

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

Pension Application of Robert Bolling R19363

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris

To the Government of the United States

Your petitioners Susan Gilliam (formerly Susan Bolling) and Robert Bolling Jr, both of the County of Brunswick and state of Virginia humbly represent to the Commissioner of Pensions and the Government of the United States – that their father Robert Bolling Sr deceased went into the Navy of Virginia in the service of the United States at the beginning of the war of the Revolution; that he was promoted to the rank of first Lieutenant at a very early period of the war, and continued to act in that capacity until its close; That not many years after the war was ended, as will appear from the accompanying certificate fo the probate of his will, – their father died, leaving your petitioners infants, under the care of an aged mother; That their father never received during his life any compensation in money or land for his long and arduous services during the war; That in the year 1847, upon satisfactory evidence presented to the Executive of Virginia your petitioners were allowed the bounty land to which a first Lieutenant in the continental line was entitled, for services from the commencement to the close of the war; That his heirs regarding this allowance, as less than his service, during the whole war, as first Lieutenant in the Navy, entitled him to, and considering the amount allowed as an oversight or clerical error in the Executive of Virginia, again in the year 1847 brought the matter before the Government Council and were allowed the additional land bounty to which a Lieutenant in the Navy is entitled over an officer of the same rank in the army; That your petitioners having learned some fifteen or eighteen years ago that their Government had granted five years full pay, and half pay for life to all the patriotic soldiers of the Revolution, who served to the end of the war, and being fully assured that their father had served faithfully and efficiently throughout the whole war, they procured the most ample evidence in support of his claim and employed a Mr. Wood, an agent, engaged in prosecuting such claims to present it to the government for payment, that this agent proving incompetent or negligent did not attend to the claim, and suffered the evidences in its support, which had been procured at great inconvenience and labor by the claimants, to get out of his and their possession; That upon being applied to for the papers some time afterwards he stated they were left in the hands of the late Governor Gilmer who was at that time acting as commissioner for the state of Virginia to adjust claims with the general government; That these proofs confided to Mr. Wood have not been recovered by your petitioners; that a search is now being made among the papers of Gov’r. Gilmer for them, that should they be found your petitioners confidently believe that any other testimony in behalf of their claim would be unnecessary and superfluous; That should those papers be recovered in a short time, they will be forwarded without delay to the commissioner of Pension; That most of the parties who then testified in favor of the claim have since died, and your petitioners, who are engaged in agricultural pursuits and live in a retired part of the country, have not since that time made an effort to secure the money due from the government for their father’s revolutionary services; That they did not until lately know that complete testimony was yet at their command to prove clearly the justice of this claim; That even in the absence of the full proofs entrusted to Mr. Wood, your petitioners feel happy and confident in the belief that the claims of their father for commutation or five years full pay and half pay for life are fully made out and supported by the indisputable proofs herewith presented and by record evidence at the command of the government; That relying upon its merits your petitioners most cheerfully and confidently submit their claim – with the evidences of its validity and justness to the decision of their government – humbly praying that in allowing the claim, the interest, which has been so long accruing, and which your petitioners are informed has been generally and recently allowed upon similar claims may be paid to them; And that your petitioners having an abiding sense of the unsullied good faith and just dealing of their government

cannot be otherwise than confident that their reasonable petition will be granted – your petitioners desire now to call the particular attention of the government to the different kinds of evidence filed in this case, which they trust will be deemed conclusive in establishing their claim and in authorising the views and reasonable expectation set forth in this petition. – They would first call attention to the fact that the claim for their father’s land bounty has been twice at different times and in different forms before the governor and council of Virginia, and that on both occasions it was allowed for service to the end of the war. In the second place to the full, conclusive and minute deposition of Capt’n. R. Y. Bland, who is an old gentleman belonging to one of the oldest & best Virginia families, was an inmate of Robert Bolling’s family and is his administrator; Capt’n. Bland has ever borne the character of an honest, exemplary & christian gentleman; He is in a high degree impressed with the solemnity of an oath and will give no information, of the truth of which, he is not positively certain. – The deposition of Thomas Woodlief (a certified copy of which will be found with these papers) testifying to most of the material facts contained in Capt’n. Bland’s affidavit, is worthy of the most weighty consideration – it was upon this deposition and evidence in the state department at Richmond that Robert Bolling’s land bounty was allowed by the Executive of Virginia – Both these affiants state that they have every reason to believe that Lieutenant Bolling served until the end of the war, and such was the positive testimony of other highly respectable gentlemen who have testified in the case, but these gentlemen have since died and their affidavits have been misplaced by the agent referred to before. – The particular attention of the government is also respectfully directed to the report on this claim of the late John H. Smith Esq then commissioner of Revolutionary claims for the State of Virginia, it can be found in the acts of the General assembly of Virginia for the session of 1835 & 1836 and in a separate book printed by the Legislature and marked or entitled “Revolutionary Claims,” under the head of Document No. 6 and at pages 77 & 78 of this latter publication it will be found in the following words – to wit – “Bolling Robert, Lieutenant, Navy – He was Lieutenant in the Virginia Navy in 1776, was promoted first Lieutenant, and served to the end of the war (see the affidavit of William Whitfield, on file in the office of the Executive department.) He received $2666\frac{2}{3}$ acres of land in June 1817, for a service for and during the war. His heirs are entitled to additional bounty land. The Lieutenants in the state Navy have generally been allowed 4000 acres of land for a service of three years. It appears from the journals of the Navy board, that prior to October 16th 1776, Robert Bolling was commander of the schooner Peace & Plenty, and that he was recommended January 28th 1777 first Lieutenant of the Manley Galley vice Sturdivant promoted. There are many entries in the Navy journal shewing that he was in service after that time, and at different times. His service was from some time in 1776 (prior to October) to the end of the war.”

Among their papers, to which the attention of the Government is solicited, filed in this case, will be found a certified copy of some extracts from the Navy Journal relating to Mr. Bolling’s service, also a certified copy of orders and warrant for Robert Bolling’s land bounty from the Register’s Officer of Virginia, also a copy of the will of Robert Bolling Sr and of its probate from the Clerk’s office of Dinwiddie County, – a testimonial from the Rev. Mr. Webb Rector of Bath Parish of the estimable character and high standing of old Capt’n. Bland, – Powers of Attorney from Mrs. Susan Gilliam, Robert Bolling Jr. and R. Y. Bland administrator of Robert Bolling Sr. to E. H. Smith [Edwin Harvie Smith], &c &c. The deposition of William Whitfield, said by the late commissioner to be on file in the Executive department of Virginia, cannot be found in that department: – The Secretary of the Commonwealth says it has been misplaced among other papers in his office or has been withdrawn by some one from the office.

Your petitioners take pleasure in stating that their representative in Congress the Hon. R. K. Meade has given them valuable information in relation to this claim, has manifested a warm interest in their success and is, they are assured, satisfied of its justice. He is well acquainted with all the facts of the case. Your petitioners determining to dispense with the intervention of a paid agent or attorney to prosecute this claim do most confidently submit it to the decision of a government which is proverbially just and generous to the patriotic soldiers of the Revolution, and whose sympathies have ever been with

their widows and children.

Humbly begging that this reasonable petition may be granted your petitioners will pray &c.

[signed] Susan Gilliam [signed] Robert Bolling

Brunswick County June 28th 1850

[The items transcribed below were selected from the 90 pages in the file because they include significant additional military or family details. Significant details from other items are abstracted in the endnotes.]

[The following are copies certified by the Auditor of Virginia on 25 Mar 1847 as being from the Naval Journal.]

“Tuesday the 28th January 1777.

Robert Bolling is recommended to his Excellency the Governor and the Hon’ble the Council as a proper person to be appointed first Lieutenant of the Manley Galley in the room of Lieutenant Sturdivant who is recommended Captain of the said Galley” From page 164

“Thursday the 11th day of December 1777.

Ordered that the keeper of public store deliver to Lieutenant Robert Bolling nineteen Blankets, a paint brush, for the use of the Manley Galley” From page 328

[The following is from an undated copy. Written vertically in the margin: “X applicant.” “Com’re” = Commodore. “Mas.” = Sailing Master. Numbers of pension applications are added in brackets.]

Resigned Officers, Navy

	Ishmael Andrews Lt.
not named as res’d	Robert Bolling Lt.
	[John Thomas] Boucher Com’re.
	Robert Blaws Lt.
	John Barnett Lt.
	James Cocke Capt.
not named as res’d	John Cheshire Lt. [R26]
not named	Robt. Conway [Robert Conway] Capt.
X	Ch’r. Calvert [Christopher Calvert] Capt.
	John Calvert Capt.
not res’d	Wm Deane [William Deane]
not named X	Wm Demford [William Demford] Mas.
res’d X	Robt Elam [Robert Elam] Lt.
res’d	John Hamilton Lt.
res’d	Argyle Herbert Lt.
res’d	Sam’l Hanway [Samuel Hanway R4583] Capt.
res’d	Lewis Jones Lt. [W7904]
r	Aaron Jeffries Lt.
r	Staff’d. Lightbourne [Stafford Lightburne] Lt.
r	Henry Lightbourne [Henry Lightburne] Lt.
r	Richard Montague Lt. [R77]
r	Robert Millina [Robert Milliner] Lt
r	Fr’s. Messares [Francis Messeares] Lt.
r	Richard Marsh [Richard March] Lt.
r	John Pettygrew Lt.
r	Thos Pollard [Thomas Pollard] Lt.
r	Benj’a Rust [Benjamin Rust] Lt.

r Dan'l Richardson [Daniel Richardson] Lt [R86]
 r Wm Richardson [William Richardson] Lt.
 r Joshua Singleton Lt [S7510]
 r Henry Stratton Lt
 r John Thrall Lt
 r John Taylor Lt
 r X Wm. Underhill [William Underhill] Capt.
 r X Johannes Watson Capt.
 r Isaac Younghusband Capt.
 36.
 Died before 1784
 Benj'a Chapin Surg[eo]n. [R25]
 Wm Christian [William Christian] Lieut
 Phil Chamberlayne [Philip Chamberlaine] Lt.
 Wm Christie [William Cristie] Surgeon
 James Gray Lt. [R56]
 John Harris Lt. [R41]
 George Hunter Surg'n
 Bannister Howe, Master
 Wm. Ivy [William Ivy] Capt [R46]
 John Pitt Surg'n.
 Joel Sturdevant [Joel Sturdivant] Capt.
 John Shields Lt.
 Robt Tompkins [Robert Tompkins] Capt. [R102]
 13.

The above resignations & deaths appear on the records at Richmond

[In different handwriting:]

Also Capt [Eleazer] Callender – [two illegible words]

Wm Christian [William Christian]

B. Chamberlyne [Byrd Chamberlayne, R22] Lieut

W. Chamberlayne

Pettigrew – and many others –

[The following group of orders was certified on 22 Aug 1853 in Richmond as having been copied from "Journals of the Navy Board from its organization on the 8 July 1776 to the 5 March 1779 both inclusive, and from the 6th March to the 23 1779 both inclusive, on which last mentioned day their duties were assigned to the boards of war or trade; a journal of the proceedings of the Board of war, from the 30th day of June 1779 to the 23 March 1780, both inclusive."]

Wednesday 16 October 1776

Ordered that a warrant issue to Robert Bolling for two pounds six shillings and three pence for necessaries furnished the Schooner Flub.[?] Peace and Plenty—

Wednesday 13 Nov 1776

Orderd that a warrant issue to Lieut Robert Bolling for nine pounds for the pay of the seamen on board the Schooner Peace and Plenty as pr. Aut.[?]

Tuesday 28 January 1777

Robert Bolling is recommended to his excellency the governor and the hon'ble the Council as a proper person to be appointed first Lieutenant of the Manley Galley in the room of Lieutenant Sturdevant who is recommended Captain of the said Galley.

Friday 21 March 1777.

Ordered that Mr William Holt deliver unto Robert Bolling One thousand pounds of Bawn, one ton of square Bar Iron, three Barrels of flour, and as much pork as he may want for the use of the vessels building at So. Quay [South Quay].

Tuesday April 29th 1777.

Mr. Charles Talliaferro [sic: Charles Taliaferro] of this city is requested to let Lieutenant Robert Bolling have the use of a flat bottomed Boat to land some cordage from on board the Manley Galley now lying at the College landing

Thursday May 1 1777.

Ordered that Col William Aylett [Deputy Commissary General] deliver to Lieutenant Bolling two pounds of sewing twine and half a dozen sail needles for the use of the Manley Galley

Thursday May 1, 1777.

Lieutenant Robert Bolling received orders to proceed with the Manley Galley to Portsmouth and deliver the Cordage (tallyed Maxwell) to Capt. Paul Loyall or the master builder at the ship yard in Gosport and that for the Caswell Galley to Captain Collins at Portsmouth and proceed to York for further orders.

[part missing at bottom of page] thousand pounds of Bawn, three Barrells of Beef, six Barrells of Bread, one barrel of Flour, one Box of Candles one Barrell of Whiskey, one Barrel of Rum and two Bushells of salt for the use of the Manley Galley.

Orderd that Colo William Aylett deliver unto Lieut. Robert Bolling two Lanthorns and six pounds of twine for the use of the Manley Galley

Wednesday 10 September 1777.

Ordered that a warrant issue to Lieut Robert Bolling for fifty pounds upon account to furnish necessaries for the use of the Manley Galley.

Wednesday 10th Septem'r. 1777.

Ordered that the keeper of the public store deliver unto Lieut Robert Bolling thirty six waistcoats, thirty six pair of Stockings, twelve Hatts and twelve pair of shoes for the use of the Manley Galley.

Wednesday 10th day of Decem'r 1777

Ordered that William Holt deliver to Lieutenant Robert Bolling two Barrells of Beef two ditto of flour then ditto Bread one box of Candles and one tierce of Taffier for the use of the Manley Galley

Orderd that Capt George Elliott deliver to Lieutenant Ro Bolling six Barrells of the Irish pork he brought from Cumberland for the use of the Manley Galley.

Orderd that Captain George Elliott retain eight Barrells of the Irish pork, that he brought from Cumberland on board his Galley for her use, and that he deliver ten Barrells being the remainder to Lieutenant Robert Bolling for the use of the Manley Galley

Ordered that the keeper of the public store deliver to Lieutenant Robert Bolling for the use of the people on board the Manley Galley forty nine yards of linen, twenty four pair of shoes, 24 hats 126 yds chex 51 yds cloth 10 yds Corderoy 4 yds muslin and 11 handkerchiefs upon his paying for the same.

Thursday the 11 day of December 1777

Ordered that the keeper of the public store deliver to Lieut. Robert Bolling nineteen blankets a paint brush for the use of the Manley Galley.

Friday the 12th day of December 1777.

Ordered that the keeper of the Public Magazine deliver to Lieut. Robert Bolling one hundred pounds of powder for the use of the Manley Galley.

Ordered that a warrant issue to Lieutenant Robert Bolling for fifty pounds upon account for the purpose of furnishing necessaries for the use of the Manly Galley.

Brunswick County Sct: Thomas Woodlief aged 57 years personally appeared before me Hartwell Tucker a majistrate of the aforesaid County and made oath that he was well acquainted with Robert Boling Sen'r.

Decd at the commencement of the Revolutionary War between America and Great Britain, and knows that the said Bolling went into the Navy of the United States [sic] in the year 1776 as a Lieutenant and shortly afterwards was promoted to a first Lieutenancy: That he this affiant remained in the navy about 12 months at which time he left it, That the said Bolling still continued in the Navy and he always heard & believes that the said Bolling remained in the Navy during the war. Given under my hand and seal this 10th day of July 1815. [Certified copy.]

The affidavit of R. Y. Bland of Dinwiddie given under oath before me E. H. Smith a Justice of the peace for the said county this 18th day of May 1850–

Question 1st. Do you know whether or not Robert Bolling deceased formerly of Dinwiddie County in the State of Virginia served in the Revolutionary war?

Answer to 1st Q. He certainly did serve in the Revolutionary war.

Question 2nd. In which Branch of the service and in what capacity did he serve?

Answer 2nd He served as a Lieutenant in the Virginia State Navy, I have often heard him talk about this service.

Question 3rd Did he serve throughout the whole war?

Answer 3rd Mr. Bolling served to the close of the war and I have always heard and believed throughout the whole war.

Question 4th In what year did he die?

Answer 4th He did in the year 1790, or about that time

Question 5th Did he make a will?

Answer 5th He did and I was present when his last will was made.

Question 6th Did he leave a widow?

Ans'r 6th Yes he did.

Quest'n 7th Did he marry her before the close of the war?

Ans'r 7th He married her in the year 1780, in December of that year according to the best of my recollection.

Quest'n 8th Where & when did he die?

Ans'r 8 He died at his residence in Dinwiddie in the year 1790

Quest'n 9th How many Children did he leave, name them?

Ans'r 9 He left only two children Susan & Robert.

Question 10th Are these children of Mr. Bolling now living?

Ans'r 10th Yes Susan married the late Sam'l. Gilliam of Brunswick county in which county both she & her brother now reside.

Question 11th Is Mr. Bolling's widow living or dead, if dead when did she died and where?

Ans'r 11th She died in the County of Brunswick in the month of August 1832

Question 12th When & where did Mr. Bolling marry his wife, and what was her maiden name?

Ans'r 12th They were married in what was then the lower part of Amelia County, this part of Amelia has since been cut off and forms now Nottoway County, in the year 1780, her maiden name was Clara Yates.

Quest'n 13th Did Mr. Bolling's widow ever marry after his death?

Ans'r. 13th She never did marry after Mr. Bollings death, I was an inmate of the family before & after his death.

Question 14th How many children did she leave, what their names, which are living, did she leave a will?

Ans'r She left two children Susan & Robert, they are both still living, She did not make or leave a will.

[signed] R. Y. Bland

NOTES:

A letter from E. H. Smith dated 25 Aug 1851 states: "It appears, from manuscript Book entitled 'Virginia Navy Papers' and compiled by order of the Legislature of Virginia by John H. Smith Esqr the late Commissioner of Revolutionary claims for this state, that Robert Bolling was a Lieutenant at different times during the war in 3 of the naval vessels of the state to wit the Peace & Plenty The Manly Gally and The Brig Musquito [sic: *Mosquito*].... On page 21st of 'Virginia Navy Papers' is this order to wit 'July 5, 1779 The Manly – S. Guard [*Safeguard*], Hero, Lewis and Page gallies and ship Glouster [sic: *Gloucester*], ordrd to be dismantled, & their stores and men &c transferred to other vessels of war.'"

A letter dated 10 Oct 1851 refers to an 1834 affidavit by Maj. James Blick (pension application S6664) stating that Robert Bolling "of Dinwiddie – formerly of Prince George – was a Lieutenant in the commencement of the war of the Revolution, that he was in the Continental Line and served from the commencement to the close of the war, that he never resigned his commission.."

The file includes a copy of the last will and testament of Robert Bolling, signed on 10 Nov 1790, with the following directives: sale of two lots at Broadway in Prince George County and five acres adjacent to lands of Theodorick Bland and William Gilliam; use of his estate by wife Clara Bolling until she remarries, the land to go to Robert Bolling, Jr after she remarries; division of "my negroes" between children Robert Bolling, Jr. and Susanna Bolling; sale of up to 500 acres to pay debts. Alexander Bolling was a witness.

On 19 Feb 1850 Susan Gilliam and Robert Bolling, Jr. appealed to President Millard Fillmore. In a letter dated 18 Nov 1850 E. H. Smith stated that Susan Gilliam and Robert Bolling, Jr. "and their large family connection in every branch are and have been unswerving whigs." A letter by E. H. Smith dated 7 July 1851 states that Robert Bolling, Jr. "is poor and has a very large family to provide for." On 2 Aug 1851 Richard Y. Bland Sr stated that he had been a member of the family of "Capt'n. Robert Bolling Sn'r., and that he had heard the late Maj. James Blick say that "he was a cabin boy in a naval vessel commanded by Lieutenant R. Bolling."