

[Southern Campaigns American Revolution Pension Statements and Rosters](#)

Pension Application of Francis Bright R16

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris. Revised 5 Dec 2017.

Monday April 29 1776

Captain Francis Bright is appointed Captain of the first armed Cruizer directed to be fitted out on the Eastern Shore, and Captain Robert Cooke of the second.

Instructions to Capt Bright as follows "Captain Francis Bright &c" copy filed.

[Certified by the Auditors Office in Richmond on 14 Dec 1832 as being from the minutes or proceedings of the Committee of Safety in "an old Book or Journal in this office (folio 88)."]

Tuesday the 12th day of May 1778.

Capt Francis Bright, late of the Brigantine Northampton personally appeared before the board and resigned his commission which is ordered to be filed

[Extract from the Journal of the Navy, certified 6 Feb 1833.]

Richmond February 24th 1853

Hono. Louis McLane

Sir In your letter of the 11th Inst. you inform me that the claim of Captain Francis Bright was rejected, because he resigned his commission – Capt. Bright was commissioned a Captain in the Navy in April 1776. An entry is made on the Journal of the Navy board, on the 12th of May 1778 that he on that day resigned. These facts are set forth in the petition to the Executive of Virg'a. for the allowance of land bounty – and although it appears that Bright is reported to have resigned yet it is nevertheless proven by the affidavits of respectable persons who were in the service that he was in service until the time of his death in 1812, he having been transferred to the Revenue service upon the formation of the U. S. Government under the Constitution. The witnesses were interrogated particularly as to the fact of Capt. Bright's resignation, which was mentioned to them, and their answers show that if he did resign, his commission must have very soon been restored to him, as they speak positively of his continuance in the service to the end of the war. There is a case analogous to this – Capt. Gooseley [sic: George Goosley R55] was an officer in the Navy & is reported on the Journal to have resigned in 1777 – but in 1782 he is again reported on an old Journal of the Navy as a Captain in the Navy who had been exchanged as a prisoner of war. I held back the claim of Capt. Bright for land bounty, a considerable time, in order to disprove the entry of his resignation, which was done to the entire satisfaction of the Executive Council, which is as signed [illegible word] as any other board in this union. I requested the Secretary of this State to furnish copies of all the depositions & other evidence filed in the vouchers upon which the land bounty was allowed. That evidence clearly proves Brights service & if a doubt remains with you as to the Justice of the claim, it is because all the evidence has not been furnished you. I have to request that the evidence may be returned to me in order that I may see whether all the vouchers laid before the Executive were furnished I have the honour to be with very great respect Yr Ob Servt/ J W Murdaugh

[The federal pension file also contains copies of documents submitted in the application for bounty land from Virginia, which are transcribed below.]

[The following are from [bounty-land records in the Library of Virginia](#). One online document is undeciphered.]

U. S. Navy Yard Gosport Va/ June 10 1830

I, James Barron [W12264] of the U. S. Navy do hereby certify that I was well acquainted with Captain Francis Bright who to my knowledge was a Captain in the Virginia Navy during the war of the revolution

and had command of a vessel, called the Northampton (as well as I recollect) I recollect to have seen Captain Bright in his vessel in Yorktown as early as 1777 and understood that he had been in service from the commencement of the war – I moreover certify that Captain Bright continued in the service untill the end of the war, when he was sent to England with a cargo of Tobacco, in the State vessel Perseverance.



I William Jennings [S5615] do make oath that I was intimately acquainted with Capt. Francis Bright who was an officer in the Virginia State Navy during the revolutionary war, I know that Capt. Bright entered the service at an early period of the war, and to the best of my knowledge, he continued to the end. I do not believe that he ever resigned. I know that, at the time of a fight either in 1779 or 1780 [see endnote], between Capt. Taylor [Richard Taylor S25873] and a British privateer off the Capes of Virginia (in which battle I was wounded) Captain Bright was then Commander of a Brig. I know that Capt. Bright was in the service at the time of the siege of York Town [28 Sep - 19 Oct 1781], and I am confident that he continued to the end of the war, for I never heard of his having left the service, and if he had my intimacy with him would have made me acquainted with the fact. August 14th 1830
[Elizabeth City County]



I deem it not unimportant to state a fact in relation to Richard [sic?] James, which tends to prove that an officer might have resigned at one time & have entered the service again. It appears in the Journal of the Navy Commissioners that Lt. Michael James [R47] resigned his Commission on the 21st of Aug't 1778 and he is nevertheless reported by the board of officers in 1784 as having served to the end of the war. In May 1778 the Journal says Bright resigned. two respectable witnesses swear positively that he was in service on the 29th of October 1779 & (not so positively) that he was in service to the end of the war – See Auditors Report Journal House Del[egates] – Document No 17 1830-31
Francis Bright was Commissioned a Captain in the State Navy on the 29th day of April 1776. In the old navy Journal, in the auditor's office it appears, he resigned on the 12th of May 1778. Having been in service only two years. The friends of Bright were always of the opinion that he continued in service to the end of the war. They do not doubt the record of his resignation. But they are satisfied that he entered the service again immediately after he had resigned his first Commission, & continued to the close of the war. Captain Thomas Jennings testifies that he himself entered the service in 1778 that Bright was then commander of a Brig, That Bright continued this said command the whole time of four years that he (Jennings) was in service – which was up to the year 1782 – he moreover testifies that he was in the action between Captain Taylor & a British Privateer off Cape Henry. That at the time of the action Capt Bright with his Brig lay under Smith's Island in sight of the Battle which he says was fought 18 months or two years after he entered the service in 1778. Wm Jennings was also in the action & testifies that Bright had command of a Brig at the time, which he reports to have taken place in 1779 or 1780 – Commodore Barron testifies that Bright was in service as early as 1777 & continued to the close of the war, for he distinctly recollects the fact that Capt Bright was sent to the West Indies in the state vessel Perseverance, with a cargo of tobacco belonging to the State. The time of the action between Capt. Taylor & the British Privateer could not be discovered by reference to History & it was only a few days ago that the time was accidentally learnt, in the petition of Chs Bennett to the general assembly in 1783 wherein he sets forth that the battle was fought on the 29th of October 1779 being three years & five months after the date of Capt. Bright's commission. This petition corroborates the testimony of the two Jennings's both of whom

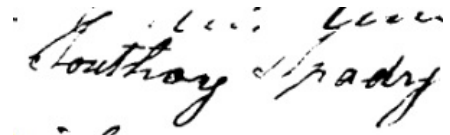
are positive in their evidence that Capt Bright was in service at the time of the action & it therefore became necessary to prove the time of the action Bright was Commissioned in April 1776 and resigned in May 1778 – was in service again the same year of 1778 at the time Thos Jennings entered, which was in the summer of 1778 – one or two months after the record shows his resignation – was in service at the time of the action on the 29 Octo 1779 beyond doubts and continued in service the whole time that Thos Jennings was in the service, which was up to 1782 being more than three years from the second entry into the service – taking out of the calculation the time he [one or two illegible words] he is reported to have resigned. The three witnesses were apprised beforehand of the reported resignation of Bright in 1778. But they nevertheless gave their affidavits without any hesitation. This claim would have been presented several months ago, but the time of the Battle of Octo 1779 was deemed material in the chain of evidence, & that was not ascertained untill a few days ago. In presenting this claim I have thought it my duty to mention the fact of Capt. Bright being reported as resigned – which he possibly might have done, but I am satisfied from the respectable & positive testimony that he was out of the service, if at all, only a few days.

Feb'y 28th 1831

J W Murdaugh

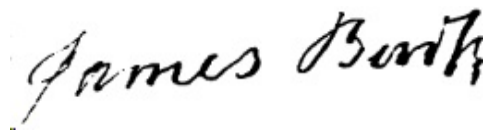
I hereby certify that Francis Bright served in the Virginia Navy in the Revolutionary War & commanded a Brig which was frequently off the Coast of the Eastern Shore I once brought Capt. Bright from Williamsburg to York Town where he went on board of his Brig. I also once witnessed an engagement between an American Vessel & a British Schooner during which Capt. Bright fired a shot at the British Schooner and attempted to pursue, but was prevented by want of Wind. This engagement took place in the latter part of the year Seventeen Hundred & Seventy Nine. Capt. B. was in service at this time. [In Northampton County, 3 Dec 1831]

Southey Spady



I certify that Capt. Francis Bright commanded the Brig Northampton in the Virginia Navy in the Revolutionary War & that said Bright was in said service the greater part of the Revolutionary War. He was in service when I left the Navy at the end of the year seventeen hundred and Eighty. [Elizabeth City County, 23 Dec 1831]

[James Burk S6649]



J W Murdaugh on behalf of the heirs of Capt. Francis Bright respectfully requests the Executive of Virg'a to re examine the claim of Capt Bright recently allowed land bounty for three years The evidence in this case is of the most respectable character & proves beyond dispute that Capt Bright was in service from the beginning to the end of the war J. W. Murdaugh hopes that the additional allowance of one sixth for the 7th year of Capt Bright's service will be allowed his heirs as has been done in many other cases

Richmond July 12th 1832

I, Thomas Jennings an inspector of the Customs at the port of Norfolk now in the sixtyeight year of my age do hereby certify that I was intimately acquainted with Captain Francis Bright who was a Captain in one of the vessels of the Virginia State Navy during the revolution. He was nursed at the breast of my mother and I knew him from his youth to the time of his death. I entered the State Navy in the sixteenth year of my age– sometime in the year of 1778 and continued in service four years. I know that Captain Bright was in service early in the war. I know, that, at the time of a battle between Commodore Taylor of

the Patriot and a British Schooner which was fought off of Cape Henry about eighteen months or two years after I entered the Navy, Captain Bright then had command of one of the state brigs, which lay at that time under Smith's island [Smith Island]. I was in that battle. I know that Captain Bright was in the service as late as the Siege of York and to the best of my belief he continued in service to the end of the war, and in fact to the time of his death, for he had Command of the Revenue Cutter (which was once I believe one of the state vessels) immediately after peace, and continued in the Cutter to the period of his death. I never knew or heard that he resigned before the war was over, nor do I believe that he ever did resign, for if he had I think I should have known it – at all events, if he did resign, it was after I left the Navy. [6 Sep 1832]

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "William Jennings". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

NOTES:

According to *History of Virginia's Navy in the Revolution*, by Robert Armistead Stewart Chap. 7, the engagement described by William Jennings it was in October 1778 that the ships *Dragon* and *Tartar* attacked the HMS *Lord Howe*.

The file includes a 1776 account of line and other ship supplies for "Brigantine Northampton Capt. Francis Bright," certified in the Auditor's Office as copied from "an old Book in this office entitled the 'Rope walk journal'."

A document in the file states that Francis Bright died on 18 Dec 1811.

A York-County court document dated 21 Aug 1832 states that on 20 May 1832 Captain Francis Bright was found to have died without a will, leaving three children: Elizabeth, Susan Hannah, and Margaret Mary. It further stated that "the said Elizabeth hath since died leaving five children. vizt. Susan H. Moore, Elizabeth the wife of Henry Edloe, Virginia F., Catharine M and Julia S. Travis; and that the said Susan H. Bright intermarried with Samuel F. Bright hath also died leaving one only child called Susan H. now an infant. and... that Susan H. Moore, Elizabeth the wife of Henry Edloe, Virginia F. Catharine H. and Julia S. Travis, and Susan H. Bright are the only heirs at Law of the said Capt. Francis Bright – Margaret M. Bright one of his daughters having died as infant."