

Southern Campaigns American Revolution Pension Statements and Rosters

Pension Application of Richard Taylor S25873

VA/ VA Half Pay

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris. Revised 4 Feb 2022.

[The following are in the federal pension file.]

An Act granting a pension to Commodore Richard Taylor.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That from and after the third day of September, one thousand eight hundred and sixteen, a pension of three hundred dollars per annum be allowed to Commodore Richard Taylor in consequence of a total disability arising from a wound received in a conflict with the enemy in the revolutionary war, while in the command of a flotilla in the waters of the Chesapeake, under a commission of captain in the navy from the State of Virginia, to be paid to him, the said Taylor, half yearly out of any monies in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated by law.

(Signed) H. Clay [Henry Clay], Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(Signed) John Gaillard, President of the Senate Pro tempore

(Approved) March 1<sup>st</sup> 1817. James Madison.

[Certified copy.]

The United States, D'r.

To Richard Taylor a Captain in the Navy of the State of Virginia in the Revolutionary War. For his Half pay from 3<sup>d</sup> September 1783 (date of Treaty of Peace) to 30<sup>th</sup> August 1825 (date of his death) in pursuance of the 3<sup>d</sup> Section of an act of congress "to provide for liquidating and paying certain claims of the State of Virginia," approved 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1832, being 41 years 362 days, at £73 Virginia currency equal to \$243a per annum

Amounting to dollars, 10,218.00.

Auditors Office/ 15<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1832

Wm. Parker

[Copy certified 30 May 1846.]

Memorial of Joseph Saunders [S17073] filed in the case of Commodore Richard Taylor, 3<sup>rd</sup> Auditors Office

The undersigned begs respectfully to represent to your Honorable body, that on the 7th day of March, 1777 he enlisted in the navy of Virginia, for the term of three years, and was placed on the ship Dragon, then building at Fredericksburg, Va. and commanded by Capt. E. Callender [Eleazer Callender].

"Your petitioner" &c. further states, that as soon as the ship was launched, and the provisions was put on board, he was given charge thereof, and as steward I issued rations &c.

"Your petitioner" &c that to protect the commerce of Chesapeake Bay and the ports thereof, the State of Virginia put in commission some three or four ships, a barge, some galleys &c, &c. Captain Ceeley Sanders [sic: Celey Saunders VAS4653] commanded the Tempest, Capt Taylor [Richard Taylor] the Tartar, Captain Ensign [sic] Callender the Dragon, and Lieut John Lurty [R65], first Lieut. of Dragon, commanded the Brig Her name is forgotten." ["Northampton?" inserted in brackets] "these vessels were fitted out, manned, and stationed near the capes of Virginia and the coasts thereof"

"Your" &c. — "that these vessels were ordered on a cruise to the South, destination not published – and in a day or two after they put to sea, came in sight of a British 14 gun ship, which gave chase to our fleet, and came up with them. Night came on, our fleet separated, changed their course, evaded her pursuit, and returned to their station near the Capes of Virginia"

"Your" &c. — "that in this service, the ship Dragon discovered a sail past[?] the windward, and in maneuvering decoyed her down upon us, and fired on us. We engaged having all ready, but she finding her mistake, fired a broadside, hauled for wind, and being a fast sailor, soon got out of our reach."

“Your” &c “that captain Taylor, now commodore heard the firing, and in a tender came along side the Dragon – after that came up with the Privateer as she proved to be took a number of men and some officers and gave chase after and came up with her, and engaged her. She returned the fire, and maintained the contest valiantly for a considerable time, until Com. Taylor received a dangerous wound. Several of the men were also wounded &c. The next in command thought proper to bear away and take care of the wounded. Com. Taylor never came into service after this.”

“Your” &c that Capt Wm Saunders [William Saunders R89] was put in command of ship Tartar after this. Capt. Callender resigned command of the Dragon, and Capt James Markham [R72] put in command of her. Then Edward Travis [R103] —“ the remainder not thought to be material.  
(Copied by Examiner)

[The following are from Virginia Half-Pay records beginning at

<https://www.fold3.com/image/616522713>]

To the Honorable the Senate and house of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.

The undersigned memorialist [Joseph Saunders] begs leave respectfully to represent to your honorable body that on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of March 1777 he enlisted in the Navy of Virginia for the term of three years and was placed upon Ship Dragon then building at Frederik’s Va & Commanded by Captain Eneazer Callander

Your memorialist further state that as soon as the Ship was launched, and the provisions was put on board, he was given charge thereof, and as Steward I issued Rations &c

Your memorialist further states that to protect the Commerce of the Chissapeck Bay & ports thereof, the State of Virginia put in commission some three or four ships a brigg some Gallies &c &c Capt Ceely Sanders Capt Eneazer Callander commanded the Dragon and Leut John Lustic first Leut of Dragon commanded the Brigg her name is forgotten, these Vessells were were maned [manned] fitted out and stationed near the capes of Virginia and the coast thereof.

your memorialist further state that those vessells were ordered on a cruize to the South destination not published and in a day or two after they put to sea come in sight of a Brittish 14 Gun ship which gave chase to our fleet & came fast up with them. Night came on our fleet separated changed their course evaded her pursuit and returned to their Station near the capes of Va.

your memorialist further states that in this service Ship Dragon discovered a sale [sail] far to the winward and in maneuvering decoyed her down upon us and fired into us, we engaged having all ready, but she finding her mistake fired a broadside, hauled her wind and being a fast Sailer soon got out of our reach

Your memorialist further states that Capt Taylor (now Commodore) heard the firing and in a tinder came along side Dragon, finding no chance for the Dragon even to come up with the Privateer as supposed to be took a number of men & some officers and gave chace after and came up with her and engaged her She returned the fire and maintained the Contest Valiently for a Considerable time until Commodore Taylor recd a dangerous wound Several of the men were also wouned, and hopes of the enemy becoming faint, the next in Command thought proper to bear away, and take care of the wounded, Commodore Taylor never came into actual Service after this

your memorialist further states that Capt Will Sanders was put in command of Ship Tarter, after this Capt Callander resigned Command of Dragon and Capt James Markum put in command of her, and he being an old and infirm man did not hold command long and on his resignation Capt Edward Travis was given command of Dragon.

your memorialist further state that when the Brittish fleet Blockaded the Chessapeek and some ships came into the Hampton Roads, the ship Dragon and an other ship of Va Navy commanded by Capt Richard Barron [R5] was then lying in the Hampton Rhodes they were obliged to give place to superior force force and run up James River and to the Ship yard where they were finally destroyed by the Brittish

or sunk by their commanders

Your memorialist further state that in the interym between this time & the time the Brittish army came from Charlestown to Va and to petersburgh, he having been promoted to master mate of Ship Dragon, was now promoted to a Lieutenant in the Navy a Given Charge of a Gallie [galley] with instructions from (Capt James Maxwell [R73] who was commissioner & Superintendent of the Navy) to man & fit her out as quick as possible go down near the enemies fleet watch her motion and if any thing worth noticing transpired give notice to Genl Lafayett [sic: Lafayette] and abide by his instruction

Your memorialist further states, that he did mad and prepare said Gallie and went down on said station and joined Lieutenant Chandler who was then there and same duty, he in a few days after was taken prisoner by a Decoy prepared by the Brittish for that purpose and died a prisoner in thir possession.

your memorialist further state Lt Chandler and myself pryor to this time by permission of Capt Maxwell did man a Gallie and went down chickamominy river and attacked a British ship we supposed her to be a transport but after our commencing the action run out a brod side of Guns which were concealed and discharged them they appeared to be loaded with Luggage [sic: langrage: shot for tearing sails and rigging] & round shot Some fell short some without and some passed and some passed through our sales & riging, we kept up our fire and she as regularly poured in her brodside into us untill our ammunition was nearly out and no hopes of taking hir, we bore away, and returned to ship yard

your memorialist further state that when the Brittish army was at or near Petersburg Va the brittish sent a number of Gun boats up to our ship yard in order to destroy what vessells and naval stores were there I then had loaded the Gallie I commanded with naval stores in order to take them up the river and secure them But wind & tide was against. I came to anchor put a spring on my cable and soon as the boats came within Gun Shot I discharged my Cannon Sunk my Vessell and escaped to shore with the men I had with me,

Your memorialist further state that this was the last active Service he had in the navy, the whole was destroyed by the Brittish But he did render service to the army in transporting forage and provisions to them, and in one of those trips Rec's a Signall from French Adm'. who had blockaded the Brittish in York River. That Cornwallace had Surrendered and he went right up to yorktown through the Brittish fleet while there were ordered by Capt E Travis of the navy to take a Sergeant and guard in navy and go on board a Brittish Ship & search for slaves, which information information said was about to be taken away contrary to Stipulations, I did so found only one and brought him to [undeciphered] delivered to the proper authority.

your memorialist further state that after peace he setled up and recd his back pay & land bounty at auditors office in Richmond In certificate for full pay to the end of the war or disbanding the army as a Lt of the navy of Virginia a Lt Ranked Recd pay equal to a capt in the Land service all of which will appear by reference to those records. Your memorialist further state that after this he turned his mind to proving a support for old age or a family if he ever should have one and soon after this a change took place in his mind respecting future prospects he left his [undeciphered] place & went farway to the westward and devoted himself to domestic economy & religion Your memorialist further state that in his retired situation he many time on reflection that he was one of the many worthys who had risked their lives for their countrys good was cheered & filed with grateful sensations that now they enjoyed the fruits of all their toil in sweet injoyment of all the good things of life & equal right to home wife child & fire side Your memorialist further state that he was unacquainted with the regulation of the Legislature of Va in giving half pay to those officers who served to the end of the war untill a year or two ago and on inquiry respecting the subject he understood that his name is not on the roll of the officers of the Navy of Va who were entitled to that half pay, how it happened or why his name should be excluded he is at a loss to divine and knows that he served his country faithfully and felt as much devotion to the cause and gloried in the Idia of Liberty & equal rights as much as any other & still feels the same spirit stering within Your memorialist further state that he is now upwards of 73 years of age and will soon go the way of all the earth & has become weak & feeble by affliction and infirmity and he hopes that he may be permitted to enjoy the like bounties enjoyed by his comrades of the state of Va, and that your honorable Bodies will

decree accordingly and your memorialist will for ever pray &c

Aug 31 1832 [Shelby County AL]

Joseph Sanders [sic]

[From [Library of Virginia Legislative Petitions Digital Collection](#)/ Kentucky Counties – Robertson, Richard Taylor.]

To the Honorable the Legislature of the State of Virginia

The memorial and representation of Richard Taylor Robertson of the County of Jefferson State of Kentucky

Respectfully Sheweth That Richard Taylor formerly of the state of Virginia entered into the service of that state as a captain and commander of the Schooner *Hornet*, soon after the Beginning of the Revolutionary war, that he commanded said Schooner for some time (the certainty of which your memorialist is not informed) and about the latter part of the year 1777 he took command of the Ship *Tartar* of the Virginia State line, and continued to command on Board until some time in the year 1777 when he was wounded in an engagement between the ship *Tartar* and a British Schooner near the capes of the Chesapeake Bay, he then for a short time was not in active service, but had the command of Various Boats in the Rivers emptying into the Chesapeake until the seige of little York by Gen'l. Washington [28 Sep - 19 Oct 1781] at which time he the said Taylor was employed in supplying the French Fleet and American vessels with provisions under the directions of the State of Virginia, that he continued in the service of State subject to it's commands until about november of December 1783, that he was commissioned by his Excellency Beverly Randolph [sic: Beverley Randolph] in the year 1786 to command the Publick Boat Patriot which he did until the vessels of the state line were transfered to the Federal Government, or otherwise disposed of in or about the year 1787, all which will mor fully appear by reference had to the records of the war office from the year 1776 until 1787. Your memorialist further sheweth that the said Richard Taylor moved to the state of Kentucky about the year 1796 or 7, that he was at that time in independant circumstances and therefore would not ask for the allowance of half pay which the Legislature of Virginia in may 1777 had promised her officers who remained in the service until the end of the war. But soon after from unavoidable accidents, and inability (frequently) on account of his wounds to attend to his Business he sustained great lossis so that his former competency was reduced to a mere pittance, he said Richard Taylor died in the month of August 1825 leaving to your memorialist (his grand son) all moneys which your honorable Body may think proper to grant according to the aforementioned act of May 1777

Your memorialist is aware that many years have elapsed since the aforementioned services were performed, yet hopes that, that will form no objection in the breast of a State who hath hitherto regarded her promises, and liberally rewarded those who at any distance of time have risqued their lives or fortunes in her service

If your honorable Body should consider that you memorialist ought to receive any thing, he prays that it may be printed out, to whom and in what manner proof shall be made of said Richard Taylor's death, and of your memorialist's being the proper person to whom it ought to be paid

Richard T. Robertson

1827 Mar. 9 The following documents accompanying the petition of Richard T. Robertson, were this day delivered to me.

- 1<sup>st</sup> A certificate of Benjamin Taylor Sen Jefferson County Kentucky dated Mar. 19 1826
- 2 A certificate of Wm. Taylor Sen'r. Oldham County Kentucky dated Mar. 6 1826
- 3 .Certificate of John T. Berry Clk. of Oldham County Kentucky, shewing that Richard T Robertson is the Admr. of Richard Taylor Sen'r. and certificate of Richard Barbour a Magistrate, shewing that Berry is Clerk &c. dated Mar 1826.
4. Recommendation of John Page Sr. Governor Commander of the *Tartar* to the civility &c of all persons &c. dated 11<sup>th</sup> Sep'r 1788.

5. Richard Taylors Commission Aug't. 2 1780
6. Depositions of Wm. Taylor Sen'r. & Ben. Taylor Sen'r. 22<sup>n</sup> Nov'r 1826. John Mason

Dec'r 20<sup>th</sup> 1826 ref'd to Claims/ 1827 Jan'y 2<sup>nd</sup> Rejected/ 24<sup>th</sup> Reported

[The following are from [pension files in the Library of Virginia](#). Many online images from the file cannot be transcribed because large portions are missing.]

I DO, with the advice of the Council, hereby certify that Richard Taylor Gent. late Captain of the Ship Tartar, appears to have been disabled in such a manner while in the service of The Commonwealth of Virginia as to entitle him to the sum of Seventy five pounds 5/7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> yearly; which allowance is accordingly made him, to commence from the first day of January 1786

GIVEN under my hand at Richmond, this 5<sup>th</sup> day of January 1786.

[signed] P. Henry [Patrick Henry]

Caroline [County, VA] April Court 1788

Ordered that the Sheriff pay Richard Taylor the Sum of Thirty eight Pounds ten shillings and six pence being the amount of his pension from January to the fourth day of July 1787

J Pendleton DC

Rec'd the within contents of Thomas Hoove[?]  
June 2 1788



[A document with the date missing from the online image states that Taylor intended to move from Caroline County to Kentucky.]

At a Court held for Jefferson County at the Courthouse in Louisville on Tuesday the first day of December one thousand seven hundred and ninety five  
Captain Richard Taylor personally appeared before this Court, and informed [the] Court that he stood on the Virginia State pension list, and that his inability occasioned by a [w]ound in the thigh still continues, and having [sat]isfied the Court of his being a resident of the [sai]d County, on his motion to same was ordered [to] be certified. In Testimony whereof I Ste[p]hen Ormsby Clerk of the Court of said County [hav]e hereunto set my hand and affixed the Seal [of] the said County this seventeenth day of December [179]5 and in the fourth year of our Commonwealth Step'n. Ormsby

[The file contains a document signed by Dr. W. Warfield in December 1795 the online portions of which indicate that Taylor had an "imposthume" (abcess) in his thigh. Beginning with a document dated 8 July 1803 signed as "Rich'd Taylor Sen'r." The latest document in these files is dated 25 April 1826.]

#### NOTES:

Joseph Saunders also described in his pension application (S17073) the engagement in which Richard Taylor was wounded, but there he erroneously referred to him as John Taylor. The confusion may arise from the fact that Richard Taylor had a brother named John Taylor who was a midshipman, and a different John Taylor deserted from the Tartar.

A letter in Taylor's federal pension file dated 9 Apr 1824 states that he "must be about 80 years of age, was a Capt in the Navy in the time of the Revolutionary War, was then dreadfully wounded."

The federal pension file contains a long analysis of the meaning of "supernumerary," whether naval officers became supernumerary when their vessels were captured or destroyed, whether Taylor in particular was a supernumerary officer, and whether his half-pay should commence when he became

supernumerary or at the end of the war. The document also summarizes legislation authorizing the decommissioning of several vessels. Taylor became supernumerary on 4 Oct 1779, but he had been out of command since 19 June 1779 because of wounds.

The Virginia Half-Pay file includes a document dated 30 July 1825 listing the following heirs of Richard Taylor: grandchildren Richard Taylor Robertson, Eliza M. Robertson Byrne (wife of Thomas K. Byrne), Catharine Robertson, Mary Ann Robertson Anderson (wife of James B. Anderson), and great grandson Richard Taylor Jacob. John J. Jacob was named guardian of Richard Taylor Jacob, who was a minor. The document also states that Matilda Robertson was a daughter of Richard Taylor.