

ROOM 17 CUSTOM HOUSE,
BALTIMORE, MD.

August 18, 1911.

The Commissioner of Pensions,

Sir:

John Smothers, Co. G, 9th U.S.C. Inf., of No. 619 Bethel street, Baltimore, is pensioned at twelve dollars per month, and is claiming increase because of age, alleging himself to be seventy-six years old. The Chief of the Civil War Division requested that a special examiner be directed to examine the pensioner's family Bible, furnish a copy of so much of the record as refers to date of his birth, and give his opinion as to the value of said record as evidence.

I called upon the pensioner, took his statement and that of his half-brother, Frank Johnson, and carefully examined the Bible record.

While there is no evidence of erasure or alteration of the birth record of pensioner, the color of the ink indicates that it was written within recent years, and apparently within five or ten years, in spite of the fact that he claims his wife's niece did the writing for him "not long after the war."

The entries of births of members of the family occurring 1870 to 1877 are written in somewhat yellowed ink on the page proper, and below the date line; while the alleged record of pensioner's birth is written at the top of the page, and outside of the lines surrounding the page, and above the title line, "Family Record." This leads to the belief that the record of his birth must have been written up there after the page proper was full, and that the writing below is probably not over thirty years old. Judging from this fact, and also from the fact that the pensioner is still a lusty workman, earning good wages at teaming, and that he does not look to be over sixty, his hair showing no sign of grayness that I could see, I doubt the authenticity of the said birth record. His half brother testifies that the pensioner is seventy-three or seventy-four, and he certainly does not look so old as that.

I examined the registration records of the City of Baltimore, and found that as far back as 1906 the pensioner swore to the registration officers that he was seventy-one years of age, and last fall he gave his age as seventy-five.

I recommend reference of papers to Chief of Civil War Division for consideration.

Very respectfully,

L. S. Perkins
Special Examiner.