

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Pension Application of William Mitchell S38221

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris

At a Court held for Spotsylvania County the 3rd day of October 1825

District of Virginia Spotsylvania County to Wit

On this 3rd day of October personally appeared in open court being a court of record by the laws of this state William Mitchell aged seventy eight years resident of Spotsylvania county in said district who being first duly sworn according to law doth on his oath make the following declaration in order to obtain the provision made by the acts of congress of the 18th of March 1818 and the 1st of May 1820 for revolutionary soldiers &c that he served in the revolutionary war from the [blank] day of December 1776 to the 15th of December 1783 when he was regularly discharged that he enlisted as a private in the continental line under Capt. Harris [see endnote] of the 1st Virginia regiment at Hobs Hole [sic: Hobbs Hole at present Tappahannock in Essex County VA on Rappahannock River] state of Virginia from thence he went to Williamsburg and divers other places in said state and remained in the land service for eighteen months from which he was transfered to the Marine service in the brig Musquetoe [sic: *Mosquito*] under Capt Harris [John Harris, pension application R41] that he was engaged in several battles in one of which he was taken prisoner and after encountering many difficulties he escaped & entered again in the american service under Capt [Alexander] Dick and remained untill the close of the war when he was regularly discharged at Fredericksburg & State aforesaid. That he hereby relinquishes evary claim whatever to a pension except the present That his name is not on the roll of any state except Virginia and that he should have made earlier application for a pension but having employed an attorney some three or four years ago to get him enrolled as a pensioner he waited from time to time relying on his attorney till finding that either from his said attorneys neglect or some other cause unknown to him he should never get his pension to which he was so justly entitled & of which he stood in great need for his suppo[rt] he employed a friend some short time since who by his activity & industry furnished him with the necessary papers and pointed out the proper course to pursue to the obtaining his pension he further declares on oath he was a resident citizen of the untied states on the 18th day of December 1818 and since that time has not by gift sale or in any manner disposed of his property or any part thereof with Intent thereby so to diminish it as to bring himself within the provisions of an act of congress entitled an act to provide for certain persons engaged in the land and naval service of the united States in the revolutionary war passed on the 18th day of March 1818 and that he has not nor has any person in trust for him any property or securities contracts or debts due to him nor has he any income other than what is contained in the schedule hereto annexed and by his subscribed to wit one old bed one old chest and that he own no land whatever, that since the 18th day of March 1818 no change has taken place in his property that when he was able he was a labourer and his family consists of himself and wife who is aged ninety two years and in support of his being the same person enlisted & served aforesaid offered to the court the paper writing signed Samuel Coleman in the words following to wit

Council Chamber January 27th 1821

John Tyler/ William Mitchell

William Mitchell is entitled to the proportion of Land allowed a private of the Continental line for the war his services commencing on the [blank] day of December 1776 and ending 15 Nov'r. 1783.

Council Chamber/ January 27th 1810

Samuel Coleman

Jno. Tyler

[Mitchell made the following statement in support of an application by heirs of George Catlett W2524:]

The deposition of William Mitchel of Caroline County, taken before me the subscriber, a justice of

the peace for said County to be read in evidence in the claim of the late George Catlett's heirs, for compensation for his services in the revolutionary war. The deponent, being first duly sworn, states, that he enlisted in the latter part of the year 1775 in the naval service of Virginia, for the term of one year; and served out that term in the sloop Defiance, commanded a part of the time by Capt. [Eleazer] Callender. On the expiration of that term he enlisted again in the marine service for three years or during the war, and joined the company of Capt. Alexander Dick, in which George Catlett was Lieutenant. He states that a short time after his second enlistment, and as he thinks in the spring of 1777, that Capt. Dick's Company was put on board the brig Musquito, and ordered on a cruize. The officers of the Musquito were Capt. Harris, Capt. Dick, Lt. Geo. Catlett, Lt. Chamberlayne [Byrd Chamberlayne R22], Midshipman [Alexander] Moore, Steward Jno. Brock [John Brock], gunner's mate Robt. Hamilton [Robert Hamilton], and Jos. Warrick [sic: Joseph Warwick] pilot or pilot's mate, the last 5 from the Defiance, where I had served with them. Some of the privates were John, Jas. & Wm. Dishman [John Dishman, James Dishman W9409, William Dishman R2965], Moses Standley [Moses Standly (Stanley) W3886], Geo. Spellman [or George Spellman, S37433], Thos. Cattrill [Thomas Cottrill], Jno. Dodd [John Dodd], Wm. Dollins [William Dowlins or William Dollins], Tom Chandler [Thomas Chandler, possibly R24] &c. In the spring of 1777 we sailed from Norfolk on a cruize and bore away for the west Indies. We captured the Snow John which got away from us. We captured also the ship Noble, both loaded with cloathing & provisions for the British Army. The latter we carried into Point Petre in the Island of Grandtier [sic: Pointe-à-Pitre on Grande-Terre] and sold her. From the crew of the Noble we took the small pox, which detained us some time at Point Petre. After recovering from the small pox we set sail on another cruize, and soon spied another sail which turned out to be the British ship Ariadne. She was a larger ship than the Musquito, & mounted more guns. We could not escape her, and we were compelled to surrender. She took us into Barbadoes [sic: Barbados], where the privates were confined as prisoners for seven months and fifteen days; when we were sent over to England and confined, some in Fortune jail [sic: Forton Prison] and others in prison ships. After a confinement there of thirty two months or thereabouts, myself and fifteen of the privates made our escape by undermining the jail. We seized a small sloop which was near, & crossed over to France, whence we soon got a passage to the United States. Capt. Dick made his escape some time before me and returned to the United States. When I escaped, I left Lt. Catlett in jail, in another apartment, and he did not escape till some time after me, as I understand. He returned to the United States not long before the surrender at York, and joined the infantry as Capt. Dick did also; there being no naval command for them. On my return, I reported myself to Capt. Dick in Fredericksburg, and was ordered by him to join the infantry, which I did, and served in the company of Capt. Wallace until the surrender at York. Lt. Catlett was with us at the seige of York acting as an officer, and after the seige was over, many of us were permitted to return to our homes, with orders to join the army again when called on. This was the case with Catlett & myself as well as others, and we returned to our homes which were near each other. We did not again go into service, but were always ready to do so if called on. I am confident that Catlett never resigned. If he had, I certainly would have heard of it. He was a brave & meretorious officer, & was fond of military life, and his feelings of hatred towards the English, for the treatment we had received were so violent, that I am certain he would never have left the service as long as there was a chance for fighting or an opportunity to be revenged. Such were his feelings as well as my own, and all those who were confined with us in prison. After our capture before named we were carried into Barbadoes, & the seamen only, were put in Bridgetown prison. The Officers were carried off to England & put in Fortune prison at Gosport, where we found them on our arrival there, and where some of them as well as some of the privates remained to the end of the war as I heard from them after their return. [12 Jul 1837]

Wm hisXmark Mitchell

NOTES:

The first Capt. Harris was probably a different officer from Capt. John Harris who commanded

the *Mosquito*. The latter Capt. Harris was an officer in the Virginia Navy as early as spring 1776.

A Treasury-Department document states that the administrator of William Mitchell received the final pension payment up to the day of his death, 28 Apr 1840.

The following extract was taken from Robert Armistead Stewart's *History of Virginia's Navy of the Revolution*

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

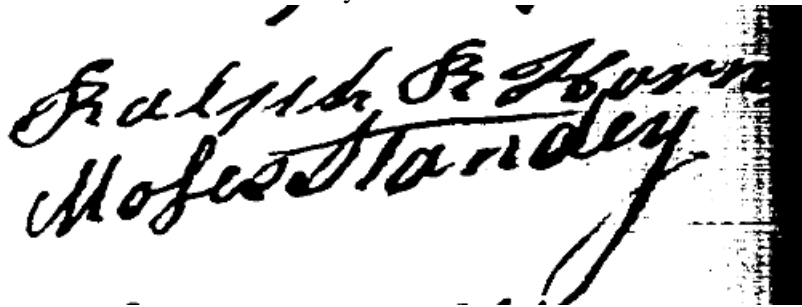
Bounty Land Warrant information relating to William Mitchell S38221 supp. [vsl 3VA](#)
Transcribed by Will Graves 6/20/13

[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.]

[From [bounty land records in the Library of Virginia](#)]

We Ralph R Horn¹ & Moses Standley² do hereby Certify that William Mitchell of the County of Caroline & State of Virginia enlisted with Captain Alexander Dick sometime in the month of November 1776 to serve in one of the Virginia State Regiments for 3 years or during the War & that sometime in the month of February 1777 was carried by the said Captain Dick on board of the Public armed Brig the *Mosketto* [*Mosquito?*]³ & Sailed on a Crews, & on the 4th day of June following was taken prisoner by his Britannic Majesty's Ship *Ariadosay* [*Ariadne?*] Sir Thomas Pringle commander & was kept prisoner during the War between one & America, and after returning to America was discharged at Fredericksburg Virginia in the month of November 1781. Certified under our hands this 20th of July 1809.

S/ Ralph R. Horn
S/ Moses Standley

Handwritten signatures of Ralph R. Horn and Moses Standley in cursive script, written in black ink on a white background. The signatures are positioned below the typed names of the certifiers.

I do Certify that I am well acquainted with Ralph R. Horn & Moses Standly & believe the certificate they have given to William Mitchell respecting his services as a Soldier is perfectly correct.

S/ Geo. Buckner
20th July 1809

¹ [Ralph R. Horn S38046](#)

² [Moses Standley \(Stanley\) W3886](#)

³ *Mosquito/Musquito*. ND7:1236, ND8:965, ND9:19-20, Dandridge:187, M389, Coggins:102, ND10:924, ND11:130, 285, 887, VANavy:154, brig in VA Navy, 1776, Capts Jacob Valentine, Isaac Younghusband, and John Harris, captured and crew jailed in 1777 in Barbados and officers to Forton Prison. VANavy:154, it captured the British snow *John* and the transport *Noble*. The ship *Noble* was valued at 75,000 l ivres. Connor:345fn (1876), SchV:52, DaviesXIII:1094, privateer of Virginia, taken Aug 1777 in the West Indies by the British *Ariadne*, and part of crew to Forton Prison 8 Aug 1777. SchV:52, Kaminkow:230, 14 guns, 72 men, indicates one of two captains, John Harris or John Martin, capture of Aug 1777 for John Harris, no date for John Martin...C2, 52. Ford1776:861. ND9:19 this was apparently a VA vessel renamed *Endeavor*, later captured by *Ariadne* 4 June 1777. Silverstone:20. <http://www.awiatsea.com/Other/Hough%20List%20M.html>

Lieutenants Byrd Chamberlayne and George Chamberlaine, who had levelled charges against their former commander, Capt. Robert Tompkins of the *Henry Galley*, were assigned to the brig. Byrd Chamberlayne took the place of the overbearing Lt. George Rogers, on November 21, 1776. George Chamberlaine, after a short service on the *Manley*, entered the *Mosquito* on January 28, 1777. Nine of the *Henry's* crew with hammocks, bedding, etc. were also transferred to the *Mosquito*, and on the same day that Byrd Chamberlayne was appointed first lieutenant, his brother Edward Pye Chamberlayne was received as midshipman.*

A shifting of marines was likewise determined. On December 4, 1776, Alexander Dick, captain of marines since February 4, received notice at Port Royal that his company of about twenty-five was wanted for the *Mosquito*. The men were accordingly shipped from Hobbs Hole to Portsmouth on the *Manley*, Capt. Cocke, who was directed to take on Capt. Valentine's marines in return.

On Wednesday, February 6, the *Mosquito* with a crew of close to seventy-five, her captain supplied with instructions concerning the disposal of prizes, left the Capes and bore away in the direction of Point Peter, Grande Terre, one of the ports "open to our cruizers", as the Naval Board had been discreetly informed.

Late in March, the adventurer met with success not unmixed with ill fortune. Her initial conquest, the *Snow† John*, laden with clothing and provisions for Antigua, contrived to slip away from the captor, but that same evening the *Virginia*

*The officers of the *Mosquito* were: John Harris, capt.; Byrd Chamberlayne, 1st lt.; George Chamberlaine, 2d lt.; Charles de Kay, sailing master; Alex. Moore, midshipman; Robert Hambleton, gunner; Edward Eagles, gunner's mate; John Brock, steward; Jos. Warwick, pilot's mate; Archibald McNickle, surgeon; John Smith, boatswain; Edward Chamberlayne, midshipman. Marines: Alex. Dick, captain; George Catlett, 1st lt.; Edmund Waller, 2d lt.

According to a statement of Wm. Mitchell, private, Lt. Chamberlaine, Moore, Brock, Hamilton, and Warwick had previously served on the *Sloop Defiance*, along with himself.

†A "Snow" was a peculiarly-rigged species of merchant-man, with a small and short mizzen, and bearing a try-sail instead of topsails and spanner-sheets.

brig fell in with and took the Antigua-bound King's transport-ship Noble, Capt. Addis, from Cork, Ireland, with a cargo of beef, bacon, candles, flour, etc. The prize was convoyed successfully into the port of Guadaloupe, and the valuation of the cargo at 80,000 livres caused each private to welcome in anticipation "60 lois, deducting the portion reserved for the Board of War." Capt. Harris, unable to see to the transaction in person, consigned the commission to a merchant at Point Peter, one M. Soubies, who, according to his own declaration, shipped the greater part of the supplies to Martinique on a boat that fell a prey to a Dominican privateer. For this piratical outrage Soubies contended he was able to exact no redress. It was the conviction of the Virginia authorities, however, that he was seeking to screen himself behind shallow excuses, and, two years later, Capt. John Cox, appointed agent in Martinique, in succession to Richard Harrison, was instructed to spare no pains to bring the French defrauder to terms.

The crew of the Mosquito, destined to receive no share of their booty, were marked, on the other hand, for an ungrateful memento from their late captives of the Noble. "We have just received," a letter of June 5 from Martinique per the sloop Virginia announced, "a letter from Capt. Harris. He left Guadaloupe a few days ago after being detained there a short time by the Small Pox which had gone through his whole crew without much loss except that of time." In after years, the marine Wm. Dishman affirmed that, when the prize was taken, discovery was made that one of the Mosquito's crew had the smallpox, and it was necessary to return "to inoculate the rest." Whether the contagion came by the customary channels or whether it was "small pox taken by inoculation," to use an expression then current, further time devoted to convalescence might have averted the lot in store for the crew. Shortly after the Mosquito left port on the evening of June 4, she espied a sail that turned out to be a British man-of-war commanded by Sir Thomas Pringle (according to Ralph Horn) or under Capt. Collier (if Moses Stanley be credited). Despite every effort to evade a pursuer so superior in weight of metal the little Mosquito was soon overhauled and forced to surrender. On

June 19, James Smith, an agent in St. Eustatius, reported the loss: "Mosquito Brig captured to windward of Barbadoes by the Ariadne Man of War of 20 Guns—The Capt and his hands it's reported were sent home with a number of others (among them Ralls) in the fleet that sailed three days ago from S. Kitts." And, on July 10, the seizure was announced by John Ball, almost in the manner of a remark in parentheses: "I forgot to mention to you that the Mosquito was taken by the sloop Ariadne and carried into St. John, Antigua. Capt. Harris, Capt. Ralls, and a Captain of the Sloop Oliver Cromwell of Philadelphia (who was also taken by a Kings ship) are all sent to England in the June fleet. The Ship which took out the Mosquito failed her much."

So the officers of the Mosquito, commissioned and warrant, but not their "hands", were transported "home" to Fortune (Forton) Gaol, the quondam Queen Anne's Hospital, in Gosport, and their home-coming is thus chronicled in the extant Journal of an American prisoner:

"Muscator (*sic*) from Virginia committed Aug. 8, 1777.

"Aug 9 (1777) this day came on shore forty nine American prisoners. Among them were three captains of armed vessels, viz. Captain Courter of the 'Oliver Cromwell', Captain Harris of the 'Miscator' (*sic*) and Captain Hill of the 'Montgomery'. The Agent made it his business to make them deliver up their money by the point of the bayonet. There is no such thing as refusing."*

"The Sailors we are told are all in Goal at Barbados," Van Bibber & Harrison announced on June 25, "but the Capt & other officers are carryed to Antigua, from whence they will be transported to England. It seems prisons are there fitted up for the reception of all Americans who have the ill fortune to fall into their hands (no matter where) but more particularly those taken in armed Vessels.—This is a consequence of the last Act of Parliament suspending the Law of Harbeas Corpus

*"A Yankee Privateersman in Prison in England. Journal of a Forton Prisoner, edited by W. R. Cutler", *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, April, 1876 to January, 1879.

& empowering the King to seize & confine whoever he may suspect of Treason or Rebellion."

The hardships visited on the seamen and marines were in afteryears variously related. Moses Stanley declared that he and others were thrown into a Bridgetown prison and kept seven months and fifteen days before they were transported in the *Antelope* to "Fortune Goal," Gosport. From the Barbadoes prison (other testimony shows) Francis Pickett, Reuben Brooks, and William Chandler of Caroline County were removed to enforced service on a British ship, and the two last-named, seized with fever, died for lack of necessaries.

Ralph Horn, charged with the crime of treason, was kept six days in confinement. On June 17, 1778, the men were distributed, he further recalled, in a fleet of British ships bound for Jamaica and there removed to a *Man-of-War*, "where six of us drew 4 British mens rations". Two chances to escape presented themselves, but each attempt met with failure. According to Capt. Dick, Horn, after seven months in Barbadoes prison, was removed to the *Antelope* "on the Course of Brazil". On the ship *Prince George* several captives were ill used because they refused to enlist, and Horn, failing in his effort to escape, was brought to the gang-way. Three years later this marine was transported in the *Romulus* to England, and there lay three years more before he was finally released, reaching New Castle on Sept. 19, 1783.

But Barbadoes had not held all its prisoners. M. Soubies, of Guadaloupe, in bad odor because of his "Noble" transaction, affirmed, in 1778, that he had furnished with clothes Virginia seamen escaped from Barbadoes. William Dishman left the island under pleasanter auspices. Detained at Bridgetown until June, 1778, he and other men were distributed among the ships of a merchant fleet that touched at the port. The three Dishman brothers were placed on the same ship and set at liberty on the island of Jamaica. After a period the three were put on a vessel, with permission to work their way to Philadelphia, but, thanks to the intervention of a Scotch merchant on board, they were landed a short distance below their intended destination, then in the hands of the British,

and contrived to reach Baltimore safely—on the night, as it happened, of the illumination in celebration of the recent treaty with France.

Dr. Iveson, of the *Mosquito*, was reported by Harrison, on December 27, 1777, to have arrived in St. Pierre, bearing the news that the remainder of the prisoners in Barbadoes would be released by the first of the year, unless orders should arrive for their further detention. It later developed that the Habeas Corpus Act was to continue another year, and "Harris' people much in want of cloaths" were supplied by Harrison, through a friend, "to the Amount of 20 Lois."

Finally, the Barbadoes prisoners were transported to Gosport, England, where some were held in the hulks and others in "Forton Gaol." Shortly after the newcomers' arrival Ralph Horn received from Capt. Alexander Dick a note urging that an endeavor be made to have all the privates lodged together in the prison, presumably with a view to an *en masse* effort to effect an escape.

Among the first to get out, by whatever means, were Dr. McNickel, Captain Dick, and Midshipman Moore. After an interval William Mitchell and fifteen other privates succeeded in undermining the gaol, made straight for the harbor, seized a small vessel, and safely reached the French coast.

Captain Harris, who, during his imprisonment, had received news direct from Virginia "from one Green* a Virginian who has not been very long from his country", was fortunate in receiving the good offices of Dr. James McCaw by proxy and, later, in person.

According to his fellow-prisoner, John Kilby†, Capt. Harris left Forton under the following circumstances: "At last the day and hour of exchange were announced to us** The agent appointed for that purpose, a Mr. Hurum, called all of our names and read to us these words, to wit: 'You all now have received His Majesty's most gracious pardon.' At that time there was a loud cry from many of our men, 'Damn his

*This was doubtless Capt. Wm. Green, of the *Defiance*, captured in 1778.

†"Narrative of John Kilby", *Scribner's Magazine*, July, 1905

Majesty and his pardon too.' The gates were opened and one hundred of us, the first on the list, (when I say the first on the list I mean this, that as we were committed so we stood on the list, unless put back under the penalty before mentioned), were marched out under guard. There were one hundred of us with Captain John Harris at our head."

The prisoners went directly from Portsmouth to Nantes on a French vessel, and at the French port Kilby and many other seamen shipped with John Paul Jones.

A letter to a now unknown correspondent throws some light on Harris's fortunes:

"Some time in the year 1779, while I was in Fortune 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 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* & many other Gentlemen, but do not well recollect, but it was some-

*Commodore Alexander Gillon, of the South Carolina State Navy, went abroad in 1778 to negotiate a loan on indigo.