

Ensign John Wood Sr. - was a Revolutionary War Soldier and an early Illinois Pioneer. John Wood, son of Joseph and Catharine Hedges Wood, was born 27 Nov 1754 in Frederick County, Maryland. John supported the Patriots during the Revolutionary War joining the Maryland Militia from Frederick County. He served first for about two months under Wagonmaster, John Pierce. Presumably he drove wagons of supplies for the Continental Army. On 1 Jan 1777 he was appointed Sergeant in Captain Philip Smith's Company, Colonel James Johnson's Battalion of the Maryland Militia. Most likely a member of the "Flying Camp Battalion." This force would be expected to perform a number of vital functions in New Jersey while General George Washington's army was preoccupied with the defense of New York City. His duties would include guarding the vulnerable Jersey coast, protecting the Continental Army's supply lines, suppressing roving bands of Tories and acting as a ready reserve of reinforcements. His skill and charisma no doubt lead to further promotion.

On 17 Apr 1781 he was commissioned Ensign in Captain Jacob Collins' Company of the same battalion. An Ensign in the Militia at that time was the same as a 2nd Lt in the U.S. Army today. He managed to survive the war uninjured.

John Wood was married twice. His first marriage was on 5 Dec 1781 in Frederick County, Maryland to Martha Ogle (1761-1820), daughter of a miller Alexander Ogle of Frederick County. Alexander Ogle was of royal descent through King John I and King Henry III of England. Alexander Ogle died in 1783 and devised to his daughter, Martha Wood, a negro slave named Rachel and 200 acres of land in Berkeley County, Virginia (today part of West Virginia). John Wood and his family moved to this farm where they lived for ten years. They sold out and returned to Frederick County, Maryland for a short time. They then moved to Kentucky and in 1798 settled in Warren County, Kentucky where they lived until 1808, at which time they again sold out and moved to Wabash Co., IL. John Sr. and his sons explored Illinois, landed at Palmyra, wandered out through the deep forest to open country now called Barney's Prairie. Wood put up a small hickory round-log cabin on the northeast quarter of section 36, township 1 north, range 13 west. His cabin completed, he returned to Kentucky, and in the fall of 1809 brought his family, consisting of his wife and seven children: Alexander, Jeremiah, Eli, John, Mary, Betsey and Martha. This same fall he planted an apple orchard, having brought the young trees with him from Kentucky. From it originated the "Wood" apple, a choice variety.

In the year 1810 he and his neighbors constructed Fort Wood as a protection against the Indians. It was the first thing of its kind in that vicinity, and was occupied by the Barneys, Higgins, Ingrams and others. It consisted of an inclosure about eight or ten feet high, formed by setting halves of small hickory logs side by side in the ground. The specific inducement to the building of this as well as of Forts Barneys and Higgins, was the Herriman massacre in Lawrence county about the year 1809. None of these defenses were ever attacked, the inmates sleeping securely while two of their number stood guard by night. On one occasion the sentries, his son Jeremiah Wood and friend William Barney, deserted their posts, and took the dogs that had been put out to watch, and went coon-hunting. Afterward, the other, they built Fort Barney, where the old historic village of Friendsville now stands.

After the death of his wife, Martha Ogle Wood about 1820, John Wood married Rachel Bratton on 27 Jan 1824. Rachel was the widow of James Bratton (who died in the War of 1812) and a daughter of Enoch Greathouse. She was granted a widow's pension on 21 Apr 1853. John Wood died 14 Nov 1832 and was buried near his first wife, Martha Ogle Wood, in the old

Wood Cemetery not far from Friendsville, Wabash County, Illinois. His grave marker reads "John Wood, Ensign, Maryland Militia."

The children of John and Martha Ogle Wood are: Susanna (born 6 Jan 1783, married Joshua Buchanan), Elizabeth (born 23 Aug 1783, married William Bright), Joseph (born 5 Aug 1786, married Leah Greathouse), Mary (born 15 Jul 1788, married William Barney), Alexander (born 14 Aug 1790, married Priscilla Greathouse), Jeremiah (born 28 Aug 1792, married 12 Jan 1815 Jane Philpott or Phelpatt), Rebecca (born 27 Dec 1794, married Enoch Greathouse), Eli (born 8 Dec 1797, married Mary E. Courter), Martha (born 6 Nov 1800, married Lewis Armstrong, son of John and Elizabeth Martin Armstrong), and John (born 20 Dec 1803, married Katherine Bratton).

Sources: Mary H. Buchanan, Wabash County, Illinois History Vol. #1 1993. Mt. Carmel Daily Republican Register, July 5, 1929, US Census Records, Combined History of Edwards, Lawrence and Wabash Counties, Illinois. The publisher is J. L. McDonough & Co., Philadelphia and Edwardsville, IL. 188. US Military Pension Records