Most other genealogies claim that this George Summers was married to Anna Barbara Longstreet. After years of research, I have yet to find any documentation to support the Longstreet maiden name. It's possible that Anna Barbara remarried after George Summers died in 1785, but no documentation has been found to support that idea.

2 Evangelische Kirche Freistett, *Kirchenbuch, 1621-1962*; citing FHL film 1189676 Items 1 - 7, Heiraten 1736- 1787.

3 Evangelische Kirche Freistett, *Kirchenbuch, 1621-1962*; citing FHL film 1189673, Items 8-10, Taufen 1736- 1758.

4 Egle, William Henry; *Names of Foreigners Who Took the Oath of Allegiance to the Province and State of Pennsylvania, 1727-1775*; Harrisburg, PA, 1892; originally published as Pennsylvania Archives, Vol. XVIII, Second Series, Harrisburg, 1890, Reprinted by Genealogical Publishing Co, 1967, 1976, 1994; p. 353.

Strassburger, Ralph B.; Hinke, Wm J [ed]; *Pennsylvania German Pioneers: A Publication of the Original Lists of Arrivals in the Port of Philadelphia from 1727 to 1808*, Vol. I; originally published Norristown, PA, 1934 by Pennsylvania German Society; reprinted by Genealogical Publishing Co, 1966, 1975, 1980, 1992; pg 482.

Rupp, Daniel I.; *A collection of upwards of thirty thousand names of German, Swiss, Dutch, French and other immigrants in Pennsylvania from 1727-1776 ...* = Chronologisch geordnete Sammlung von mehr als 30,000 Namen von Einwanderern in Pennsylvanien aus Deutschland, der Schweiz, Holland, Frankreich u. a. St. von 1727 bis 1776 ..., text in English and German; Philadelphia 1927; p. 274-5.

5 Robert L. Hess and F. Edward Wright, *18th Century Records of the German Lutheran Church of Philadelphia (St. Michaels and Zion)*, Volumes 1-5 (1745-1800), Lewes, DE, 2008, vol 1, pgs 39, 72.

"Pennsylvania Births and Christenings, 1709-1950," database, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:V2VN-G44> : accessed 29 October 2015), Johan Jurg Sommer in entry for Maria Catharina Sommer, 22 Jun 1755; Christening, citing Trappe, Montgomery, Pennsylvania; FHL microfilm 844,886.

Frederick S. Weiser and Debra D. Smith, *St. Michael's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Germantown, 1741- 1841*, Volume 1, p. 63, Johannes, son of Johann Georg and Barbara Sommer, born 11 March 1759.

6 Guiseppi, M.S., *Naturalizations of Foreign Protestants in the American and West Indian colonies (pursuant to 13 George II, c. 7)*, Manchester [England] : Sherratt & Hughes, 1921; pg 108.

7 Sussex County, New Jersey; County Clerk; *Deeds, 1785-1901*, Vol. E3-192; citing FHL film 959673; John Summers and wife to Andrew Crutz Sr; 3 July 1798; recorded 1827.

- George Summers of Oxford, New Jersey wrote his will on 17 May 1785.⁸ In it, he named his wife Barbara, his sons George and John, and his five daughters, Mary, Catharine, Margaretha,⁹ Barbara, and Eva, and their husbands. He died on 6 August 1785. His death record, written in German, was recorded at the St. James “Straw” Lutheran Church of Greenwich, New Jersey. The most recent translation of that record¹⁰ reads like this:

1785, Aug. 8th. Johann Georg Summer, born at Freystadt in Elsas, April 23rd 1721. Had as (a) member of our congregation in a 42 year marriage raised 11 children. Was eleven years (with) cataract(s) (at) his end blind. Died Aug. 6th. Lived 64 years, 3 months and 15 days.

The Evidence

Here is evidence that pertains to the question about a George Summers from Oxford, New Jersey serving in the American Revolution.

- We know that George Jr. married Anna Neswanger¹¹ on 19 January 1773 in Philadelphia County, PA.¹² There is no birth record found for their son, John, but later burial records suggest John's birth year as 1775.¹³
- We know from deed records that George Sr. purchased 414 acres in Oxford twp, Sussex county, New Jersey in 1775,¹⁴ just before the start of the American Revolution. We know it was George Sr. rather than George Jr. who acquired this property because a) the will of George Sr. left his plantation to his youngest son, John Summers, and b) John Summers sold that plantation in 1798, and the deed at that time recorded the history of his father acquiring the property.
- We know from the 1834 pension application of Daniel Vliet that Col. Jacob West certified “a roll of Officers distitute of their commissions belonging to Col. Jacob West Regiment being the first of Sussex County [New Jersey]” and that George Summers of Oxford was noted as an Ensign in the company of Capt. Jacob Mackey on 6 June 1777.¹⁵
- We know from a deed dated 27 March 1778 that George Summers of Oxford, New Jersey, yeoman, purchased property in Warrington, Pennsylvania.¹⁶ Based on the age category of the

8 Sussex County, New Jersey; Surrogate's Court; *Record of wills, 1753-1900*; citing FHL film 565476; #399S, will of George Summers, 1785.

9 For reasons not completely understood, George named his daughter Margaretha, wife of Thomas Hayes, as Catharine, the name of another daughter who was wife of Andrew Banghart. This might have been the result of his eyesight problems or old age. All other documentation names the wife of Thomas Hayes as Margaretha Sommer.

10 Schaefer, M.A., “The Straw Church is Alive!”; http://mann-genealogist.blogspot.com/2014_02_01_archive.html; 2014

11 There are several varied spellings of this surname; the transcription of the marriage record uses the spelling “Mesminger.”

12 Ancestry.com. *Pennsylvania, Marriage Records, 1700-1821* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA. Image 269/332.

Original data: Pennsylvania Marriage Records. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Archives Printed Series, 1876. Series 2, Series 6; page 281.

13 Findagrave Memorial #81397983.

14 Sussex County, New Jersey; County Clerk; *Deeds, 1785-1901*, Vol. E3-192; citing FHL film 959673; John Summers and wife to Andrew Crutz Sr; 3 July 1798; recorded 1827.

15 NARA M804, *Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files*, Record Group: 15; Roll Name: 2245; New Jersey - David Vliet - pgs 54-55 of 61.

Stryker, William S.; *Official Register of the Officers and Men on New Jersey in the Revolutionary War*; Trenton, New Jersey; 1872; p. 457.

16 Bucks County, Pennsylvania; Recorder of Deeds; *Deeds, 1684-1866*, citing FHL film 172880; Vol. 18-499; Joseph Wallace to George Summers; 27 March 1778; recorded 15 September 1778.

George Summers who was enumerated in Warrington thereafter, we know it was George Jr. who moved from Oxford to Warrington.

- We know on 31 March 1778, George Summers of Warrington took the oath of allegiance to the State of Pennsylvania.¹⁷

There are a number of other facts that pertain to the life of George Summers, Jr. from 1778-1825, but the question of this article is focused on the George Summers who served for New Jersey in 1777. We might wonder about which George Summers served for Pennsylvania from 1778-1784, (see the Appendix of this article), but the DAR/SAR applications all claim descentance from the George Summers who died in 1785 in New Jersey.

My Analysis

Were both George Summers (Sr. and Jr.) living in Oxford Twp, Sussex, New Jersey in 1777, the year that Col. Jacob West certified a roll of officers who served in his regiment? I think yes.

- Given that George Sr. had just purchased property in Oxford in 1775, and that he was still living there when he wrote his will in 1785, I believe that he was indeed living in Oxford in 1777.
- Considering that George Jr. married in Philadelphia County in 1773, and had a young son by 1775, it's hard to say at first glance if he was living with his father in Oxford, NJ. However, the 1778 deed where George Jr. purchased property in Warrington, PA stated that George Jr. was “of Oxford Twp, Sussex, New Jersey”. Given this detail, I believe that George Jr. was living in Oxford before 1778.

If both George Summers Sr. and Jr. were living in Oxford in 1777, which one served with Capt. Mackey?

- George Sr. was 56 years old in 1777, based on his birth record in Germany. In addition, based on information from his death record in 1785 which said he had been suffering from cataracts for 11 years, he was, in 1777, already losing his eyesight.
- George Jr. was 29 years old in 1777, based on his birth record from Germany. He had a wife and young son, and was apparently also living in Oxford Twp. Most importantly, he was in the age group of males, ages 16-50, which was required by an act of the New Jersey General Assembly to provide service to the militia.¹⁸

These facts provide logical evidence that George Summers Jr. was more likely the one who served with Capt. Mackey in 1777.

¹⁷ Williams, Richard T. and Mildred C., *Oaths of Allegiance, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, 1777-1786*, Danboro, Pennsylvania : R.T. and M.C. Williams, 1973; p. 36.

¹⁸ New Jersey General Assembly, First Session, Chap. XX, p. 26, 15 March 1777; “An Act for Better Regulating the Militia”

My Conclusions

Based on this study, I conclude that George Summers Sr. did not serve for New Jersey in the American Revolution in 1777. He was older than those required to serve in the militia, and he was having eyesight problems. And, it seems, his son of the same name was also living in Oxford at the time, and George Jr. *was* of the age that he would have been listed for service in the militia. So I further conclude that the son of George Sr., George Summers Jr., was the one who had the rank of Ensign in the company of Capt. Mackey.

But did George Summers Jr. also serve for PA after he moved to Warrington in 1778? I find the evidence on this point to be inconclusive. But whether or not George Jr. of Oxford did also serve for PA is, I think, irrelevant to DAR/SAR applicants because George Summers Jr. did not have any descendants to survive him.¹⁹

¹⁹ M.A. Schaefer, "[No Surviving Descendants of Revolutionary Patriot George Summers 1747-1825](#)", 2016.

Appendix

I include here my notes about a George Summers who served for Pennsylvania during the time of the Revolution. They may be useful for reference by some other researcher.

George Summers of Warrington, PA, previously of Oxford, NJ, certainly took the oath of allegiance to the State of PA in 1778, but I'm not sure that means he continued to serve in the militia. Maybe he did, and maybe he did not – I find the evidence on this point to be inconclusive.

- We know that in September 1778, a George Summers served as either or both a drummer and a fifer in the Sixth PA Regiment of the Continental Army (serving under Capt. Doyle & Col Josiah Harmon).²⁰ The documentation does not give any other identification of this person.
- We know that in August, 1779, Capt. Andrew Summers, 5th Company of Artillery of the PHL militia, had a drummer and a fifer whose names were John Summers and George Summers.²¹ It's worth noting that several public family trees of Capt. Andrew Summers (of England) show that Andrew Summers had a son named George.
- We know that in 1784, a George Summers was a private with the PA Third Regiment.²² We also know from a later land bounty application from his son, Jacob Somers, that this George Summers had been of Westmoreland, Pennsylvania.²³

Further points to consider are:

- George Summers of Warrington was not the only male of that name living in Pennsylvania after 1778. This article cannot begin to account for all the other individuals of this name who might have served for PA after 1778. None of the documentation mentioned for PA military service during this time helps us to differentiate any one person named George Summers from another.
- In several documents pertaining to a George Summers who served for PA after 1778, the position that was held was either drummer or fifer or both. According to information published by [The United States Army Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps](#), "... males that were younger than 16 or older than 50 could serve as musicians in the army." In 1779-1780, George Summers of Warrington was 31-32 years old. He was neither a child nor an elder, and thus it seems less likely that he was the person who served in a musical position in the PA militia.

20 Linn, John Blair and Egle, William H [ed]; *Pennsylvania in the War of the Revolution, Battalions and Line, 1775-1783*; Harrisburg, PA, 1890; Vol. 1; p. 590; George Summers, Drummer [Sixth Pennsylvania]

Egle, William Henry [ed], *Journals and Diaries of the War of the Revolution with lists of Officers and Soliders, 1775-1783*; Harrisburg, PA, 1893; pgs 460-61; George Summers, Fifer; Capt. John Doyle's Co. 6th PA Regiment.

21 Egle, William H. [ed]; *Pennsylvania in the War of the Revolution, Associated Battles and Militia, 1775-1783*; Harrisburg, PA, 1890; Vol. I, pg. 718; Drummer and Fifer – John Summers and George Summers.

22 NARA M881, *Compiled service records of soldiers who served in the American Army during the Revolutionary War, 1775-1783*; Record Group: 93, Roll Name: 0805; Pennsylvania Third Regiment; George Summers.

23 NARA M804, *Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files*, Record Group: 15; Roll Name: 2245; Pennsylvania - George Somers - pg 4 of 5.