## Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Virginia Bounty-Land Claim of John Cowper VAS1568

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris

[From bounty-warrant records in the Library of Virginia.]

## To David Campbell Esquire Governor of Virginia

The Memorial of Mary E. Darden an infant under the age of twenty one years, by Jacob Darden her guardian. Respectfully represents that the Grand father (or great Grand father) of the said Mary, John Cowper of the County of Nansemond, was duly commissioned a Captain in the State Navy of Virginia, during the war of the Revolution, and served in that capacity. Your Petitioner further represents, that during the period of the said war, the said Captain John Cowper commanded a vessel of war [the boat Dolphin, spring 1779], and whilst at sea the said vessel was sunk in an action with a vastly superior force of the enemy, and all on board perished according to the accidental accounts of that day, and which have since been handed down as a matter of tradition in the family of the said Captain John Cowper, and which your Petitioner as an historical fact, asserts to come directly within his own knowledge. At the period referred to, the said John Cowper left three children of very tender years, viz John, Jane and Horatio. John was the oldest child, and by the statutes then in force, was wholly and exclusively entitled to his estate. He died in the year 1809 leaving two children surviving him viz Betsey and Horatio. The latter died unmarried and intestate, leaving his sister Betsey his heir at law, then said Betsey married Wm Darden and is likewise dead leaving an only child your petitioner Mary her heir at law. Your petitioner represents further to your Excellency, that the land Bounty to which the said Captain John Cowper was entitled for his services has never been obtained, and there is no doubt that the infancy of his child and heir at law John Cowper at the period referred to, and there being no person to protect and watch over his rights, during his minority, is the sole reason why his Land Bounty was never obtained. Your petitioner therefor prays that the claim of the said Mary E. Darden may be examined into by your Excellency together with the proof exhibited, so that the Land Bounty due to the said Captain John Cowper a gallant offer [sic] of the Revolution may be awarded to his grand child 12 Feb 18401 Jacob Darden

## Dear Sir Portsmouth March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1840

The petition of Jacob Darden legal guardian of Mary E. Darden the heir of Captain John Cowper which I had the Honor of presenting to your excellency on saturday last, in sustained by the evidence filed by my friend Frederic Vincent Esq'r in the case of Doct Simon Harris [VAS12] recently allowed. The testimony of Commodore James Barron [W12264], proves beyond all reasonable doubt, the fact of Captain John Cowper's loss at sea. The testimony of John C. Cohoon also, and that particularly of Armistead Culley [S8270], a highly respectable citizen of Baltimore. The character of the persons giving the testimony cannot be questioned, for the certificate of the Hon. Mr Howard of Congress shews the standing of Armistead Culley and the certificate given by my [illegible word] friend Wm D. Hodges dec'd. of the character and standing of John C. Cohoon, must be satisfactory and the character of Commodore Barron is sustained by the history of his country

Captain John Cowper being commander of the vessel, at the time she was lost, and all on board perished; and the evidence being sufficient to authorise the allowance of the claim of Doct Harris, who perished at the same time, there can be no doubt of the justice of the claim of the heir of Captain John Cowper. The evidence is the same in both cases, and as the claim of Doct Harris has been examined and allowed, there can be no trouble in investigating the testimony as to Capt Cowper, as it has been once examined; and the testimony being the same, there can exist no difficulty in allowing the claim. I neglected to file with the papers, the power of attorney, which is herewith inclosed

I would very respectfully under the circumstances of this case, ask that the Executive will during the

present week, consider this claim, while the evidence is still retained in the [illegible word]

Yours Respectfully/ James Murdaugh

## NOTE:

Robert Armistead Stewart gave the following account of the sinking of the Dolphin in History of Virginia's Navy Of the Revolution (1934; reprinted 1993 by Genealogical Publishing C., Baltimore. p72): "And now came the final episode in the career of the Dolphin, with a crew of seventy-five men, commanded by Captain John Cowper, of Nansemond County. The vessel ready for sea, the intrepid captain set sail from Nansemond Creek in search of outlying privateers. Yet before weighing anchor he had deliberately nailed his flag to the mast, vowing, cost what it might, never to strike it to an enemy. He shaped the course of his vessel over the broad expanse of Hampton Roads, stood away towards Cape Henry, and passed out into the ocean. As the Dolphin's sails became shadowy in the distance watchers at the Cape observed three other vessels take shape on the horizon. Suspense as to the nature of the strangers was brief. Captain Cowper, before he left home, had solemnly resolved that, no matter what the odds against him, he would without hesitation assume the offensive. The Dolphin was accordingly now seen bearing down upon the newcomers, who as promptly closed in to meet the attack. The action which now began was, according to witnesses, a long and apparently doubtful one. Finally, however, the three hostile tenders sheered off and bore away to the eastward, leaving, to the watchers' eyes, no sign of the fourth. It had been a death struggle against hopeless odds. The Dolphin with all on board had gone to her doom."

A document in the file states that Jane Cowper married Edward Norfleet and died leaving four children: Nathaniel, Wilson, Ann, and Jane. It states that Horatio Cowper, son of John Cowper, Sr., died in 1802, and that Horatio Cowper, son of John Cowper, Jr., died in 1836 leaving no widow or child.