

483 CREACH, JOHN

Bookbinder

Stafford County

Bookbinder in Stafford County (1757).

Creach is known to have been part of Virginia's print trade as a result of his presence on the muster rolls of the Virginia Regiment during the French & Indian War. Those rolls provide an unusually detailed view of the individuals that were part of George Washington's command during that conflict, including birthplace and occupation.

The Virginia Regiment was formed in 1754 as an expeditionary force designed to counter an attempt by the French to claim the forks of the Ohio River (today Pittsburgh); Washington was defeated by a combined force of French troops and native warriors in July 1754, and forced to sign a surrender ceding the region to France. Exactly a year later, a British force led by General Edward Braddock suffered a similar fate in the Battle of the Monongahela, with the commander losing his life in the rout and Washington saving the harried survivors. Following Braddock's defeat, Virginia Governor Robert Dinwiddie directed Washington to raise additional troops to defend the western frontier, intent of filling the regiment out to 1000 men – 20 companies of 50 men each. The process was laborious and incomplete, with Washington requiring weekly "size rolls" from his company commanders in order to track the progress of this effort.

The rolls for the company commanded by Capt. Thomas Waggener of Culpeper County (1724-60) are the ones recording Creach's enlistment. In September 1756, he was reported as a corporal in Waggener's unit, having been recruited in Stafford County by Capt. John Fenton Mercer, the brother of Washington's close friend and aid-de-camp, George Mercer. His trade as a bookbinder was noted, as was his birth in Ireland; he was then twenty-five, standing 5' 3" tall with a dark complexion, short brown curly hair, and a scar on his cheek. At that time, Waggener's company was billeted in Winchester as it slowly grew in size. But the unit soon moved out to help construct forts along the South Branch of the Potomac west of Winchester and Woodstock; these were ordered built in the wake of the death of Mercer and several of his men in a native ambush near Fort Edwards, west of Winchester, that April. So in August 1757, Creach is recorded as a sergeant in Waggener's company now stationed at Fort Holland, just north of modern-day Moorefield in Hardy County, West Virginia. Just how long he remained in the Virginia Regiment is uncertain, as he does not appear on any subsequent surviving roll. The regiment itself essentially melted away after a second British force, led by General John Forbes, captured Fort Duquesne in November 1758, so removing the French threat to western Virginia. Creach likely returned to his old trade at about that time, or else used the military bounty warrants that were used to pay Virginia's soldiers to acquire land in the Ohio Country; unfortunately, no record of either alternative has yet to be found for Creach.

The militia rosters of Virginia's colonial militia evince the presence of several bookbinders, like Creach, who worked outside of Williamsburg. That evidence demonstrates that the print trade spread across the colony, albeit tenuously and often in league with other trades,

even where there was not a printing office present.

Personal Data

Born: ca. 1731 In Ireland.

Died: After 1757 Unknown.

Sources: Bockstruck, *Virginia's Colonial Soldiers*.