

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

Virginia documents pertaining to John Nicholson VAS3845  
Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris.

[The following are from [bounty-land records in the Library of Virginia](#).]

Elizabeth City County, Towit:

The affidavit of James Burke [James Burk S6649] taken this 12<sup>th</sup> day of July 1833, before me, a Justice of the Peace in & for the county aforesaid, as follows – that he, the said James Burke was a warrant officer of the Virginia State Navy in the war of the revolution and served three years as such – that he knew well John Nicholson who was formerly a citizen of Accomack county, in the state of Virginia, but removed to Elizabeth City County, where he died and where his heirs now reside – that the That the said Nicholson was early in the war an officer of the Continental Navy, and served as such four or five years, he believes, until after the siege of York in 1781 – that when this affiant last saw said Nicholson, he was captain of the Continental frigate, and this was late in the war. Sworn to by the said affiant this 12<sup>th</sup> day of July 1833.

R. G. Banks JP

I certify that I knew John Nicholson formerly of the county of Accomack afterwards of Elizabeth City County. I know that said Nicholson was a Citizen of Virginia. One of his sons was County surveyor for Elizabeth City County, and died in that county. His heirs lived in this county and Edward Rudd of said county married one of his grand children. Nicholson was an officer of the Continental Navy.

[8 Dec 1851]

George Phillips

To the Executive of Virginia

The petition of the Undersigned Heirs at law of John Nicholson dec'd respectfully sheweth: That the said Nicholson was a citizen of the State of Virginia and served as an officer of the continental Navy in the war of the Revolution. See affidavit of George Phillips marked A, also of James Burke marked B. Being a citizen of Virginia, he became entitled to land bounty, as tho' he had served in the Virginia line. See Resolution Gen'l Assembly Va, Nov. 27 1779, 10 Vol. Hen. Stat. at Large [Henings Statutes at Large] P. 539.

The only inquiry is did he serve a sufficient length of time to Intitle him to bounty land?

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of August 1776, said Nicholson was commissioned second lieutenant of the continental Ship Washington, as will appear from the following extract from the Journals of Congress:

“Aug. 22 1776. The marine committee having recommended Dudley Saltonsall [sic: Dudley Saltonstal] to take command of the frigate Trumbull, Jonathan Maltbay to be first Lieutenant, and David Phipps to be second Lieutenant of the saide frigate; — Wilson to be first Lieutenant of the Washington, and John Nicholson to be Second Lieutenant of ditto, John Hodge to be commander of the Montgomery frigate: Resolved that they be accepted, and commissions granted to them accordingly.” Vol. 1. P. 752  
[[https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(jc00566\)\)](https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCID+@lit(jc00566)))]:]

Subsequently Nicholson was promoted to the rank of Captain, being commander of the Hornet, as appears by the following extract:

“Thursday July 13 1778. On application being made by John Nicholson late captain of the Horner, and also an application being received from Henry Johnson, late Captain of the brig Lexington in the Service of the U. States, which vessels they have respectively lost, desiring to know which way they are to proceed in order to have their conduct inquired into: Ordered, that the said application be referred to the Marine Committee, and that they take order thereon.” Jour. Cong. Vol. 2. P. 622.

[[https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(jc01157\)\)](https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCID+@lit(jc01157)))]:]

These two entries shew a service of nearly two years; but we find Captain Nicholson again in service as Captain in the Continental frigate Deane. See following extract:

“Tuesday, Aug. 8<sup>th</sup> 1780. The board of Admiralty to whom was referred the petition of Capt. Henry Mitchell, report:

That the vessel & cargo mentioned in the said petition as having been seized by Captain Nicholson of the Continental frigate Deane, being libelled in the maritime court in the State of Massachusetts bay, is in course of procedure to bring the legality of the capture to a decision, and therefore it is inexpedient for Congress to interfere: Resolved, that Congress agree to said Report.” Jour. Cong. Vol. 3. P. 505.

[[https://www.constitution.org/uslaw/cont-cong/17\\_journals\\_continental\\_congress.pdf](https://www.constitution.org/uslaw/cont-cong/17_journals_continental_congress.pdf)]

Thus it appears that Capt. Nicholson was in service from the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of August 1776 to at least Aug. 8<sup>th</sup> 1780 – a period of nearly four years. Land bounty is asked as for a captain of the Navy.

James Fitchell & Ed. Rudd, heirs &c per [undeciphered]