

James W. Cunningham, Sr. (1756 – 1844) P-142280

James W. Cunningham, Sr. was born in January 1756 in Augusta County, Virginia to Jacob Cunningham and unknown spouse. He was a farmer his entire life.

In August 1775 he entered the service as a volunteer in a Virginia Militia Company commanded by Capt. Russell guarding the Western frontier from the Indians. He fought in the battle of Long Island on Houlston River. In 1780 he "agin inlisted" in a detachment of militia where he was a waggoner hauling lead to General Nathaniel Green in North Carolina.

On 22 March, 1781 he married Elizabeth Gillespie in Washington County, Virginia. Elizabeth Gillespie, was born in Virginia in 1763 and died in McMinn, Tennessee in 1835. Elizabeth was the daughter of William Gillespie, born in 1720 and died in 1800, and Mary Clendenin, born in 1725 and died in 1798. James Cunningham died on April 12, 1844 in St. Francois County, Missouri. He and his wife Elizabeth had many children and the couple now rests on what was their land grant in Missouri.

In 1802 he received Spanish Land Grant No. 829 for a parcel of land 3 miles north of Farmington, Missouri, in what is now St. Francois County. The land at the time was in St. Genevieve County. St. Francois County came into existence in 1821 at the time Missouri was admitted as a State, following the Louisiana purchase in 1804. The grant was for 1500 Arpens of land on the St. Francois River. It was on this land that James and Elizabeth raised a large family. There are 15 children named on many files as descendants of James and Elizabeth

Following the Louisiana Purchase, owners of land within the territory were required to apply to the United States for approval of their grants. In 1806 a survey of the land was made by Soulard, a surveyor from St. Louis, after which the grant was approved and title to the 1312 acres was vested in James W. Cunningham, Sr. A copy of the land grant No. 829 may be obtained from St. Francois County Recorder of Deeds and a copy of the survey from the Farmington Public Library.

In 1832 he applied for, and received a pension for his services in the American Revolution. He was the lone Pensioner listed in the 1840 Census for St. Francois County, Missouri. The following is a transcript of the declaration he made in the St. Francois County Court when he applied for his Revolutionary War Pension:

State of Missouri

County of St. Francois

In the County Court, May term, May 7, 1833

On the seventh day of May in the year 1833 at the aforesaid personally appeared in court Said James Cunningham, a resident of the County and State aforesaid before William Murphy Presiding Justice and Thomas Hale & George W. Robinson Justices holding said court.Said Cunningham aged seventy seven years last January who being duly sworn according to law does on his oath make the following declaration to obtain the benefit of the act of congress passed June 7th 1832 to wit: That in August 1775 he entered the service as a volunteer in a Militia Company commanded by Capt. Russell and Lieutenant Bowen and continued therein about five months guarding the western frontier of Virginia against the Indians and that in May the following year he was called into service to guard said frontier and continued to serve in a "malitia" company commanded by Captain John Campbell and Lieutenant Arthus Bowen about seven months that with which time the militia had an engagement with the Indians at Long Island on Houlston River in which the Indians were defeated. Sometime in the latter part of said year he belonged to a detachment of militia commanded by Col. William Chesley served in a company of which Daniel Smith was Captain ,William Bowen was lieutenant and further that in the fall of 1780 he was employed as a waggoner by a militia officer whose name or toitle is not now recollected to haul lead from Chissels Mine in Virginia to General Greens army then stationed in North Carolina that said lead was delivered by him to Joseph Marberry Deputy Indian Warden General at Salisbury in said state that carried? to the lead not being ready when applied for he was about five months in " compleating" said service for which he never received any compensation. And the said Cunningham does hereby relinquish any claim whatsoever to a pension or annuity except the present and "declairs"that his name is not on the pension roll of the office of any state subscribed and sworn to in open court May 7, 1833.

Submitted by Harry Edward Cruncleton, Jr.

NSSAR# 176409

Saramana Chapter SAR