

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

Pension Application of Francis Otway Byrd W6219  
Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris

To the honourable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.

The petition of Otway Byrd,

Most respectfully sheweth, That your petitioner at a very early period of Life was entered as a midshipman in the British navy, by his Father, the late William Byrd esq'r. of Westover in Virginia [William Byrd III, 6 Sep 1728 – 1 or 2 Jan 1777], and actually served in that capacity on board several ships of war, and particularly the Fowey, then commanded by George Montague esq'r. until within four months of the period required by the rules of the British navy for obtaining a Lieutenants Commission. That in the year 1774 apprehending that his native country might be thrown into a state of actual hostility with the crown in whose immediate service he then was, he repeatedly solicited his fathers permission to leave the navy, preferring, under such circumstances, to abandon his prospects though considered as extremely flattering under the patronage & Friendship of a Commander of rank and Connexion with persons in power. That, his Fathers assent, unfortunately for your Petitioner could not be obtained – that he not only objected in the strongest Terms to such a step, but threatened in case of perseverance therein to cut him off from every provision intended for him by his will; and did in reality by his last will and Testament bearing date the [blank] day of July 1774 make the following conditional provision for your petitioner – viz: "It is my will and desire that at the death of my dearest wife all my Estates whatsoever, consisting of Lands, Negroes, Stocks of all sort, plate, Books and Furniture be sold as soon as convenient and the money arising from the sales thereof be equally di[vided] among all my children that are alive at the time of my dear wife's death. My will is that if my son Otway should quit the navy be[fore] the death of my dearest wife that he shall not be entituled to a part of the above said money arising from the above said sales. [part missing from bottom of page in Fold3 version]

That patents have since been obtained for the Lands therein mentioned which lie at the Falls of the Ohio [at present Louisville KY], and as your petitioner hath been informed are extremely valuable; but he can form no estimate of of the value of the distributive proportion of the Estate to which he might have been entituled at the decease of Mrs. Byrd, who is still living.

Your petitioner begs leave further to add that he entered into the service of his Country immediately after the commencement of hostilities, and served during the campaigns of 1775 and 1776 as aid de Camp to General [Charles] Lee, and after that period as a Lieut. Colonel of Cavalry till the year 1778 when, finding his pay from the great Depreciation of money at that time wholly inadequate to support him in the rank he held, and being, from a total deprivation of resources from an offended parent, then deceased, unable to maintain him[self] in the Army, he reluctantly resigned his Commission: and [illegible word] such resignation was excluded from that recompense, which other officers, who were enable to remain in service, till the conclusion of the war, have since received.

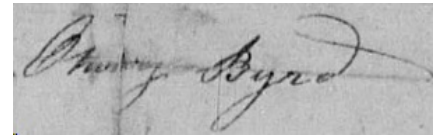
Having thus forfeited his hopes of preferment, and an adequate provision in his first profession, and all that he might have expected as a patrimonial provision by his dereliction of the royal Cause; and from the peculiar distress and hardship of his situation, all that he might have claim'd from the Justice of his country, could he have remained in that service which his Inclination and principles equally prompted him to embrace, he presumes to hope that an application to the supreme Legislature for such a compensation as may be deem'd adequate to his sacrifices, and services, will not be regarded as presumptuous or unreasonable.

And your petitioner will ever pray &c

Dear Sir, [following names listed: John Page Sen'r, Geo. Mason, Edm'd Pendleton, Carter Braxton, Thos. L. Lee, John Bacon Sen]

I have left the Navy contrary to my Father's inclination; I don't know what may be the consequence. You must be assured that nothing but the present unhappy disturbances would have induced me to take this step. And to prove to my Countrymen my willingness to serve them – should a standing Army be rais'd I would wish for some part in it – for which purpose I take the liberty to solicit your Interest – this being unknow to my Father I should wish to have kept secret, I am Dear Sir,  
with great Esteem/ Your very Humble Servant

Westover July the 25<sup>th</sup> 1775

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Otway Byrd". The ink is dark and the paper is aged and slightly yellowed.

Extract from the "Proceedings of the Convention of Delegates for the Counties and Corporations in the Colony of Virginia, held at Richmond in the County of Henrico, on Monday the 17<sup>th</sup> Day of July 1775." Williamsburg printed by Alexander Purdie.

"Saturday August 26, 1775.

It appearing to the Convention that Otway Byrd, esq; had on account of his attachment to American Liberty, resigned his provision and prospects in the British navy, and may be destitute of Employment.

Resolved, That the said Otway Byrd, esq; be strongly recommended to his Excellency general Washington, and the Conventions of our sister Colonies to the eastward, for promotion in the army in that neighbourhood; and that until such promotion shall take place, or it shall be otherwise ordered by this Convention, that he be allowed ten shillings a day, to support him as a Cadet in the continental Army, to commence the day he joins the said Army, and that he be also allowed the sum of £50 to be paid him immediately."

Resolved, That Maj. [William] Washington be promoted to the Rank of Lieut Col. in the room of Lieut Col Byrd, of Col Baylors [George Baylor's] dragoons, resigned; and that he proceed to Bristol and take command of Col Baylor's Regiment.

Extracts from the Journal of the House of Delegates of Friday the eighteenth day of June seventeen hundred and eighty four.

Mr. Carter Henry Harrison reported from the Committee of Propositions and Grievances that the Committee had according to order had under their consideration several petitions to them referred and had agreed upon a report and come to several resolutions thereupon which he read in his place and afterwards in at the Clerk's table where the same were again read and are as followeth:

"It appears to your Committee that Otway Byrd resigned his commission in the British service and in September 1775 was appointed Aid de Camp to General Lee, in which capacity he acted until the first day of January 1777, when he was appointed Lieutenant Colonel of Light Dragoons, and acted under that appointment until the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 1778.

2<sup>nd</sup>. Resolved that it is the opinion of this Committee that the petition of the said Otway Byrd praying that a bounty in lands may be given him, is reasonable, and that he ought to be allowed the like proportion as by law given to a Lieutenant Colonel.

[Some parts not transcribed.]

Extract from the Journal of the House of Delegates of Wednesday the twenty third day of June seventeen hundred & eighty four.

A message from the Senate by Mr. Brown,

Mr. Speaker. The Senate have agreed to the bill to revive an act, entitled an act for calling in and finding the Paper money of this State with an amendment to which they desire the concurrence of this house; also to the Resolutions for granting bounties of Land to Alexander McClanahan, Thomas Elliott, Otway Byrd, Cleon Moore, William Mountjoy, Thornton Taylor, Gabriel Maupin, Charles West, William Boyce, Nathaniel Lucas, Michael Bowyer & Leven Powell, with an amendment to the last, to which they desire the concurrence of this house; also to the Resolution directing the Auditors to grant a specie certificate to Edmund Webb, to settle the accounts of John Watkins, directing the Treasurer to receive from the Sheriffs notes for tobacco destroyed at the Rocky Ridge, collected by them before the burning of the said warehouse; for allowing sums of money to Isaac Thacker, Arthur Aiken, and William Meredith, directing the Auditors to settle the accounts of Steuball Pratt, and for putting John Angel and George Brown on the list of Pensioners. And then he withdrew.

Virginia to witt,

Corporation of Lynchburg Campbell County on this 30<sup>th</sup> October 1838 personally appeared before me David R. Lyman a Justice of the peace for the Corporation aforesaid Mrs. Anna Byrd, (the widow of Col. Francis Otway Byrd) aged 73 years who being first duly sworn, according to law, doth on her oath, make the following declaration, in order to obtain the benefit of the provision made by the act of Congress passed July 7<sup>th</sup> 1838 entitled "An act granting half pay and pensions to certain widows" That she is the widow of Col. Francis Otway Byrd dec'd. a Revolutionary officer in Continental line of service who was appointed a Cadet, by the convention of delegates from the Counties and Corporations of the Colony of Virginia, held in the City of Rich'd. in the County of Henrico, the 17 July 1775 at 10/- pr day and £50 additional to be paid down – That he served as aid-de camp to Gen'l. Lee during the campaigns of 1775 and 1776 and after that period as Lieut Col. of Cavalry untill near the close of the War – and she thinks he resigned his commission the fall of the year after they were married in 1781 as will appear or, corrected by the returns to the war department – and for which service he rec'd. 6,000 acres land which is presumptive evidence (at least) that he served three years or more in the continental service – and for further evidence of service, she will have to rely on the records to be obtained in the City of Richmond and at the Auditors office, and war departments in the City of Washington.

That she was married to the aforesaid Col. Francis Otway Byrd, in Mecklenburg County Va. the 6<sup>th</sup> of ap'l. 1781 by the Rev'd Mr Cameron and that her maiden name was Anna Munford – that her husband first settled in Char's. [Charles] City County where they lived several years during which he held the high Sherriffalty – from thence he removed to Norfolk Va where he held the office of Collector of the port untill his death – which she avers was on the [blank] day of September 1800 and that she has remained a widow ever since as will more fully appear by reference to the proof annexed – (and inasmuch as there is no positive proof that her husband was in the service after they were married she must say) that she was not married to him prior to his leaving the service but that the marriage took place previous to the 1<sup>st</sup> Jan'y. 1794 Viz, at the time above stated

Sworn to, and subscribed on the day and year above written – Anna herXmark Byrd

State of Virginia Clarke County to witt,

On this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of Nov. 1838, personally appeared before me Nathaniel Burwell a Justice of the peace, in and for the County aforesaid; Mrs. Maria H Page a respectable lady of said County; who, being first duly sworn according to law; doth, on her oath say – That, she is the sister of Col Francis Otway Byrd, (more commonly called, or, known, by the name of Otway Byrd) a Revolutionary Officer. That, he was married to miss Ursula Anna, alias Anna, (sometimes called Nancy Munford, the 2<sup>nd</sup> daughter of Col Robert Munford of Mecklenburg County in the State of Virginia – the said County in which they were married; in or about the year 1781 or 1782 at any rate before the 1<sup>st</sup> of Jan'y. 1794.

That they lived together as man and wife untill the death of her brother Col Otway Byrd, which was

about the year 1800. That Mrs. Anna Byrd, the widow of Col. Francis Otway, or, Otway Byrd has remained a widow ever since the death of her husband (about the year 1800) and is a widow at this time – and is the identical person, who, now solicits a pension, at the hands of the Government.

[signed] Maria H Page

NOTES:

The file includes several accounts showing pay and rations for Otway Bird. The file includes a copy of the survey of Otway Byrd's bounty land. Also in the file is a personal letter from Otway Byrd to a Col. Parker, from Norfolk on 18 Feb 1800, referring to his petition for the land, with the following extract: "There is an account in the War department that shews I did not draw pay and subsitance for the whole time, that the Virginia act states my being in service; but surely that ought not to militate against me, for it was a point of delicacy, for when I was from the army on furlough, I was returning, and was stop'ed by a spell of sickness that confined me many weeks, and as I ultimately determin'd to resign I did [not?] feel myself at liberty to draw for such time."

The file contains a copy of a deed dated 8 Oct 1781 transferring land on Roanoke River from Robert Munford to Otway Byrd, both of Saint James's Parish in Mecklenburg County, for five shillings and "more especially for the love and affection he hath for the said Otway Byrd and his Daughter Ursulaanna Byrd."

On 15 April 1843 Anna Byrd's age was given as 77. On 31 May 1845 Ann O. Wright, executor of Anna Byrd who died on 21 Aug 1844, applied on behalf of the heirs for an increased pension on the grounds that Francis Otway Byrd held a higher rank as officer. The surviving children of Anna Byrd were listed as follows: Maria B. Bradfate, Ann O. Wright, and Abby Davis.