

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Pension Application of Thomas Cheeseman (Chisman) R27
Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris

VA Sea Service

[Neither the heirs' application for half pay nor their [application for bounty land in the Library of Virginia](#) contains any original document by Thomas Cheeseman (Chisman). The following transcripts, arranged chronologically, are selected to give a summary of conflicting claims about his service. One of the points of disagreement is whether in 1779 Cheeseman was surgeon to the survey party extending the VA-NC boundary or on duty as a naval surgeon. Each document is from the federal pension file unless noted as being from the heirs' application for bounty land in the Library of Virginia.]

[From the bounty-land warrant papers of the Library of Virginia. Certified copy from "a book... which appears to be a journal of the Navy board," in the Auditors Office in Richmond.]

Saturday April 25th 1778

Ordered that the keeper of the public store deliver to Doctor Thomas Cheeseman as much cloth as will make him a suit of cloths with proper trimmings on his paying for the same.

[The following items from the federal pension file were certified as copies from the day books of the Auditors Office in Richmond.]

June 15th 1779

Thomas Chisman (upon Aud't.[?]) Dr.

Governors warrant to enable him to attend the Commissioners (as surgeon) appointed for extending the boundary line between Virginia & North Carolina [£]100.—.—.

Fryday November 10th 1780

Doct'r. Chisman

for money advanced to purchase a horse 140.—.—.

Saturday Novem'r. 11 1780

Boundary Line with No. Carolina Dr. to Dr. Thos. Chism'a

For amount of his [illegible abbreviation] of pay & Expenses as Surgeon attending the Virginia Guards that attended Doctor Walker running the Boundary Line between North Carolina & Virginia 3808. 8.

Doctor Thomas Chisman Dr.

Warrant for Bal of his account 3708. 8

[From the bounty-land warrant papers of the Library of Virginia.]

Rich'd 30 July 1832

Dr Sir./ To obviate the objection to the claim of Doct. Thos. Cheesman, permit me to observe, in addition to the statements in the Petition – that the "Tartar" which was directed to be sold by the act of 24 December 1779, being the oct. session of '79, was not in fact sold – but was kept in commission in the Virginia Navy, at least as late as the fall 1780. See the affidavit of James Burk [pension application S6649], enclosed & Colonel Ro. McCandlish's[?] certificate of his standing in society also enclosed –

Dr. Cheeseman was on board of the Dragon as early as 8 June 1777. But I can get no legal evidence of the fact. I enclose a certificate of A. M. Green, that he has seen Dr. Cheeseman's name on the Books of the Dragon. Though not strictly evidence, it may indicate the true history of his said services.

I enclose also Henry Buchannans [signed Henry Buchanan] affidavit that Dr. Cheeseman returned from service in the latter part of 1780 or early in 1781. No man stands higher in his neighbourhood than Mr. Buchanan, & he says he was a neighbour of Dr. Cheeseman & never heard of his

leaving the Navy in any but an honourable manner, & that he must have heard of it, if Dr. C. had left it under other circumstances. He therefore could not have been cashiered or superseded which without this proof, would not be presumed, unless some particular facts created such a suspicion. I have endeavoured to obtain the further evidence of Mr. Goodwin, but he could not be seen & Mr. Buchanan's was thought sufficient.

If Mr. Goodwin's be necessary, I will obtain it, tho' the appropriation will be exhausted in all probability before it could be received.

I hope, however that the evidence heretofore filed & that now adduced will be deemed sufficient.

I am very Respectfully/ yr. obt servt./ Thomas Green

P.S. I enclose also Henry Vaghan affidavit confirming the statement of James Burk & I may further remark that one or two of the officers referred to by Mr. Vaughan has rec'd. the land Bounty & the other one is on the Record as an officer of the navy. T. G.

[From the bounty-land warrant papers of the Library of Virginia.]

I certify that it appears from the Books of the Ship Dragon which are in my hand writing, that Thomas Cheeseman was Surgeons Mate of said ship as early as the 8th day of June 1777 and that Redgnel Hudgons [Ridgnell Hudgens] enlisted on board of the sloop Defiance as a seaman and died in service.

It farther appears from the Books of the sloop Defiance now in my possession that Meriman Payne [sic: Merryman Payne VAS146] was sailing master in that ship as early as the 12th day of August 1776. Given under my hand this 2nd day of August 1832.

Teste/ W. S. Triplett

[signed] David Henderson [S5506]
Midshipman & Clerk of the Ship
Dragon. Eleazer Callender Master

[From the bounty-land warrant papers of the Library of Virginia.]

Petition for Bounty land

The Heirs of Dr. Thomas Cheeseman Surgeon - S. Navy [State Navy].

This claim has been before the Executive since April 1832 – It was rejected. June 14th 1832 – I soon again registered for reconsideration – July 14 1832, on add'l. evidence. It was rejected nov'r. 19th 1833: and again was rejected – March 18 1834 – for reconsideration.

I have heretofore reported unfavourably of this claim: but there is now before the Executive sufficient proof of Dr. Cheesmans service as Surgeon for three years, or more – that is to say my opinion is – that the claim is sustained by proof. – your Excellency may think differently.

The facts are – Dr. Cheesmans name is not on the army Register. I have found it in the navy Journals but once – It is not to be found in the few, & important, papers & payrolls of the vessels, Dragon, & Tartar, in which he is said to have served. But, there is proof of his title to bounty land, I think, commands respect.

David Henderson midshipman & Clerk of the ship Dragon, (who has the Books & papers of that vessel in his possession) has certified, that as early as the 8th day of June 1777, Dr Cheesman was Surgeons mate on board the Dragon.

Peter Goodwin was well acquainted with Dr. Cheesman, in the Revolutionary war; Dr. Cheesman was his relation, and was surgeon on board one of the ships of the Va navy, for more than three years. The witness speaks, with confidence, of these facts: and says, he is in no manner interested as heir, or relation, of Dr. Cheesman. The witness is credible.

Henry Buchanan a respectable witness says – he was well acquainted with Dr. Cheesman – that he was a surgeon in the Va. Navy & served more than three years – that he left the navy in the latter part of 1780, or early in 1781 – and practiced medicine in York County. If he had left the service dishonourably, the witness would have known it.

Henry Vaughan swears, that the ship Tartar was in service until the summer of 1781.

James Burk says, that Dr. Cheesman was surgeon in the Va. Navy; that he was on board the Tartar commanded by Com. Taylor [Richard Taylor, S25873]. That in the engagement near the Capes of Virginia, in which Com. Taylor was wounded – there were several persons wounded on board the Patriot (in which last vessel the witness was) – and that Dr. Cheesman was sent from the Tartar to the Patriot, to assist in dressing the wounded. This witness also swears, that the Tartar was in service, until the fall of 1780. He is a credible witness.

Wm. James [William James], a credible witness – says, that Dr. Cheesman served three years (he is certain) as Surgeon of one of the Virginia vessels, in the Revolutionary war.

To his Excellency Gov'r Tazewell Respectfully submitted/ John H Smith Com'r. &c May 7th [1834]

[On 20 Aug 1835 William Tabb and Robert Tabb, grandsons and heirs of Thomas Cheeseman, petitioned the Governor of Virginia for bounty land.]

Dr. Thomas Cheeseman.

In the communication from the Pension office, of the 4th Nov'r, It is said, that he is shown to have been a surgeons mate on the Dragon 1777 and a witness testifies, that he Cheeseman, was a surgeon on board the Tartar in the Revolutionary war, commanded by Commodore Taylor, in which, Commodore Taylor was wounded; in this engagement, several persons were wounded on board the Patriot, in which witness belonged, and Dr. Cheeseman came on board the Patriot from the Tartar to assist in dressing the wounded in the Patriot – that, from the papers in Commodore Taylors case, it is discovered, that the action took place in 1779 probably June.

The Galley then building in Fredericksburg, was on the 2^d April 1777, named the Dragon; she was commanded by Capt. Eleaz'r Callender, who resigned 15 April 1779 – on the 8 June 1779 Captain Markham [James Markham R72] was ordered to take command and refit her – she was transferred to the Board of Trade the 25 March 1780. Dr. David Brown [R15] would appear by sundry entries in the Journal of the Navy board, of 9 Oct'r '77 – 25, 26 & 28 August and 17 Decem'r '78, to have been the Surgeon of that vessel. On the 17 Dec'r '78, leave of absence was granted to him to the last of the month.

The Tartar was commanded by Capt. Richard Taylor, it would seem that she was under the command of Capt. Travis [Edward Travis R103] on the 20 Nov '78 – On the 8 February 1779 Captain John Lurty [R65] was ordered to take command of the Tartar during Capt Travis absence or until further orders. Capt. Richard Taylor has stated in a note or certificate, appended to an account against the ship, that the Records books were lodged, "with the Navy Board, in Novem'r 1778, soon after I left the ship Tartar," and "my being wounded and taken from the ship in the manner that I was, & other officers taking charge I never could get" &c.

Dr. Justice Livingston [R64] was, it seems, attached to the Scorpion in March 1777 and to the Northampton in Mary Septem'r & Decem'r 1778.

On the 29 August 1778, the keeper of the public store was ordered to deliver Dr. Chapin, sundry articles for the use of the Tartar.

On the 3 Septem'r 1778 Dr. John Lyon [R66] Surgeon to the Hero, was ordered to deliver the surgeons instruments in his possession to Dr. Chapin for the use of the Tartar.

On the 11 September 1778, it was ordered, that a warrant issue to Capt Richard Taylor for £10 specie, on acct for the purpose of furnishing himself with necessaries in case of his being taken by the enemy – and on the same day a similar order, infavor of Capt. Eleazer Callender – also a letter of instructions to Captain Richard Taylor to make a cruize.

On the 27 October 1778, It was ordered that Dr. Jno. Chapin [John Chapin], have leave of absence from his duty on board the ship Tartar, for the space of two months.

On the 27 Jany 1779, Ordered that Mr. Goodson deliver Dr. Reynolds [John Reynolds R85] sundry articles for the use of the sick on board the Tartar.

On the 13 Feby 1779 Dr. Livingston had an order to receive a medicine chest and medicine for the sick on board the Tartar, on the 13 Feby 1779, one per clothing and hospital stores for the Tartar, on the 17 May 1779, one for hospital stores for the sick on board the Tartar Dragon Patriot and Fly – on the 8 Sept'r. 1779, one for sundries for the use of the sick, ship Tartar – there was also an allowance for 2 months of Sugar and Coffee as surgeon of the Tartar from 28 Sept to 28 November 1779 – he obtained land bounty, as a surgeon of the Navy, on the 22 July 1783, for a service of 3 years.

Dr. John Swope [R98] who had been in the Liberty and Henry, is embraced in a list of officers of the Dragon, as surgeon of the latter, entitled to supplies for 30 dys, 2^d September 1779 – and for Sugar & Coffee for 2 months, 7 October 1779 – he obtained land bounty for service from 24 May 1776 to November 1781, as a Surgeon of the Navy, on the 2^d Nov'r. 1783.

From the foregoing it would seem, that the action did not take place in June 1779 – but in September or October 1778 – (I have a vague impression that I have seen the day mentioned, in a petition for relief from some one disabled in it, but have not been able to find it) – that, Dr. Brown was Surgeon of the Dragon for 1778 and Dr. Swope in the latter part of 1779 – that Dr. Chapin was surgeon of the Tartar from 29 August to late in Decem'r. 1778, and that on the 13 Feb'y 1779 and after, Dr. Livingston was the Surgeon of that vessel.

Could it have been Dr. Chapin and not Dr. Cheeseman, who went from the Tartar to the Patriot.

The only reference to Thomas Cheeseman, found in the Journals of the Navy Board &c is the following entry–

Saturday the 25 April 1778

Ordered that the keeper of the public store deliver to Dr. Thomas Cheeseman as much cloth as will make him a suit of clothes with proper trimmings on his paying for the same.

There is however, in the Auditors office, a memorandum book of John H Smith late Commissioner, in reference to the Navy, in which is found, "A list of officers and Seamen of the State Navy belonging to the ship Dragon, Captain Eleazer Callender," at the end of this list, is the following note, This list was copied from a list (the original paper) in the hands of David Henderson Esq'r. of Fredericksburg.

The arrangement is alphabetical, I select the following, all that are noted as officers, and include Cheeseman who is not so distinguished. [First names moved before last to aid searching.]

Names	When entered Service	When discharged or paid
David Brown [R15] Surgeon	July 21 1777	May 13 th 1778
Charles Bennett Sail'g Mast'r	March 17 1777	Jany 20 1779
Eleazer Callender Capt	Decem'r 13 1776	d[itt]o
Thomas Cheeseman	June 8 1777	d'o
John Cranberry S Mast'r	Jany 24 1778	May 13 Discharged
Nath'l Craghill [Nathaniel Craghill] Mid	June 6 1777	July 24 1777
Alexander Davis Q'r M'r	Augt 10 1777	May 13 th 1778
Will'm Downton [William Downton VAS226] Gun'rs mate		Jany 20 1779
Thos. Dawson [Thomas B Dawson VAS227] Midship'n	Sept'r 12 1778	d'o
David Henderson [S5506] d[itt]o	April 1 1777	d'o
Thomas Knowles Carp[ente]rs mate	Feb'y 26	Jany 2 ^d 1779
John Lurty [R65] Leut	April 17 1777	May 3 ^d 1778
John Laws B[oatswai]ns mate	June 29 1777	Jany 20 1779
Rich'd Montague [Richard Montague R77] Mids'n	July 7 1777	d'o
Benjamin Rust [VAS95] Mid	June 9 1777	d'o
James Tutt [VAS225] Midship'n	June 25 1777	Jany 24 1778 discharged by Navy Board
Thos. Watson [Thomas Watson] Q'r. M'r.	March 21 1777	Sept 2 ^d 1777 Died
Francis Webb [R105] Mid	Oct 19 1777	Jany 20 1779
Alvin Wilson Mid	March 1 1778	d'o

From this list of Mr. Hendersons, it appears that Thomas Cheeseman belonged to the Dragon at the time I suppose the action to have taken place, but it is not shown in what character.

By underscoring any theory in thing memoranda, in red ink, of which it may be desirable to obtain official evidence, and returning it to me, such evidence will be procured and forwarded, or – if any new point is suggested, by adding it, search will be made, and evidence if found, transmitted

14th Nov 1853

J. J. [Joseph Jackson]

NOTE: On 21 May 1838 in York County VA Thomas Curtis made a deposition regarding the heirs of Dr. Thomas Chisman, as follows: “that he was well acquainted with Dr. Thomas Chisman sometimes called ‘Cheeseman’ formerly of the County of York (and who served as a Surgeon in the War of the American Revolution as this deponent has understood & believes) from his earliest infancy to the time of said Chismans death which happened about 1798 or 1799. This deponent knows that said Dr. Chisman married a near relation of his by whom he had & left an only Child named Lucy who married a certain Robert Tabb formerly of the County of York That said Tabb and his said wife had & left at the time of their death only three children William Robert and Mary Tabb. That Wm & Robert Tabb are now living. That Mary married Lewis Moreland & is dead & left at her death a son Lewis who died at the age of 8 or 9 years That said Lewis Moreland the Father is now living. this deponent from these facts is certain that the said William & Robert Tabb are the only heirs of the said Dr. Thomas Chisman or Cheeseman....” On the same date Samuel Sheild, 52, stated that in 1793 he was a scholar in the school of Dr. Thomas Chisman, who died in Hampton, that Robert Tabb died about 1812, and that the widow of Dr. Chisman married Richard Jarrett and had died about 25 years previously.