

[Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements and Rosters](#)

Virginia documents pertaining to James Barron VAS1949  
Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris.

[From [Library of Virginia Legislative Petitions Digital Collection](#)/ Elizabeth City County]

To the Honorable the Speakers & Members of the General Assembly, the petition of Samuel & James Baron [sic: Samuel Barron, pension application R6 and James Barron W12264] Heirs and Representatives of Commadore [blank; see endnote] deceased Humbly sheweth

That your petitioner's Father during the American Contest took an active and decided part in favor of his Country and at a very early period of the War was appointed to the command of the State Boat the Liberty equipped by the public to guard the Shores and Islands of the Chesapeake from the Ravages and plunder of the British Barges. – That our petitioners Father continued in the actual Command of this Vessel untill the establishment of a State Navy, the command of which, then, by reason of services and seniority, devolv'd upon him – that he discharged the duties of this, his Command, with diligence and fidelity, untill the derangement of the said Navy; after which, he was retained in his original command of the Liberty, to which it was thought necessary to add, one other Vessel – namely the Boat Patriot, in order to guard against such predatory descents as above mentioned.

That your petitioners Father was not only among the first who step'd forward in the cause of his Country, but was constantly engaged in her service from the commencement of Hostilities, untill long after the Ratification of her Independence by the treaty of Paris. – Your petitioners conceive that their Fathers continuance in Service for this space of time being made to appear there will remain no doubts in the mind of a single Member of your Honorable House, of his claim to Commutation being just and equitable, and such an one, as will call on the judgement and feelings of Gentlemen to consider on it's own principles unconnected with claims of a similar nature.

Your petitioners rely on the justice of the Honorable the Legislature in this as in all other Instances, and pray that the Auditor of Public Accounts may be directed to issue to them Certificates for the Commutation due their said Father for his long & faithful services the which having never issued in his life time, now only properly demandable by, and payable to them – And as in duty bound your petitioners will pray

Sam Baron Jas. Baron

29 Oct. 93 Claims/ reasonable

[From [Library of Virginia Legislative Petitions Digital Collection](#)/ Norfolk (City)]

At a period during our revolutionary war, when the contest for liberty became doubtful, and the stoutest hearts began to quail for the consequences, that might probably result to those who had rendered themselves conspicuous in the struggle for independence, the Government of Virginia, found it necessary to make tempting offers of reward to those who would adhere to the cause, and serve faithfully to the end of it.

Those offers of a liberal reward, however, depended on a contingency but little more to be relied on than the termination of the contest itself. It was, indeed, a promise of both land and money, to be paid to the officers of the Virginia state line, and also to those of her Navy, in proportions suitable to the rank they held at the close of the war.

My father, Commodore James Barron, commenced his career in the defence of his country, in 1775, as the Captain of a Minute Company at Hampton, composed of the sea-faring young men of that town, (for Hampton was then a place of importance,) but was very soon after called on to take command of the armed pilot boat sch'r [schooner] Liberty, mounting ten two-pounders. This vessel was the only one that ran the whole war, and made more prizes than any ten vessels in the State Navy, although, at one period, we had fifty sail of various descriptions,– ships, brigs, sloops, schooners, galleys and gun-boats, in many of which my father served; but as it was his duty to be constantly on the look out for the enemy, much of his time was spent in the Liberty. My brother and myself were both of us attached to the State

Navy, some years before the close of the war: I think in about 1779.

But now to return to the boasted reward of land and commutation, up to this day, with the exception of two thousand acres of land, out of the eight thousand, which was my father's portion, and a small part of the commutation pay, we have never received one cent, but have paid somewhere about sixteen hundred dollars to different agents, to recover our claim.

I am therefore inclined to think, that our best course is to abandon the land claim, which we have endeavoured to recover, (which would not remunerate [sic] us for the expense that we have been at) to the State, and solicit a re-settlement of the claim, on terms, such as a faithful public servant is justly entitled to, with due consideration for the great disadvantage which has attended the heirs of Commodore James Barron, in consequence of the delay which they have been subjected to, from the circumstance of the land which was selected for him having been previously disposed of to others, under the sanction of treasury warrants. The State of Kentucky, also, interposed serious difficulties to the establishment of those claims.

Commodore James Barron served, as before stated, from the commencement of the war to its close, and after, until his death in 1787. During the war, he loaned the State ten thousand pounds in money, and stores that would have commanded the cash, and could not be obtained without it. His services were various—at some periods of the war he was called upon to serve as a member of the board of war; at others, he was associated with the Commissaries, to aid them in procuring supplies of provisions for the army, and particularly so at the siege of York Town; he was there associated with Colonel [Timothy] Pickering Commissary General of the Continental Army, at Trebel's Landing [Trebell's Landing on James River 6 mi W of Yorktown], and collected all the force that could be procured for the transportation of provisions for Gen. Washington's army—even canoes were resorted to, so drained was the State of all kinds of craft.

Commodore Barron became the senior officer of the Virginia Navy, some time in the latter part of the year 1779, and was commissioned Commodore over all the vessels of the Commonwealth, on the 3d of July, 1780.—That commission, signed by Thomas Jefferson, as Governor of the State, I have now in my possession.

It may not be amiss here, to remark, (in justice to my father's claim) that both my brother and myself, have received this reward of land and commutation pay as revolutionary officers, in the same service.

The plea set up by the Government of Virginia, that the heirs of Commodore Barron had not legally contended for his claim, is new to us, as we have, at all times, since the close of the revolutionary war, had an agent; and in the course of the time that has elapsed, we have employed several, to whom the money herein stated to have been paid, was bestowed as reward for their services; but we have as yet, not received the slightest benefit 500 of the 2000 acres, that were free from encumbrance, were given to Mr. David Brodie, of Hampton, for his services, as one of our agents, and by him given to a Mr. Boggs, for a farm on Mill Creek in Elizabeth City Co., and estimated at the rate of two dollars per acre, the price that the State of Virginia was to allow in lieu of the land, in the event of its not being put into the possession of the officers to whom it was promised.

Major Crogan [possibly William Croghan], of the Virginia State line, was the first agent, appointed by the officers of the army and navy, to attend to their land claims, and select and survey the portion of each; and no doubt exists, that that worthy officer performed his duty in this matter faithfully; but he did not probably know, at the time he was performing this duty for his brother officers, that the State Government had already disposed of a great portion of those lands, under the treasury warrant system, which was practised in those pressing days of necessity; and it is a well known fact that the greater part of these lands have long since been held and settled by those who thus obtained them: and further, that any contention for them would be useless, if not absurd, for so it has proved to us, after sixty years of incessant exertion and expense.

For the other Heirs and Himself, JAMES BARRON.

Dec'r. 18<sup>th</sup> 1848 ref'd to Claims

on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of June 1783 Warrant no 711 issued to James Barron Esq for his services as a  
Commodore of the State navy from Decr 25 1775 to April 7<sup>th</sup> 1783  
Decr 19<sup>th</sup> 1848 E. C. Robinson

[The following are from [bounty-land claims in the Library of Virginia](#). Some online images are not clear enough for transcription. Two other documents are not transcribed because they add no new information.]

To his Excellency the Governor of Virg'a./ and to the Honorable Council of State

The undersigned the heirs of Commodore James Barron dec'd. of the Virginia State Navy respectfully represent that he was duly commissioned a Commodore with the title of Commander in Chief of the State Navy, and served therein eight years during the war of the revolution. That he as a Commissioned Commodore with the chief command of that division of the State forces, ranked with the officer commanding another division of the forces on land, which was a Major General. That by the act of 1779 (10<sup>th</sup> Hen. P160) He became entitled to a bounty in land equal in quantity to that allowed an officer of equal rank in the army. That by the act of 1780 (10 Hen. P375) 17000 acres of land wee allowed to a Major General and 10000 acres to a Brigadier General for three years services, and by the act of 1782 (11 Hen P84 Sect 9) an additional allowance of one sixth was granted for every years service over six. The undersigned further represent that the title of Commodore was in former times, and is at this day, only a title by courtesy – given to a senior Captain, to perform some special service with a squadron, & that Captain retains the title and rank no longer than the command; and whilst in command he ranks (according to the usages of our own & of the British Navy) with the Brigadier General. But Commodore Barron was duly commissioned a Commodore and was commander in Chief of the Naval forces of Virginia, cooperating with the land forces in the war generally, and not assigned to the performance of any special duty. Consequently he ranked above a Commodore by mere courtesy, and is certainly entitled to the bounty of a Major General, which is 15000 acres with the addition of 5000 acres for the extra years over six – equal in the whole for his eight years services to 20000 acres. they shew that they have recd. warrant No 711 for only 7777<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> acres, leaving a balance yet due of 12,223 acres – which they pray may be allowed them

James Barron son & heir

Samuel Barron son of Samuel Barron [R6] dec'd. the  
other heir of Commodore James Barron decd

Copy The Commonwealth of Virginia

To James Barron, Esquire. Greeting

Know you that our Governor, with the advice of the Council of State doth constitute and appoint you Commodore of the armed vessels of this Commonwealth.

In testimony whereof, these our Letters are sealed with the seal of the Commonwealth, and made patent.

Witness Thomas Jefferson, Esquire, our said Governor at Richmond, this third day of July in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty. signed Th. Jefferson

Council Chamber June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1783

I do certify that James Barron is entitled to the proportion of Land allowed a Commodore of the State navy, for service from December 25<sup>th</sup> 1775 to april 7<sup>th</sup> 1783. Thomas Meriwether

Benjamin Harrison

A warrant for 7777<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> acres iss'd to Jas Barron Esq'r.

June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1783

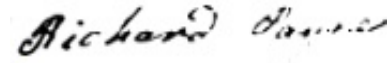
An Exam'd Copy

Apl 2<sup>nd</sup> 1830

Teste/ Wm Selden, R. L. Off. [Register of the Land Office]

Personally appeared before me William Hope a Justice of the peace Richard Payne, and being duly sworn on the holy bible, states that he was well acquainted with Midshipman James Barron (now Comodore James Barron) said Barron was a young Midshipman & performed served on board of the Schooner Liberty & I think was occasionally on board of other vessels attached to the squadron command by his Father, he was in the service at least three years till the peace of 1783.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand & seal this 8<sup>th</sup> day of April 1833. Wm Hope JP



Before me William Hope a Justice of the peace in & for the County of Elizabeth City appeared William Jennings [pension application S5615] an Old and respectable inhabitant of said County and being duly sworn, states the he served as a mariner in the State Navy of Virginia during the revolutionary War, and was well acquainted with Midshipman James Barron (now Comodore James Barron) of said Navy, the said Barron was a young Midshipman and performed service during the said War for at least three years until the peace of 1783 he served principally in the Schooner Liberty & as an aid to his Father visiting the various vessels composing the fleet.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand & seal this 8<sup>th</sup> day of April 1833 Wm Hope JP



[The following are from [rejected claims in the Library of Virginia](#). Some documents are not transcribed, because they are repetitious.]

Washington October the 18<sup>th</sup> 1838

To his Excellency David Campbell governor of Virginia

Dear Sir/ I had intended to call in person, and explain to you the contents and purport of the accompanying papers. But circumstances deny me this pleasure, and I now use the freedom of sending them to you, with a request that you will act and decide upon the matter submitted to your consideration, as soon as it will suit your convenience to do so.

My father the late Commodore James Barron entered the Naval Service of Virginia in december 1775 as Captain, and was Commissioned Commodore of the armed vessels of this commonwealth in July 1780 (after I had entered the service as a Midshipman) and to my certain knowledge, continued in the Naval Service of Virginia Commanding (until and after the close of the war), the armed vessels the Patriot and Liberty until his death, which occurred on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 1787.

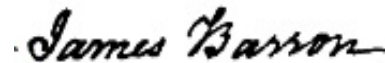
Mr. Vincent of Norfolk in passing through here, on his return home, was obliging enough to furnish me at my request, with an abstract of the various laws of Virginia upon the subject of Land Bounties, promised to the officers and soldiers for Revolutionary Services &c, and the questions which I now respectfully submit to your consideration, are

1<sup>st</sup>. Are not the heirs of my deceased father, entitled to receive from Virginia a Bounty in Lands for his services commencing in december 1775 and until his death in May 1787 by the Act of May 1787 notwithstanding the termination of the War in 1783 – deducting therefrom the Land already allowed. And

2<sup>d</sup>ly Whether in computing the quantity of Land, in reference to his grade &c, he should not be considered as ranking with a Major General of the Army, and allowed accordingly.

Mr. Vincents letter to me of the 21<sup>st</sup> September I also envelope and/ I have the honor to be

Dear Sir Very Respectfully your Excellys most Obedient Servant



Adjutant Generals Office/ Washington Oct 16, 1838.

Sir [James Barron U. S. Navy, Washington]. Agreeably to your request, I herewith respectfully annex so much of the Regulations of the service touching “The relative rank of the officers of the Army & Navy,” as may be supposed to be applicable to the case of the late Commodore Barron, of the War of the Revolution, who I understand was the Naval Officer Commanding in the State of Virginia, i.e. the Naval Commander in Chief in the service of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Extract:

“The Officer highest in rank in the Navy to rank with the Officer highest in rank in the Army.

The spirit if not the letter of this Regulation it is fair to presume has always been recognized in our service; and in as much as the designation of rank, in the Land & Naval forces, are so entirely different, it would not be practicable to express in terms the relative rank of the Officers of the two services, without resort to the mode indicated by the language of the above Regulation. It may therefore be fairly asserted, that the Commission which I understand your Father held in the Naval Service of the Commonwealth of Virginia, during the Revolutionary War, he being at the time the senior Naval Officer of the State or Commanding in Chief – placed him in the same scale of relative rank, with the highest officer Commanding the Land forces of that Commonwealth.

I am sir/ Very respectfully/ Your Obed't. Servt./ R Jones Adj Genl U.S.A.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> Vol. Journals of Congress page 549 is the following resolution. “Resolved that the rank of the Naval Officers be to the rank of officers in the land service as follows,

Admiral as	General
Vice Admiral	Lt. General
Rear Admiral	Major General
Commodore	B. General

There were no Admirals or commissioned Commodores in the Continental Navy but there was a commander in Chief of the Fleet appointed, see same Volume page 213. this Commander in Chief would certainly out rank a Commodore by courtesy, who is entitled to the rank of Brigadier General. In Hennings statutes at large Vol. 9<sup>th</sup> page 83 The Committee of safety are empowered to fit out vessels and appoint officers among the rest “a chief commander of the whole, as Commodore” and in the same Volume page 196 the number of Seamen is not to exceed 1300 exclusive of officers. Commodore Barron was the commander in Chief of the Navy of Virginia and both Commodore Hopkins & himself according to the rule established by Congress ranked with a Major General.

NOTE: There were three Commodore Barron's: James Barron, Sr, Commodore of the Virginia State Navy, the subject of these transcriptions; his son James Barron, Jr., [pension application W12264] Midshipman in the State Navy and later Commodore of the United States Navy; and Samuel Barron [pension application R6], also a Commodore of the USN.