

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Pension application of James Mitchell R671

f21VA

Transcribed by Will Graves

6/17/13

[Methodology: Spelling, punctuation and/or grammar have been corrected in some instances for ease of reading and to facilitate searches of the database. Where the meaning is not compromised by adhering to the spelling, punctuation or grammar, no change has been made. Corrections or additional notes have been inserted within brackets or footnotes. Blanks appearing in the transcripts reflect blanks in the original. A bracketed question mark indicates that the word or words preceding it represent(s) a guess by me. Only materials pertinent to the military service of the veteran and to contemporary events have been transcribed. Affidavits that provide additional information on these events are included and genealogical information is abstracted, while standard, 'boilerplate' affidavits and attestations related solely to the application, and later nineteenth and twentieth century research requests for information have been omitted. I use speech recognition software to make all my transcriptions. Such software misinterprets my southern accent with unfortunate regularity and my poor proofreading fails to catch all misinterpretations. Also, dates or numbers which the software treats as numerals rather than words are not corrected: for example, the software transcribes "the eighth of June one thousand eighty six" as "the 8th of June 1786." Please call errors or omissions to my attention.]

The Humble Petition of James Mitchell Mariner lately discharged from the US Frigate *United States*.

Your Petitioner humbly sheweth that he was bred to the sea from the age of 15 years, born in York Town Virginia. When he was bound Apprentice to his father James Mitchell then master of the Ship *Baltimore*, and served four and a half years to the same.

He then entered on board the *Trumbull* Frigate Captain James Nicholson Com^r onboard of which ship he got wounded in an engagement with the *Iris*, *Mentor*, & *Virginia*, English cruisers off New York in 1779, taken prisoner, and carried into New York and remained nine weeks under care, and then removed into the prison ship *Jersey* Captain Wright lying at Paulus Hook, and there confined four months in which time one hundred and fifty of his fellow prisoners died.

He was then with others exchanged, and sent to Boston, where he entered on board the *Dean* Frigate Captain Samuel Nicholson in quality of Master Mate, and remained in that capacity two years.

From this time he went into the merchants' service out of Baltimore first as mate on board the *Iris* for three years; and was then made master of the *Grace it all* [?], Schooner, of same port in which she sailed three years and a half – when he was taken by the Brig *Alert* Captain Olouee [?]¹ and carried into Point Petre Guadeloupe and condemned.

Released in six weeks he got to Martinique – and from thence returned to Baltimore.

From thence he went mate into the Ship *Betsey* in the employ of Messrs. Oliver & Thompson to Cadiz which was there sold.

No conveyance to be got at Cadiz he shipped for Gibraltar and agreed with Captain Gardner of the Brig *Henry* for his passage back to Baltimore. After being on board about a week he went ashore with some mates of vessels to view the Rock when a Captain Charles Cunningham in company with other British officers required to know who they were &c &c which having answered he ordered the coxswain of his boat then lying at the Mole Head to take us aboard his brig – to which in consideration of being wholly in their power they made no resistance. The next day the Masters of the Vessels to which they belonged came on board the Brig *Speedy* to demand their release. On Captain Gardner's application to Captain Cunningham for the release of his mate and himself he consented to his taking his mate, but refused your petitioner, who on their departure was ordered to do duty as Masters Mate, which he refusing as an American to serve on board a British ship, was ordered into irons, and next day ordered to the

1 *Olouee*

gangway – where the Captain demanded if he would do the duty appointed him, or not. – To which your Petitioner replied as before and persisted notwithstanding the threats of that officer, who directed him to be confined, ironed on both legs in which state he remained nineteen days, when the fleet under Lord Hood arrived, to whose ship, the *Victory*, he was removed for trial.

Being ordered into the round House before Lord Hood Captain Cunningham, and other officers – Lord Hood inquired his reasons for refusing to serve on board the *Speedy*, to which your petitioner answered as before. – But at length overcome by his helpless situation, the uncontrolled authority of his judges, and the personal assurances of Lord Hood of good treatment, and certain discharge on their arrival in England – he consented to remain on board the Admiral's Ship, as Masters May, in which he continued fourteen months. – And on taking the *L'Impervious* French frigate, was promoted to the rank of sailing Master to said Ship, which lasted one year: when arriving in England, he was discharged according to promise at Portsmouth. – From whence he went to Liverpool, and worked his passage to New York, on board the *Tartar* of that place.

From thence he took passage to Baltimore, where from that time 1796 to 1800 – he became a Branch pilot.

He then accepted an offer to take charge of the Brig *Wexford* of North Carolina to Liverpool, and on his way was taken by a Spanish Ship, the *Don Carlos*, and retaken by a Jersey Privateer, and carried into Jersey, on the coast of Normandy: where on paying one eighth salvage, he was liberated, and she brought her home. – But from some poisonous drug administered to him, in some wine and water, while on board the Spanish Ship, given him as he supposes in consequence of an imprudent reply to their office for his evidencing the false property of the Cargo, he your petitioner remained five days likely to die, and has never since recovered.

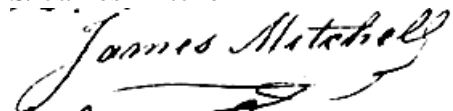
On his return to Baltimore from Washington North Carolina (where he was denied his wages for the Voyage by reason of having no legal power as Master to sue for it, none of the crew being present to recover their do you, having all dispersed before his release from Jersey, where he had been detained seven months), – being out of employe – he applied for the Gunners birth on board the *United States* Frigate: the Gunner whom he understood was to be discharged, was however not dismissed, till two months afterwards. In the interim he did duty as seamen on board, and employed in removing the water casks to the warehouse, in December last, in falling weather, he got frostbite, and lost the use of hands & feet for three months and at the end of two months was dismissed as invalid by Lieutenant Speake – and has been ever since confined to the poor house, exposed to the vagabonds whom the laws send for punishment, in the Workhouse apartments. Your Petitioner humbly offers to add that Captains Truston, Barry & Nicholson know him personally, and will give him a respectable character: – And from the above considerations prays that his reduced state, and services, may recommend him to the bounty of his Country on the half pay establishment.

Alexandria District of Columbia 5th of October 1802

His Excellency

Thomas Jefferson, Esquire &c &c &c

S/ James Mitchell



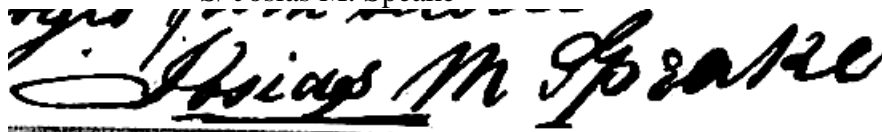
Alexandria 28th of November 1804

To the Honorable Judge Kilty

Sir,

Agreeable to your request I would avail myself of this opportunity to state to you in writing the manner in which James Mitchell seamen got injured while in the service of the United States and under my command, was one day sometime in January 1802 somewhat exposed, while snowing and hailing with some others belonging to the Frigate United States in securing some of the ships materials and water casks which he informed me sometime after that he had been Frost bitten and got his hand jammed and injured, that he could do no work – In consequence he was Discharged from service

S/ Josias M. Speake

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Josias M. Speake". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, decorative initial "J".

PS: The probability is that the frost bite and jam was the calls of the said James Mitchell losing the use of his hands and in some measure his [word cut off and illegible]

Alexandria 26th [illegible] 1804

S/ Josias M. Speake

James Mitchell, Seaman, serving last aboard the US ship, the *United States* Captain Speake, was admitted on the list of sick and disabled Seamen the 27th May 1802 for a frostbite of the foot, suffered in consequence (as he said) of being exposed in a snowstorm, with others, in the same service, and then laboring under a disease of the lungs, was reduced to so low a state as to give a little hopes of his recovery.

The frostbite got well shortly – but the disease of his lungs affording no prospect of a cure, he was sent to the Marine Hospital at Norfolk.

S/ Ch. Douglas

Got [illegible] 27th Novr. 1804

[Note: a note in this file indicates that the case was referred to the Secretary of the Navy.]