

Jacob Nicholls Clark - Revolutionary War Soldier

By Wilma J. Clark of Deltona, Florida

Jacob Nicholls Clark, born 13 October 1754, followed his brother James Clark into military service in the Revolutionary War in January of 1776. James had enlisted from Baltimore, Maryland in 1775. Jacob enlisted under Captain Samuel Smith in the First Regiment of the Maryland Line, in Baltimore Maryland, which was commanded by Colonel William Smallwood.¹

Jacob's Regiment marched from Baltimore, through Pennsylvania and New Jersey to the American Army Headquarters in New York City. 27 August 1776 he fought in the Battle of Long Island, which was commanded by Lord Sterling, and then retreated with the troops to Fort Washington, York Island, New York.

The British and Hessians attacked Fort Washington 16 November 1776, overpowering the American Army, and forcing a surrender of Fort Washington to the Hessians. Jacob and other surviving American soldiers fled across the Hudson River to Fort Lee, New Jersey, only to find that Fort Lee had also been captured 20 November 1776.

After these defeats, the Continental Army was exhausted, demoralized and uncertain of its future. It was a cold winter and many of the soldiers were now walking barefoot in the snow, leaving trails of blood. Believing that the need to raise the hopes and spirits of the troops and people was imperative, General George Washington, Commander in Chief, ordered a massive surprise attack on the Hessian held city of Trenton, New Jersey.

Colonel Smallwood's First Maryland Regiment marched into the Battle of Trenton under the command of Major General Nathaniel Greene, 26 December 1776,² and Jacob was once again engaged in battle. This time an American victory resulted as the Hessians surrendered.

Jacob now entered into what was known as the Philadelphia Campaign of 1777. The British plan was to seize the then capital city of Philadelphia. 25 August 1777 a 265-ship armada, under the command of General William Howe, arrived with 13,000 British and 5,000 Hessian troops at Head of Elk, Maryland.³ This was an encounter at which the Continental Army was significantly out-numbered. Jacob was assigned to guard the baggage train at Head of Elk and although he was not engaged in this battle, he helped to lead an orderly retreat into Chester County, Pennsylvania when the British and Hessian forces overpowered the American troops.

¹ General Services Administration, National Archives Record Service, Washington, D.C., Revolutionary War Pension File # S.15379 (Jacob N. Clark) and Revolutionary War Pension File # W. 9182 (James Clark).

² The Battle of Trenton Order of Battle, Washington's Army that Crossed the Delaware for the Battle of Trenton December 25-26, 1776; (The New Jersey Historical Society).

³ The Battle of Brandywine, Second edition (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1992).

General Washington rapidly moved his troops between General Howe's Army and the city of Philadelphia and prepared to fight what would be one of the largest and bloodiest battles in the war. By the night of September 10th, the American troops were extended along a six-mile line on the east side of Brandywine Creek. Washington knew that the British army would have to cross the creek here in order to advance to Philadelphia. The Battle of Brandywine was fought 11 September 1777, and while the Continental Army fought valiantly, the British attack was overwhelming, and the Americans were forced to retreat once again.

After their defeat at the Battle of Brandywine, the Continental Army in order to regroup, marched about 10 miles north of Brandywine and set up camp. When British General Howe learned of their position, he moved his troops toward them in order to encounter a second skirmish with the Americans. 16 September 1777 General Washington and General Howe, on opposite sides of the valley, met again for battle, but before a shot was fired, a tremendous cloudburst with torrential downpours of rain, forced both armies to leave the field and wait to fight again another day.

The cartridges and powder of the Continental Army were completely ruined leaving them in a precarious position. For safety, and to replenish ammunition, General Washington ordered all of his troops to the Warwick Furnace, an early ironworks community located in Chester County, Pennsylvania 17 September 1777.⁴ Here, Jacob N. Clark met his future wife, Tabitha Dennis, the daughter of accountant, John Dennis, who worked for the Warwick Furnace.⁵

Comment [k1]: I know what Warwick Furnace is but only because of all your recent e-mails. I think a little explanation would be helpful.

Jacob marched on toward Philadelphia as part of an exhausted Army and their next encounter was the Battle of Germantown. 4 October 1777, Jacob raised his rifle in battle, aimed, "taking sight of one of those poor fellows in the British service."⁶ However, before he could fire, Jacob was himself struck in the forehead by a spent musket ball. The ball penetrated his skull, entering just above his right eye. A surgeon performed a trepanning operation to remove the crushed portion of his skull. A silver plate was then inserted over the wound and Jacob forever after wore a scarf around his head to protect his injury.

Jacob N. Clark did not depose himself in his pension application as being present for the next three events of the Philadelphia Campaign, which were Fort Mifflin, Whitemarsh, and Philadelphia. It is likely he was recuperating from his head injury during this time. He does state that he was marched to Perkiomen Creek, which was an American Army encampment just outside of Germantown, Pennsylvania.

In Jacob's Revolutionary War Pension Deposition, dated 13 May 1833, he states that he remained under the command of General George Washington and was with Washington during the winter of 1777 at Valley Forge. Family history indicates that Jacob was a guard for Washington, and he related to his family a story about having seen the General go out

⁴ George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741-1799: Series 3b Varick Transcripts.

⁵ Warwick Furnace Records-Ledgers and Journals, Archived at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁶ Letter written by Jacob's grandson, James Madison Clark, dated August 12, 1886. (In the possession of Charles Jacobs, Jr., Esq.).

each morning during that cold winter at Valley Forge “praying to the Almighty to deliver them from their enemies.”⁶

Not much is written about the soldiers who were selected to guard General Washington. This elite group in the Continental Army was called the “Commander in Chief Guard” or sometimes “Washington’s Life Guard.”⁷ These men were chosen because they were physically tall and strong and Jacob N. Clark “was about 6’ 3” in height, erect and very muscular,”⁸ according to his grandsons.

After Jacob recovered, he was placed in the company of Lieutenant Jacob Hovis to act as a recruiting agent for the Army traveling into Hampton County Maryland. All recruiting parties were then summoned back to Germantown in the spring of 1778.

28 June 1778 Jacob Clark engaged in the Battle of Monmouth, New Jersey. That winter, he reenlisted with the Continental Army, under the command of Captain Yates. Colonel John Hoskins Stone commanded this Regiment. Jacob states in his pension deposition that he stayed with this Army during the years 1779, 1780 and 1781, being promoted to the rank of Sergeant while serving with Captain Yates in 1779.

19 July 1781 General Washington’s Army was encamped at Dobbs Ferry, New York, on the Hudson River.⁹ It was here that Washington heard of Lord Cornwallis’ encroachment at Yorktown, Virginia. Jacob Clark states that he was ill and remained at Dobbs Ferry when his Regiment moved out for the Siege of Yorktown. Later, partially recovered, he requested a map so that he could rejoin his Regiment in Virginia; however, a Captain instructed Jacob to wait and reassigned him to a scouting party of thirty to forty men who were following the movements of the enemy in New York.

Jacob N. Clark, now in the company of this new detachment, marched to the east side of the Hudson River. On their third day out, they were surprised and captured by a party of British and Hessian soldiers. During that night, Jacob escaped under the cover of darkness, but was re-taken three or four miles away, receiving a near mortal wound to his right side from an enemy bayonet. He was immediately transported to the notorious British prison ship, *The Old Jersey*¹⁰ where he was confined until the end of the war. He returned to Maryland naked and destitute.

⁷ South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism; U.S. Department of the Interior-National Park Service, (http://www.southcarolinaparks.com/soldiers-settlers/rev_war.aspx).

⁸ Letter written by John T. C. Clark, grandson of Jacob Clark, circa 1883. Partial tattered letter posed by Edgar Davis Clark, 1967, Transcribed into the research of Lilian Graham Polk (in the possession of Wilma Clark).

⁹ George Washington, 1732-1799. The writings of George Washington from the original manuscript sources, University of Virginia Library.

¹⁰ American Prisoners of the Revolution: Prisoners On Board The Old Jersey-List compiled by 'The Society Of Old Brooklynites' in 1888.

Both Jacob and his brother settled in Ohio after the war, but were forced to leave in 1785 when a Congressional petition to remove all early settlers from Ohio until the lands could be properly surveyed, labeled both Jacob and James as “intruders”.¹¹ James Clark returned to Maryland and settled in Cumberland. Jacob eventually returned to Ohio and filed for his Revolutionary War Pension 13 May 1833 from his residence in Smithfield Township, Jefferson County, Ohio. Jacob Nicholls Clark died in 1841, at the age of 87.

Sons of Jacob N. Clark and Tabitha Dennis:

James Clark, 11 January 1786 to 26 July 1859, married Charlotte Alter
Jacob Clark, III, 29 May 1790, married Catherine Alter
John Dennis Clark, 09 April 1792 to 10 February 1885, married Teresa Jamieson
Hiram Clark, born 29 March 1795
Lemuel Clark, born 22 July 1797
Benjamin Clark, born 26 July 1799
Dennis Clark, 29 July 1801 to 12 July 1877, married Sarah Agnes Patterson
Daniel Clark, 11 June 1803 to 13 September 1885, married Mary Shaw
Thomas Clark, 19 Aug 1805 to 10 July 1858, married Mary Ann Wareham

Descendents who fought in the War of 1812:

John Dennis Clark (above). Served in Captain George Peters' Co., which was a part of the Washington DC Militia during the War of 1812 and received pension #SC-22527.¹²

Descendents who fought in the Mexican War of 1846-1848:

Charles Clark, son of James Clark, 25 May 1810 to 18 December 1877. Born in Cincinnati Ohio, served as Brigadier General, Commanding the 1st Division 1st Corps Army of the Mississippi.¹³

Comment [k2]: Would this have been his rank in the Mexican War?

Jacob Lemuel Clark, son of Jacob Clark III, 17 March 1822 to 26 April 1862. Born in Ohio, served in Co. F 3rd Indiana, from Clifford Indiana.

**Descendents who fought in the American Civil War:
Confederacy**

Charles Clark, son of James Clark (above). Elected Civil War Governor of the State of Mississippi.

Charles Clark Farrar, grandson of James Clark, 19 October 1838 to 6 December 1905.¹⁴ Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, served with “Bolivar Troops” 1st Mississippi Cavalry¹⁵ and as Adj. on General Charles Clark’s staff.

¹¹ L. H. Watkins, *The History of Noble County Ohio*, 1877.

¹² Virgil D. White, *Index to War of 1812 Pension Files*, (Waynesboro, TN: National Historical Publishing Co., 1989).

¹³ Charles Clark Twenty-fourth Governor of Mississippi: 1863-1865 by *David G. Sansing*, Mississippi History Now, (Mississippi Department of Archives and History).

Jacob Lemuel Clark, son of Jacob Clark III, (above). Served as Captain in 18th Missouri Regiment Civil War.

**Descendents who fought in the American Civil War:
Union**

George W. Clark, son of Thomas Clark, 29 April 1835 to 12 April 1896. Born in Lawrence County, Pennsylvania, served with 100th Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers, Company G.¹⁶

Daniel B. Clark, son of Thomas Clark, 27 May 1841 to 22 February 1922. Born in Lawrence County, Pennsylvania, he died in Portland Oregon, served with 76th Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers Company F. Rank Sergeant. Recruited in Blair County, PA, enlisted 8 November 1861 and discharged 7 November 1864.¹⁷

Andrew Jackson Clark, son of Thomas Clark, 28 May 1845 to 21 April 1910. Born in Lawrence County, Pennsylvania, served in Co. D 134th Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers, Rank Private. Mustered in 10 August 1862 and out 26 May 1863 and also served in Battery "E", 1st Regiment Light Artillery, 43rd Volunteers from 16 January 1864 to 17 July 1865.¹⁸

Living descendents of Jacob Nicholls Clark and Tabitha Dennis:

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| Mrs. Pat Alves | Mrs. Betty Duke |
| Mr. Francis Berry, US Army Retired | Mrs. Dona Gordon |
| Mr. Geoffrey Ehnis-Clark, Esq. | Mr. Charles Heflebower, Lt. Gen. USAF Retired |
| Mr. Palmer Clark | Mr. Charles Clark Jacobs, Jr., Esq. US Marines Retired |
| Ms. Wilma Clark | Mr. Calvin Johnson |
| Mrs. Wanda Costello | Mrs. Kay Kopycinski |
| Mrs. Elaine Crane | Mr. Charles Lansdale, US Navy Retired |
| Mrs. Margaret "Meta" Cronia | Mrs. Clara Robertson |
| Mrs. Bonnie Dassing | Mrs. Madel Jacobs Stringer |

¹⁴ Lola Walton Denton, compiler, *Cemetery Records of Bolivar County* (Shelby Mississippi Chapter Chairman of Genealogical Records, DAR, 1947), 3.

¹⁵ Bettie Couch Wiltshire, compiler, *Mississippi Grave Registrations A-L*, (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 1991), 118.

¹⁶ Samuel P. Bates, *History of the Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-1865*, (Harrisburg, Pa.: B. Singerly, 1869), volume III, 587.

¹⁷ Daniel B. Clark obituary, *The Oregonian, Portland, Oregon*, 24 February 1922 page 16. Bates, *History of the Pennsylvania Volunteers*, volume II, 968.

¹⁸ Andrew J. Clark Obituary, *New Castle News, Newcastle, Pennsylvania*, Thursday, 21 April 1910, page 4. Bates, *History of the Pennsylvania Volunteers*, volume II, 993.