

Beaufort County 250 Committee
Revolutionary War Biographies

*Powder, Prisoners
and Patriotism*
*Captain John Wickly's
Artillery Company*

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BEAUFORT COUNTY
SOUTH CAROLINA

Captain John Wickly's South Carolina Artillery Company

Beaufort District, Georgetown, Charleston, and the Southern Campaigns
1776-1821

This study reconstructs the known service network surrounding Captain John Wickly (also Wickley, Wickly, Weekly), an officer of the 4th South Carolina Regiment of Artillery. Its central finding is that the earlier, long roster attributed to "Wickly's company" cannot presently be supported as a company-specific list. The available modern regimental compilation lists hundreds of men in the 4th Regiment but generally labels their captain as unknown. It therefore cannot safely be converted into a roster of Wickly's company without dated muster rolls, pay rolls, or individual testimony.

The documentary core of Wickly's company is much smaller but considerably stronger. John Wickly's own pension establishes that he entered service in 1776, served at Beaufort under Captain William Harden, served under Colonel Owen Roberts, was promoted to captain at Stono Ferry, and afterward served under Colonel Barnard Beeckman. He was living in Prince William Parish, Beaufort District, in 1818, was over seventy-six years old, had lost his commission, owned no property, and received a federal pension of \$20 per month.

Four enlisted men can presently be tied to Wickly with high or moderate confidence: Isham Carter, Nicholas Prince, Edward Conner, and Mark Marlow. Carter explicitly stated that he sometimes served in Wickly's company and was captured with him at Charleston. Prince testified that Conner enlisted him and Marlow on August 3, 1777, into the 4th Artillery Regiment under Wickly's immediate command. Conner's own pension corroborates the shared service of Prince and Marlow through Stono Ferry.

Only Isham Carter can presently be documented as a person of African ancestry. Carter described himself under oath as a free man of color descended from an Indian woman and a Black man. No reliable evidence has yet been found assigning a racial identity to Prince, Conner, Marlow, or the unverified names previously attributed to Wickly's company. Thus the defensible answer is not that Carter was the company's only African American, but that he is the only one presently documented.

Elisha Watson remains unverified as a member of Wickly's company. His name may belong somewhere in the broader 4th Regiment, but no pension statement, muster extract, or other primary record located for this study connects him specifically to

Wickly. Until such evidence is found, claims that Watson fought with Wickly at Stono, Savannah, or Charleston should not be repeated as fact.

The following are principal conclusions of the research:

- John Wickly was born no later than about 1741–1742 and was still alive in June 1819.
- His Beaufort connection is direct: he testified that he served at Beaufort and later lived in Prince William Parish.
- He was captured at Charleston on May 12, 1780 and still appeared on an officer prisoner list in 1782.
- The regiment contained specialized artillery, garrison, laboratory, and field personnel; its companies were frequently detached.
- The verified company nucleus is Wickly, Carter, Prince, Conner, and Marlow—not the previously circulated list of roughly eighteen matrosses.
- Carter is the only presently documented man of African ancestry in that nucleus.
- A complete roster requires original company muster rolls and payrolls from the National Archives and South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

As conclusive documentation of Revolutionary era service records in frontier militia units is relatively rare, prosopographical methods are used to develop reliable data. Prosopography reconstructs a group by combining fragments from many individual lives. In this profile report, each association is graded by source strength. “Confirmed” means that an individual’s own statement, a named comrade’s sworn testimony, a contemporary list, or a direct official record links the person to Wickly. “Probable” means that the connection is strongly implied but not explicit. “Unverified” means the name appears in a broader regimental compilation or prior secondary account without company-level proof.

Pension transcripts are extraordinarily valuable, but they were often produced fifty years after the events and may contain faulty dates, phonetic spellings, or confused geography. They are treated here as testimony, not as infallible records. Modern roster websites are used as finding aids, not as substitutes for original returns.

Captain John Wickly: Reconstructed Life

Wickly stated on June 1, 1818 that he was “upwards of 76 years old.” This places his birth no later than approximately 1741–1742. His birthplace, parents, education,

occupation, marriage, and children remain unidentified. Earlier estimates placing his birth in the 1745–1755 range were too late and should be discarded.

In his own pension declaration, Wickly said he entered the service in 1776 and was first appointed a lieutenant. He further stated that he “served at Beaufort under Captain Harden.” The most likely identification is Captain William Harden of the Beaufort-area forces, but Wickly’s wording does not specify the date, post, or exact organizational relationship. In 1775, Harden was appointed Captain of the Beaufort Volunteer Artillery, and his unit was integrated into the 4th SC Regiment of the Continental Line in 1776. Harden served as commander of Fort Lyttleton from 1776 through as late as April 1777. This testimony nevertheless supplies a direct Beaufort service connection before his later residence in Prince William Parish.

The 4th South Carolina Regiment was authorized in November 1775, adopted into the Continental Army in June 1776, and expanded in October 1776 when the Beaufort and Georgetown independent artillery companies were incorporated as its fourth and fifth companies. The Beaufort company had been organized at Fort Lyttleton from men of St. Helena and Prince William parishes. This organizational history explains how an officer who served at Beaufort could subsequently appear in the Continental artillery establishment.

Wickly testified that he was promoted from lieutenant to captain at the Battle of Stono Ferry on June 20, 1779. His direct commander, Colonel Owen Roberts, was killed in that action, and Barnard Beeckman succeeded him. Wickly’s declaration therefore places his promotion as a battlefield promotion amid a severe command disruption rather than as a routine peacetime advancement.

Assignments and duties of the men of the 4th SC Regiment were variable and fluid. The testimony of Nicholas Prince and Edward Conner shows that soldiers under Wickly’s immediate command did not perform one uniform role. They were frequently deployed, serving at Cat or Oat Island near Georgetown, Fort Johnson, and Charleston. At times some worked in the artillery laboratory manufacturing cannon cartridges, musket cartridges, port fires, tubes, and canister shot. Others served in field operations, marching through Purysburg and Black Swamp, and covering Moultrie’s withdrawal to Charleston in 1779. The company should therefore be understood as a flexible force whose personnel could be detached to forts, laboratories, magazines, boats, or field batteries.

Wickly was included among the Continental officers captured in the capitulation of Charleston on May 12, 1780. A return dated November 1782 still lists him as a South Carolina artillery captain and prisoner of war. This is important: it suggests that he did not quickly return to unrestricted active duty and that the phrase “continued until the war ended” may refer to his continuing status on the Continental establishment while captive or paroled. Many members of the Beaufort District forces were imprisoned together on prison ships in Charleston Harbor, and over 35 of them were aboard the *Packhorse* and escaped enroute to a prisoner exchange in New York at the time of the British evacuation of Charleston.

In 1819 Samuel Warren certified that Wickly was enrolled as an original member of the South Carolina Society of the Cincinnati. Membership was reserved for qualifying Continental officers and is strong corroboration of his recognized officer status. His audited account records an indent issued in 1784 for £940 sterling for pay and subsistence through January 1, 1782 and additional state pay through May 1, 1783.

By 1818 Wickly lived in Prince William Parish, Beaufort District. He swore that he possessed no property and was unable to earn a livelihood. He was pensioned at \$20 per month for four years’ service as a captain. He was alive in June 1819 when fellow officers supported his claim. Isham Carter’s November 1821 declaration referred to him as dead, establishing a probable death window between June 1819 and November 1821.

The following table illustrates the evidentiary basis for determining service in Wickly’s company:

Name	Rank/status	Direct link to Wickly	Key places	Race evidence	Confidence
John Wickly	Lieutenant; captain	Own pension; officer prisoner lists	Beaufort, Stono, Charleston	Not stated	Confirmed
Isham/Isam Carter	Artillery soldier; sometimes attendant to Beeckman	Own pension and Wickly certificate	Stono, Savannah, Charleston	Free man of color; African and Native ancestry	Confirmed
Nicholas Prince	Private	Own pension; said Wickly	Cat/Oat Island, Fort Johnson,	Not stated	Confirmed

		was immediate commander	Charleston laboratory, Savannah, Charleston		
Edward Conner	Private/corporal in 4th Artillery; later militia captain	Prince testimony and Conner pension	Cat Island, Fort Johnson, Purysburg, Black Swamp, Stono	Not stated	Confirmed
Mark Marlow	Private	Prince says he and Marlow enlisted together under Wickly	Cat Island; Stono-era service	Not stated	Confirmed by comrade testimony
Elisha Watson	Alleged matross	No company-level primary link located	Unknown	Unknown	Unverified

Isham Carter

Carter is the strongest evidence for racial diversity within Wickly's immediate service circle. In 1818 he described himself as "a free man of colour descended from an Indian woman and a negroe man." He stated that Beeckman enlisted him soon after Brier Creek, that he served in the 4th Artillery, attended Beeckman at times, served in Wickly's company at other times, and fought at Stono, Savannah, and Charleston. Wickly certified that Carter was captured with him at Charleston. With the service of elements of the 4th Artillery at the February 3, 1779 Battle of Port Royal Island, and the sequence of troop movements in Beaufort District following Brier Creek, it is highly likely that Carter served in that engagement.

Carter's evidence also warns against treating an eighteenth-century company as a fixed modern roster. He could be attached to the colonel personally and then returned to company duty. His identity as Wickly's man was genuine but intermittent.

Nicholas Prince

Prince was born March 16, 1758 and grew up in the Kingston/Horry area. He said Edward Conner enlisted him on August 3, 1777, together with Mark Marlow, into the 4th Artillery Regiment under Captain Wickly's immediate command. His pension supplies the clearest narrative of Wickly's enlisted personnel: Georgetown-area island duty, Fort Johnson, laboratory work in Charleston, movement toward Purysburg, the Savannah campaign, capture at Charleston, and escape after thirteen days.

Following escape, Prince fought with several regimental comrades under General Francis Mairon in small unit guerilla operations in the Lowcountry, and he later became a clergyman in the Kingston Parish and remained a neighbor of Conner. A 4th Regiment muster roll contains a description of him having "black hair and a brown complexion", a notation that has led to speculation that he was of African descent, but his family lineage of noble French and Horry family parentage establishes him as of the white race. His pension testimony connects military recruitment, local community ties, and postwar memory.

Edward Conner

Conner was born December 31, 1757 in Duplin County, North Carolina, and moved as a child to Kingston County, later Horry District, South Carolina. His pension and Prince's supporting affidavits place him in the 4th Artillery as a private and corporal. He recruited Prince and Marlow, joined the regiment at Cat Island, served at Fort Johnson and in Charleston's laboratory, marched through Purysburg and Black Swamp, and remained through Stono Ferry. After Stono he returned home and later commanded militia operations against Loyalists.

Conner's career illustrates how Continental artillery service could feed directly into local militia leadership. It also shows that "Captain Conner" in later records should not be confused with his earlier rank under Wickly.

Mark Marlow

Marlow is known through Nicholas Prince's sworn testimony. Prince said they were enlisted together by Edward Conner on August 3, 1777, into Wickly's command and later returned home after Stono, having served approximately two years. No independent pension for Marlow has yet been identified. His profile therefore remains thin, but the company connection is direct and credible.

Elisha Watson and the Unsupported Roster

The prior answer identified Elisha Watson and approximately seventeen other men as members of Wickly's company. That assertion is not substantively supported by the sources examined. The published 4th Regiment compilation lists large numbers of matrosses, gunners, corporals, and privates but places them under "Captain Unknown." The names previously supplied do not appear as a coherent Wickly company roster in that compilation.

No pension file, company return, or sworn comrade statement located for this report connects Elisha Watson specifically to Captain Wickly, nor does it confirm him as African-American. The name may ultimately prove genuine, but it must remain unverified at present. The same caution applies to William Allen, Charles Amonet, John Ellis, Thomas McKee, James Moore, Matthew Sullivan, James White, George Wylant, George Sayers, William Read, David Edenfield, Edward Arts, John G. Chappell, and James Cross as a supposed Wickly roster.

This correction is substantive. A regiment-level list cannot be divided into company rosters by assumption. Men transferred between companies; officers changed; detachments were temporary; and later pension testimony often used the name of the best-remembered officer rather than the exact administrative company on every date.

African-American Representation

The evidence supports one precise conclusion: one confirmed man of African ancestry is presently documented in Wickly's verified service circle - Isham Carter. It does not support the broader conclusion that Carter was the only Black artilleryman in the company or regiment. In fact, several other African-American soldiers have been confirmed as members of the 4th SC Artillery Regiment.

Race was usually omitted from Continental muster and pay records. Some free men of color were recorded without racial labels, and enslaved laborers attached to artillery, fortifications, transport, or officers might not appear on formal military rolls at all. Responsible identification therefore requires an explicit racial description, a free-person-of-color register, census classification, tax record, court record, church register, or a tightly documented family link.

The verified enlisted network is weighted toward the coastal borderland - Colleton, Kingston/Horry District and nearby Robeson County - as well as Beaufort. Wickly himself, however, had early Beaufort service and later lived in Prince William Parish.

Carter filed first in Beaufort District and later in Barnwell District. The company's history therefore connects several Lowcountry corridors rather than one county.

Prince and Conner describe work in Charleston's artillery laboratory producing ammunition and ignition materials. This was skilled and hazardous work. A laboratory soldier needed discipline, familiarity with powder, and the ability to follow standardized processes. The company's service record should therefore not be limited to men standing beside cannon on battlefields.

The men moved among Cat/Oat Island, Georgetown, Fort Johnson, Charleston, East Florida, Purysburg, Port Royal, Black Swamp, Stono, Savannah, and Charleston again. These movements reveal the artillery regiment as a logistical network: coastal watch, fort duty, ammunition manufacture, river-corridor operations, field artillery, and siege defense.

Wickly and Carter were captured at Charleston. Prince said he escaped after thirteen days. The fate of Marlow after leaving the regiment is not established. Wickly's appearance on a 1782 prisoner list suggests unusually long restraint or unresolved exchange status. The fall of Charleston was therefore the decisive rupture in this group's Continental service.

Chronology of Wickly Company Service

Date	Event
1775-1776	4th South Carolina Regiment authorized and adopted into Continental service; Beaufort and Georgetown independent artillery companies incorporated.
1776	Wickly enters service as a lieutenant; serves at Beaufort under Captain Harden.
June 1776	Nicholas Prince begins an earlier militia tour near Charleston before later joining the artillery.
August 3, 1777	Edward Conner recruits Nicholas Prince and Mark Marlow into the 4th Artillery under Wickly's immediate command.
1777-1778	Cat/Oat Island, Fort Johnson, and Charleston laboratory duties.
Early 1779	Field movement through Purysburg, Black Swamp, Port Royal and Stono

	Ferry; Carter enlisted by Beeckman after Brier Creek.
June 20, 1779	Battle of Stono Ferry; Roberts killed; Wickly promoted to captain; Beeckman succeeds Roberts.
Autumn 1779	Carter serves at Savannah; Prince's account connects the artillery network with the Savannah campaign.
May 12, 1780	Charleston capitulates; Wickly and Carter captured; Prince captured and later escapes.
November 1782	Wickly remains listed among Continental officer prisoners.
1784	Wickly receives South Carolina indent for pay and subsistence.
June 1, 1818	Wickly applies for pension in Prince William Parish, Beaufort District.
June 5, 1818	Wickly certifies Isham Carter's service and capture.
June 1819	Former officers certify Wickly's service and Cincinnati membership.
By November 1821	Carter's declaration identifies Wickly as deceased.

The surviving evidence permits a meaningful reconstruction. John Wickly was a long-serving Continental artillery officer with direct Beaufort service, a promotion at Stono Ferry, capture at Charleston, recognition by the Society of the Cincinnati, and a final life of poverty in Prince William Parish. His verified company network currently consists of Isham Carter, Nicholas Prince, Edward Conner, and Mark Marlow. Carter alone is positively documented as a man of African ancestry. Elisha Watson and the longer roster previously attributed to the company remain unverified.

Sources:

John Wickly pension file S39132. Southern Campaigns Revolutionary War Pension Statements & Rosters, transcription and annotations; includes Wickly's 1818 declaration, 1819 certifications, Cincinnati evidence, and South Carolina audited-account abstract. <https://revwarapps.org/s39132.pdf>

Isham Carter pension file S39293. Includes Carter's 1818 and 1821 declarations and Wickly's certification. <https://revwarapps.org/s39293.pdf>

Nicholas Prince and Nancy Prince pension file W8289. Includes Prince's service narrative and supporting affidavits. <https://revwarapps.org/w8289.pdf>

Edward Conner pension file S21123. Includes Conner's service narrative and Nicholas Prince's affidavits. <https://revwarapps.org/s21123.pdf>

Return of Continental Army officers, November 1782, B383. Lists Wickly among South Carolina artillery officer prisoners. <https://revwarapps.org/b383.pdf>

Officers, Staff, and Other Prisoners of War at Charleston, B376. Transcribed general officer lists from the Charleston capitulation and later prisoner rolls. <https://revwarapps.org/b376.pdf>

The 4th South Carolina Regiment. Carolana regimental compilation and organizational summary. Useful as a finding aid; company assignments are often unknown. https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/revolution_sc_fourth_regiment.html