Rev. Joseph Willis

Over the years numerous descendants of Rev. Joseph Willis have asked me if any "absolute" proof exist of Joseph Willis' service in the Revolutionary War. Some have desired this information to join: Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution, National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR) and/or National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution (NSSAR).

Marion's troops were basically a guerrilla force, raised irregularly from the backwoods of South Carolina, no roster was kept. The only record of the men who fought under him comes from the claims that were later filed for militia pay against the state of South Carolina. Joseph Willis, Richard Curtis and Ezekiel O'Quinn said they fought under Marion in the Revolutionary War; but none of them filed for militia pay. William W. Broddie compiled a book, from the stub indents of the militia pay, entitled Marion's Men, A List of Twenty-five Hundred (1938). Only those who filed for militia pay are in it. Several early 1800 and mid 1800 authors, including W.E. Paxton, recorded that Joseph was a Marion man; but more important is Joseph Willis' own testimony to his children and grandchildren.

In addition, many courthouses with vital records were lost eight decades later in the Civil War (considered the War of Northern Aggression by many of our Willis ancestors) as a result of General Sherman and other northern forces burning the courthouses. I'm often reminded of the lyrics in the song that say (and I paraphrase) "the night they drove old Dixie down...they should have never taken the very best." Such was also the case in Alexander, LA., when General Banks came up the Red River and had the Rapides Parish courthouse burned.

Randy Willis