

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

Pension Application of John Harris R41

Privateer VA Sea Service/ Half Pay

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris. Revised 22 April 2020.

[The federal pension application consists mainly of copies of some of the original documents in Virginia bounty-land and rejected claims, which are transcribed below from the originals. On 15 Nov 1845 James Drew McCaw named an administrator of “the estate of Capt. John Harris of the Virginia State Navy in the War of the Revolution and of whose estate my wife Sarah or Sally was the sole devisee, and as York the County in which said testator lived is remote and inconvenient to take out letters of administration therefore, I have consented and request the said Northrop to take our Letters of administration at Washington City.”]

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

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> day of April 1778

Ordered that the keeper of the public store deliver Mr. William Plume as many necessaries not exceed’g thirty pounds in value for the use of Amelia the daughter of Capt Jno Harris late of the Musquitto [sic: galley *Mosquito*] who is now prisoner on his paying for the same./ From page 383”

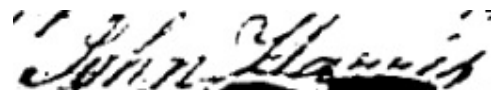
The above entry is truly extracted from the Naval Journal.

Given under my hand at the Auditors Office Richmond this 22 January 1838

Jas. E. Heath/ Aud P. Accts

[The online image of a memorandum by John Harris is mostly illegible except for his signature, but the following version is found in Chapter 5: The Career of the Mosquito in *The History of Virginia’s Navy of the Revolution* by Robert Armistead Stewart (first published in 1934, reprinted in 1993 by Genealogical Publishing Co., Baltimore MD. A similar transcription is in the federal pension file.]

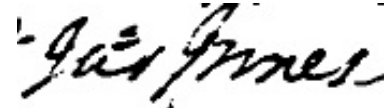
Some time in the year 1779, while I was in Fortune [sic: Forton] Prison in England, I received a Letter from a Doct’r Brehan, who had made his escape from said Prison, that if I shou’d be so fortunate as to make my Escape also, to apply to certain Gentlemen in London who would supply me with Cash to forward me to France, & when I should arrive at Paris to apply to the Honble Arthur Lee Esqr That he would Furnish me with every necessary, for he himself received many favours from said Gentleman— When I arrived at Nantes I wrote to Doct’r [Benjamin] Franklin, also to Doct’r Lee in behalf of many of the Prisoners who came over with me in the same Sloop that was in a Distressed condition. I received an answer by the Return of the Post from Doct’r Lee who informed me of his being out of office at that time, but that if I would Draw up a Remonstrance in behalf of those people he would do everything in his power that Doct’r Franklin would relieve them, at the same time expressing himself very feelingly for those poor men who had Risked & suffered in the Cause of American Liberty— While I was in France I had an opportunity of hearing the sentiments of many Gentlemen respecting the character of Doct’r Lee & I must confess I heard with pleasure that he was the true Friend to America & the Honest man & that his Honesty was the cause of his being not in office at that time particulars of which I heard from Commodore Gillon [Alexander Gillon of the South Carolina State Navy] & many other Gentlemen, but do not well recollect, but it was something respecting the publick money, I have since seen some American Prisoners that was confined with myself that said that when they got to Paris that Doct’r Lee was their Friend mentioning that Silas Dean was partial to his countrymen upon the whole, as I never before this present session had the Honor of seeing him hope no one will suppose I have any other Interest but Declare what I know to be the truth.



Williamsburg Feb'y 9<sup>th</sup> 1784.

In the Spring year 1776 I do certify the late Captain John Harris was a Lieutenant in the navy of this State and did duty in that Station, on Board the Manley Galley on the Eastern Shore, when I acted as major of the 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment at that time stationed at northampton Courthouse. In 1777 I do also know, that Captain Harris was promoted to the command of the armed Privateer called the Musquito, and in the Capacity of Captain and Commander sailed on a cruze to the west Indies, in which I have every reason to believe he was taken and carried with his crew a prisoner to Forton Jail in the Island of Great Britain. In the winter of 1779 and eighty he returned from his Captivity, at which period I was a member of the Board of War and I do certify that he produced his Commission as a Captain of the navy and required service as such. Captain Harris never resigned his commission but always steadily persevered to serve this country – He died in March 1783.

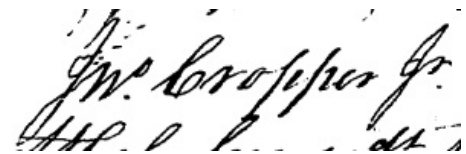
Jas Innes [James Innes VAS1344]



[The John Harris mentioned in the following appears to be a different naval officer. The following is therefore also transcribed separately as John Harris VAS3811.]

I do hereby certify, that John Harris of Accomac [sic: Accomack] County, entered a Lieutenant, in the navy of the state of Virginia, to wit, on board the gally called the Accomac [galley *Accomack*], and that he served in the said gally, was considered to behave well, and that he died in the county of Accomac afs'd. in the month of January whilst in the service of the Commonwealth the year 1781. To the best of my recollection, he was a cadet in my company of the 9<sup>th</sup> Virginia regiment, in the year 1776, and that he entered a Lieutenant (being a seafaring man) on board the gally aforesaid in the fall of the year 1776.

Jno. Cropper Jr [John Cropper W3781]  
formerly Lt. Col. Comm'dt. 11<sup>th</sup> Virg'a. Regim't.



The representatives of John Harris are entitled to the proportion of land allowed a Lieutenant of the Navy of this State for the War.

Council Chamber Samuel Coleman

June 30<sup>th</sup> 1804

[Gov.] John Page

Report on the claim of the Devises of Captain John Harris of the State Navy, for additional bounty land for his services

To the Governor Sir,

The following are the facts which have come to my knowledge touching this claim – viz –

John Harris was commission'd 1st Lieut: of the Manly Galley, August 3<sup>rd</sup> 1776. (See Council Journal for that date) – He was order'd to take command of the Brig Musquetto oct: 24. 1776 (see Journal of the Navy Board Oct: 24. 1776 p. 90) – He was recommended Captain of the Brig Raleigh, in the room of Younghusband [sic: Isaac Younghusband] resign'd, Oct. 31. 1776 (See Jour. Navy B'd. p. 96 Oct: 31 1776.) – Sundry orders respecting him were made by the Navy Board to Oct: 9. 1777. (See Journal of the Navy Board, pages–102–127–157–163–167–170–172–180–238–296.) He was captain in the Navy Novr. 28. 1776: (See Jour. of the Council of that date) He was a prisoner of war in April 1778. (see Journal of the Navy Board of the 15. April 1778–p–383.) – He was reported in service until his death, (he died in march 1783) by a Board of officers – James Barron President &c which sat at Richmond, in obedience to orders from the Executive – May. 15. 1784. (See Report &c on file in the 1<sup>st</sup> auditor's office)

A certificate issued in his name, Oct: 30. 1784 (which was deliver'd to Capt: Wright [possibly

Patrick Wright]) for £972.19 – the balance of pay due him on settlement &c– (See army Register of the State Line.)

Bounty Land was allowed for his service, s March 20. 1784, amounting to 5333 $\frac{1}{3}$  acres.

The facts which have been prov'd by the claimant are – that John Harris was in service as Lieutenant, from the Spring of the year 1776, (with the exception of the time when he was a prisoner) until he died – in the month of March 1783– that after he return'd from captivity in the winter of 1779-80, he presented himself before the Board of war, produc'd his Commission as a Captain of the Navy, and requir'd service as such – That he never resign'd his Commission, but “steadily persever'd to serve his Country.” (See the copy of Col. Innes' Certificate, dated Williamsburg. Feby: 9. 1784.)

A memorandum has been fil'd, purporting to have been made by Capt. Harris, respecting occurrences which took place during his Captivity.

upon this state of Facts, I report this claim to your Excellency as good for the additional bounty land ask'd for. The Heirs of Captain Harris should have been allow'd in March 1784, when bounty land was allow'd for 3 years service of Capt: Harris, bounty land for a service from the Spring of the year 1777 to Mar: 1783, or (as I think) to the end of the war. His heirs should now receive that allowance, subject to the deduction of 5333 $\frac{1}{3}$  acres which have been already received.

Respectfully submitted/ John H. Smith Com'r. &c/ July 24. 1835.

for reconsideration 1838 Apl 4

This claim is allowed for additional bounty land as Capt. in State Navy from 3<sup>d</sup> May 1782 to 3<sup>d</sup> nov 1783  
D. Campbell [Gov. David Campbell]

[The following are from [rejected claims in the Library of Virginia](#) in two files.]

Thursday the 3<sup>d</sup> day of September 1778

Ordered that Mr Holt deliver Mr. John Harris fifteen hundred weight of bacon 2 Barrels of flour and 500 lb of bread for the use of the Accomack Galley.

The foregoing are true extracts from a book filed in this department, which appears to be the Journal of the Navy Board for a part of the year 1778 – on the back of this book there are sundry memorandums (in the same handwriting with a part of the journal) of warrant officers on board of several vessells and their dates, amongst those on board the Accomack galley is the name of John Harris Midshipman 26 January 1778 It farther appears from another book found in this office, a [one or more lines missing at bottom of page] 18 February 1780 with the further sum of £700 – this last sum is charged upon the auditors [undeciphered word] book to Captain John Harris Jas. E. Heath/ Aud pub accounts

The Representative of John Harris is entitled to the proportion of land allowed a Captain of the State navy for the war.  
Sam'l Coleman

Council chamber 30<sup>th</sup> June 1804/ [Gov.] John Page.

Warr't. No. 5068 for 4000 acres iss'd 4<sup>th</sup> Jany 1805.

A Copy from the records of the Virginia Land Office.

Teste, S. H. Parker Reg. L. Office

To the Executive of Va.

The undersigned respectfully represents that she is the only heir at law of John Harris, a Captain of the Va. State Navy in the War of the Revolution, and that the Representatives of said Harris have rec'd for said [illegible] 4000 acres.

But according to the decisions of the Executive, a Captain of the State Navy is entitled to 5333 $\frac{1}{3}$  acres and your petitioner believes that John Harris is the only Captain of the Navy remaining who has not [illegible] that amount

She therefore prays that she may [illegible] the usual additional allowance of 1333 $\frac{1}{3}$  acres

Respectfully [the rest missing]

The Petition of James D. McCaw respectfully states –

That Captain John Harris of the Va. State Navy entered the service, as your Petitioner is informed, at the commencement of the War, afterwards Commanded “The Musquito” was taken prisoner and carried to England and died in service in March 1783. His friend Wm. Plume was his Executor and rec’d for the only child of Captain Harris (the wife of yr. Petitioner) a Land Warrant for 3 years service.

The Document filed at that time (June 1784) shows all the facts above stated relative to the service of Capt Harris. Y’r Petitioner begs it will be refered to, as a copy cannot properly be required by him. This evidence shows a clear right to additional Bounty for 1 year.

The Registers Certificate, shows that three John Harriss have rec’d Bounty land – But one was a Lieut. of the Continental Line. And the Certificate of the Auditor will show that there were two Capt John Harriss of the Navy.

The one who drew Bounty in 1804, was he of that name who Commanded the Accomack Galley – he was a Mids: – 1778 a Lieut: in 1779 and a Capt: 10 Feb. 1780. The Ledger which [undeciphered word] the Acco. as Lieut in 1779 contained the item of £700 on the 10 Feb. 1780, and altho on that Book he is not called Capt, it was because the Title of the [several illegible words] He was evidently a different person from Capt J. Harris of the Musquito who was a prisoner in England at the very time this Mr. Harris of [the rest missing]

1831 May 10 Rejected

1847 Aug’t 19 Rejected