The Last Soldier and Widow to Receive Revolutionary War Pensions



Daniel Frederick Bakeman, ca. 1868. William L. Clements Library Image Bank, University of Michigan Library Digital Collections.

Daniel Frederick Bakeman (1759–1869)

On February 14, 1867, the U.S. Congress passed a special act that granted Daniel Bakeman of Freedom, New York, a pension of $500 per year.[1] With this award, Bakeman became the last surviving Revolutionary War veteran to receive service-related benefits.

In his 1867 petition for a pension, Bakeman gave his age as 107; the age listed on his gravestone indicates a birthdate of October 10, 1759.[2] Bakeman also stated that he served as a private in a Tryon County, New York, militia company under Capt. Van Arnum in Col. Marinus Willet's Regiment during the last four years of the war.[3]

However, over the years Bakeman's status has been disputed by historians because of a lack of documentation. Various accounts identify his parents as Andreas Phillip and Catarina (Muller) Bachmann/Bakeman. This claim is based on a single reference to a baptism at the Schenectady Reformed Church in Schenectady, New York, on November 27, 1773.[4] If this record pertained to the petitioner, he would have been 14 at the time of the baptism and his parents would have married the previous year, at the Schoharie Lutheran Church on August 29, 1772—nearly thirteen years after Daniel the petitioner was born.[5] If this church record does refer to Daniel the petitioner and he was born in 1773, the year of his baptism, he would not be the country's last Revolutionary War soldier. That distinction would belong to John Gray (1764–1868) of Noble County, Ohio, a pensioner recognized as the penultimate surviving Revolutionary War soldier.

Historians have also suggested that Daniel Bakeman may have been born in northern New Jersey, near the Delaware River, and brought to Schoharie by his parents when he was very young.[6] The 1860 Freedom, Cattaraugus County, New York, census shows 101-year-old Daniel with an Albany birthplace.[7]



David Allen Lambert *is Chief Genealogist at American Ancestors.*

Bakeman married Susan Brewer in 1782, and the couple had eight children: Philip, Richard, Christopher, Betsey, Margaret, Mary, Susan, and Christine. A DAR *Report* published in 1916 concluded an account of Daniel Bakeman with the following remembrance: "His presence was always sought on all important political occasions. Always on 'Independence Day,' as he called it, he arose very early and shouldering his old musket, would make the rounds of the neighborhood firing a salute, exclaiming, 'Hurrah!'"[8]

Susan Bakeman, who was born in Albany on January 2, 1758, died in Freedom on September 10, 1863, at 105.[9] Daniel Bakeman was said to be 109 when he died in Freedom on April 5, 1869. He was buried in the town's Sandusky Cemetery. His current marker, which replicates the wording on the original one, notes "He was a Revolutionary Soldier and his last / days were rewarded with a pension of Five / Hundred Dollars a year during his life."[10]

Esther (Sumner) Damon (1814–1906)

Esther Sumner, a daughter of Justus and Elizabeth (Thompson) Sumner, was born at Plymouth, Windsor County, Vermont, on August 1, 1814.[11] She married Noah Damon in nearby Bridgewater, Vermont,

AmericanAncestors.org/american-ancestors-magazine • Do not reproduce without permission of American Ancestors.

on September 6, 1835.[12] Esther was 21 and Noah, 75. William Paine of Woodstock, Vermont, witnessed the marriage and later submitted an affidavit for Esther's Revolutionary War widow's pension.

> Noah Daman who lived in the vicinity of my said father in law and that the said Seth Fletcher had a girl living with him who worked for him in 1835 by the name of Easther Sumner who consented to marry the said Noah Daman he having buried his wife in Canada previous to his return to said Bridgewater, which was about the year 1833. We all thought it would be a most singular match, as the old man Daman was some where about 76 years of age, and the said Esther Sumner was about 21 years old…[13]

Noah Damon was born August 25, 1760, in Milton, Massachusetts, a son of Noah and Hannah (Merrifield) Damon. In 1789, he married Keziah Hatch of Springfield, Vermont, with whom he had several children. After Keziah's death, Noah married Esther in 1835. Eventually, Noah and Esther fell on financial hard times, and Noah went to live with his daughter Polly Sunbury in Plainfield, New Hampshire.[14]

Noah applied for a soldier's pension in Plainfield on November 13, 1848.[15] He claimed he was a resident of Canada when Congress passed the Pension Act in 1832 and was "ignorant of his right" to apply for a pension.[16]

He testified "that at the time of the commencement of the war in the spring of the year 1775, he was a resident of Milton in the immediate neighborhood of Boston from which place he well recollects being engaged for the first and a short time as a private in the adjoining towns of Roxbury under Captain Ebenezer Tucker who was of said Milton and commanded the Militia Company in Milton at the time." Noah also recounted his participation in the Battle of Newport, Rhode Island, and the bayonet injury he received while serving in Long Island, New York.[17]

Noah Damon received a pension of $80 per year on January 9, 1850. He died in Benton, New Hampshire, on July 2, 1853.[18] His remains are likely in an unmarked grave in New Hampshire.



Esther Damon, *Boston Sunday Globe*, April 2, 1905, p. 53. NewspaperArchive.com.

On October 25, 1855, Esther applied for a widow's pension. In an affidavit, Esther's mother, Elizabeth "Betsey" (Thompson) (Sumner) Frink, noted that after Noah moved to Plainfield, he and Esther never lived together again. She also reported that Esther never received "a cent of his pension money before or after his death."[19] As his widow, Esther was granted a pension of $12 per month. On February 28, 1905, Congress increased the amount to $24 per month.

Esther Damon died in Plymouth Union, Vermont, on November 10, 1906, age 92, of acute bronchitis and senile debility.[20] She was buried at Plymouth Notch Cemetery. A large granite marker proclaims her "The Last Widow of A / Soldier of / The American Revolution."[21] ◆

Notes

1 *Eighteenth Report of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, October 11, 1914, to October 11, 1915* (1916), 68. Available at FamilySearch.org.

2 Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files (Series M804), Daniel F. Bakeman (N.Y.) Pension # S17265, NARA; Daniel Bakeman gravestone, Find a Grave memorial 4061, Sandusky Cemetery, Freedom, New York.

3 "Who is the Last Survivor?," *Freeport Journal-Standard* (Freeport, Illinois), May 21, 1928, 11.

4 Henry Z Jones, *Even More Palatine Families: 18th Century Immigrants to the American Colonies and their German, Swiss, and Austrian Origins* (2002), 1:19.

5 Ibid.

6 *Annual Report of the NSDAR* [note 1], 67.

7 "Frederick" Bakeman household, 1860 U.S. Census, Freedom, Cattaraugus, New York, Ancestry.com.

8 *Annual Report of the NSDAR* [note 1], 68.

9 Susan Bakeman gravestone, Find a Grave memorial 13426916, Sandusky Cemetery, Freedom, New York.

10 Daniel Bakeman gravestone [note 2].

11 Esther S. Damon death record, "Vermont, U.S., Vital Records, 1720-1908," Ancestry.com.

12 Noah Damon in "Revolutionary War Pensions, 1800–1900," Fold3.com.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid. (Noah's pension is filed under the name "Daman.")

16 Ibid.

17 Maureen Taylor, *The Last Muster: Images of the Revolutionary War Generation* (2010), 53.

18 "Revolutionary War Pensions" [note 12].

19 Ibid.

20 Esther Damon death record [note 11].

21 Esther Damon gravestone, Find a Grave memorial 38834957, Plymouth Notch Cemetery, Plymouth, Vermont.

AmericanAncestors.org/american-ancestors-magazine • Do not reproduce without permission of American Ancestors.