

Nicholas Johnson, Revolutionary War Soldier of Queen Anne's County Maryland

Nicholas Johnson, a free man of color who resided in Queen Anne's County Maryland in 1820 and who died there in 1823, served for 3 years as a soldier in the 5th Maryland Regiment of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. Examination of the evidence found will enable a fuller picture to emerge as to his life, his family, and his service.

Revolutionary War Records for Nicholas Johnson

Nicholas Johnson was inscribed on the pension roll of Maryland on June 30, 1819 for his service as a Private in Col. Richardson's Regiment. He served 'a term of 3 years to 1780'. His pension payment was sent to Thomas Murphy Esq. in Centreville, Queen Anne's County Maryland. The certification of his service from the Maryland Auditor's Office in Annapolis states that he enlisted May 27, 1777 and was discharged March 27, 1780.

In his deposition given on May 27, 1818, Nicholas Johnson of Queen Anne's County MD stated that he was enlisted in Talbot County MD by Captain William Frazier of Caroline County MD on March 27, 1777 in the 5th Maryland Regiment commanded by Col. William Richardson. Captain Frazier. He stated that his company commander was first Captain Frazier, then Captain Benson. He further stated that he was discharged after serving a three year term.

In a second declaration given October 20, 1820 in Queen Anne's County, Nicholas Johnson, age 69, resident of Queen Anne's County, reiterated his service in the 5th Maryland

Regiment in the period 1777 to 1780. He further stated that his pension payments have been made to the United States Branch Bank in Baltimore. He stated that his family consisted of his wife Rebecca and four children: Marie age 12, Jacob age 9, John age 7, and Sarah age 5. He stated that he had no trade due to infirmity and disease from performing hard labor. The inventory of his property consisted on 1 cow , 3 shoats (young pigs), 1 Dutch over, 2 barrels of corn, and poultry. No widow's pension was indicated from this file.¹

A statement from the Maryland pension roll indicates that Nicholas Johnston, Private, received an annual allowance of \$96 and a total sum of \$457.05, and that he receive his pension from June 27, 1818 to his death on March 31, 1823.²

The State of Maryland enacted a law in the 1834 legislative session to allow pension payments to Rebecca Johnson of Queene Anne's County, widow of Private Nicholas Johnson.³

¹ U.S., Case Files of Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Warrant Claims based on Revolutionary War Service, pension #S.34942, veteran Nicholas Johnston, service Maryland, NARA publication M804, roll 1434, NARA catalog ID 30022, record group 15, 13 images, www.Fold3.com.

² U.S., The Pension Roll of 1835, Volume III, 03 Maryland, United States Senate. *The Pension Roll of 1835*. 4 vols. 1968 Reprint, with index. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1992, image 39 of 54.

³ Maryland Records, Volume II, resolution passed March 4, 1835, Rebecca Johnson of Queen Anne's County, ½ pay for pension of Nicholas Johnson, page 360, image 282 of 610, www.Ancestry.com.

The Life and Family of Nicholas and Rebecca Johnson

The following evidence has been found for Nicholas and Rebecca Johnson and their family:

- The 1820 household of Nicholas Johnson of Queen Anne's County Maryland had this configuration:⁴

1820 Household of Nicholas Johnson Election District 1, Queen Anne's County Maryland					
Free Males of Color under 14	Free Males of Color 16 - 25	Free Males of Color 26 - 44	Free Males of Color 45 & over	Free Females of Color under 14	Free Females of Color 45 & over
1	1	1	1	1	1

- The will of Nicholas Johnson dated February 22, 1822 names his eldest son Elias Johnson as executor and names his wife Rebecca as an heir. His two younger sons Jacob and John were also named as heirs. He refers to a farm he owned in his will, which he willed to his son Elias with life tenancy for his wife Rebecca and for his daughter Rebecca and her two children.⁵

⁴ U.S. Census, 1820, Maryland, Queen Anne's, Election District 1, household of Nicholas Johnson, *Fourth Census of the United States, 1820*; Census Place: *Election District 1, Queen Anne's, Maryland*; Page: 167; NARA Roll: *M33_45*; Image: 29.

⁵ Maryland, Queen Anne's County, Wills, Liber T.C.E No. 1, pages 230-1, will of Nicholas Johnson, will date February 22, 1822, film 14319, image 146 of 479, www.FamilySearch.org.

- The May 7, 1823 administration bond for the estate of Nicholas Johnson, deceased of Queen Anne's County names Elias Johnson as executor and William Temple and Counsey Phillips as guarantors.⁶
- Nicholas Johnson is identified as a free man of color in an Orphan's Court order requiring a list of debts owed to his estate to be done. This session of the court is dated April 3, 1824.⁷
- The inventory list of debts includes an entry from the Bank of Bates for the deceased's pension payments valued at \$48.⁸
- The inventory of the personal property of Nicholas Johnson dated May 19, 1823 shows a value of \$175.63, including household items, livestock, and 148 lbs. of bacon, 33 $\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. of lard, and 15 shoats (young pigs).⁹
- The Administration Account of the estate, dated May 17, 1823, shows a net value of \$265.14.¹⁰

⁶ Maryland, Queen Anne's County, Probate Records, Liber T.C.E. 1815 - 1835, page 161, Administration Bond, estate of Nicholas Johnson, May 7, 1823, film 14355, image 217 of 544, www.FamilySearch.org.

⁷ Maryland, Queen Anne's County, Orphans Court Records, court session April 3, 1824, order to receive a list of desperate debts owed to the estate of Nicholas Johnson, a free man of color, images 124-6 of 292.

⁸ Maryland, Queen Anne's County, Probate Records, 1824 – 1826, Liber T.C.E. No 4, page 109, list of debts owed to the estate of Nicholas Johnson, April 2, 1824, received of Wm Steven, film 14332, image 317 of 713, www.FamilySearch.org.

⁹ Maryland, Queen Anne's County, Probate Records, Liber T.C.E. No. 4, pages 306-7, Inventory of the Estate of Nicholas Johnson, May 19, 1823, film 14332, image 164 of 713, www.FamilySearch.org.

¹⁰ Maryland, Queen Anne's County, Orphan Records, Administrators Accounts, Liber T.C.E No. 1, page 376, Administration Account of the Estate of Nicholas Johnson, May 17, 1823, film 14324, image 433 of 710, www.FamilySearch.org.

- Elias Johnson, age 36 appears in the 1832 census of free persons of color in Queen Anne's County MD.¹¹
- Rebecca Johnson 'free negro' is recorded as having \$1.09 on account in an 1834 Queen Anne's County probate record. This record is part of a list of debts owed to the estate of William Wilson, and the listing including Rebecca Johnson references a note with interest from July 1, 1834 under the name William Tagwell.¹²
- Rebecca Johnson was approved on March 4, 1835 to receive a ½ pension based on her late husband's service.¹³
- Rebecca Johnson is reported to have died at the Queen Anne's County MD Almshouse at Ruthsburg in 1858. Her birth year is recorded as 1758, A note in her record states 'free'.¹⁴

¹¹ Maryland, 1832 Census of Free People of Color, Queen Anne's County, transcribed record, Salisbury University, Maryland.

¹² Maryland, Queen Anne's County, Probate Records, Inventories, Liber T.C.E No 10, 1834 – 1836, pages 302-3, List of Desperate Debts, estate of William Wilson, Rebecca Johnson, 'free negro', \$1.09 on account, William Tagwell note on account carrying interest from July 1, 1834, film 14334, images 170-1 of 734, www.FamilySearch.org.

¹³ Maryland Records, Volume II, Revolutionary War Pensions, Kilty's Laws, Rebecca Johnson, widow of Nicholas Johnson, to receive ½ pension, March 4, 1835, page 360.

¹⁴ FindaGrave Memorial, Rebecca Johnson, died February 28, 1858, burial Queen Anne's County Almshouse, Ruthsburg, Queen Anne's County Maryland, www.FindaGrave.com.

Analysis of the Evidence

The following evidence establishes that Nicholas Johnson, a free man of color, resident of Queen Anne's County Maryland, was a soldier in the Revolutionary War:

- The declarations of Nicholas Johnson in his pension file identify him as a resident of Queen Anne's County MD. His family members identified include his wife Rebecca and his son Elias.
- The 1823 inventory of the estate of Nicholas Johnson records that he received a pension from the U.S. Government.
- The 1834 record of Rebecca Johnson being eligible to receive a pension as the widow of private Nicholas Johnson.
- Nicholas Johnson is identified as a free man of color in the 1824 Orphans Court order.
- The 1820 census record of the household of Nicholas Johnson identifies all family members as free people of color.
- Rebecca Johnson is identified as a free person of color in an 1834 probate record.
- Elias Johnson, identified in the will of Nicholas Johnson as his son, is included in the 1832 census of free persons of color in Queen Anne's county Maryland.

There are some discrepancies between the pension file and probate records regarding family members and economic status of his family. His 1820 pension file declaration indicates that he had children Marie age 12, Jacob age 9, John age 7, and Sarah age 5. This declaration also indicated that he had only 3 young pigs and a cow for livestock, and corn and poultry for provisions. His 1822 will shows his children to be Elias, Jacob,

John, and Rebecca. The inventory of his estate includes 148 lbs. of bacon, 33 $\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. of lard, and 15 shoats (young pigs).

These discrepancies may be explained by these circumstances:

- The young children may have been the children of daughter Rebecca rather than wife Rebecca.
- Elias may not have been mentioned as Nicholas's child because he did not live in the household, although the 1820 census record shows a male age 26 to 44 in the household. The 1832 census record shows Elias as 36 years old, indicating a birth year of 1796.
- It is also possible that Nicholas's pension file inventory of his property and the possible presence of Elias in his household were adjusted to enhance his eligibility for a pension. This was a common practice for veterans in this era.
- The difference in material well-being between his pension declaration and his will is likely explained at least in part by the value of pension payments he received from June 1819 to March 1823, which Nicholas and his family appear to have used to their full advantage. 168 lbs. of bacon in his household inventory indicates commercial activity, as does the fact that Nicholas's estate had debts owed to it beyond just the pension funds deposited in the bank. He also stated that he owned a farm that he was bequeathing to his eldest son with life tenancy for wife Rebecca, daughter Rebecca and her children.