



**24 of 39: “Lift a half pint to” Anthony Morrison (VAS761)** who enlisted in the Virginia State Navy under Captain Thomas Pollard of Lancaster County and was “marched to Williamsburg.” By November 1777, he was serving under Captain Thomas Lilly on the ship Gloucester (Navy Journal, p. 310). “Virginia Negro Soldiers and Seamen in the American Revolution” (Journal of Negro History, July 1942) explains that the keeper of the public store was ordered to supply Morrison with “one outside jacket, one inside jacket, two shirts, one pair of drawers, two pairs of trousers, two pairs of stockings, one pair of shoes, one hat, and a blanket.” Later, he was transferred to the brig Northampton.

Blacks served as able seamen, pilots, boatswain's mates, drummers, and gunners' mates. Using Excel spreadsheets to analyze the information in *Forgotten Patriots*, 2008, I found that Morrison (p. 523) was among at least 124 Black Virginians in the Navy—State and Continental. The Journal estimated that there were about one to ten per ship. At least six served on the Gloucester, including two Nicken family members, Edward and Hezekiah. The latter died in service.

How did sailors of different races get along, where survival and teamwork determined life or death? The Journal says, "it is likely that the Negro seamen in the Revolution under various commanders fared about like the Negro seamen in the War of 1812. "[W]hite and colored men messed together, and they fraternized in general. All enjoyed together the bounteous supply of rum given by the State—a half pint a day."

In 1821, Morrison was 86 years old, was residing in Lancaster County, and was listed on the 1820 federal census as head of a household of free persons of color. According to *The Journal* (p. 281), Morrison and seven other Black sailors received pensions from Virginia in 1821. Described as always an industrious man, his documentation included this: "his shattered and trembling limbs are now tottering." The annual pensions granted ranged from \$40 to \$60, along with a one-time relief payment of \$30 to \$60.

On February 1, 1832, Morrison declared his service to obtain benefits under the Federal Act of May 15, 1828. Witnesses George W. Downman, John Kimm, and Richard B. Hutt attested to Morrison's service and reputation. On December 14, 1832, Morrison's petition was referred to the Committee on Claims. By January 11, 1833, the Committee was likely discharged, and the petition laid on the table (though the exact discharge date is unclear).

On May 19, 1834, John H. Smith, Commissioner, reported that Morrison was entitled to land for three years of service. Smith had found Morrison among the seamen of the Gloucester in November 1777 (*Navy Journal*, p. 310). Sarah Morrison, identifying herself as Morrison's daughter, later petitioned for his bounty land. Referring to Smith's favorable report, she requested an order for the full allowance of land and successfully received a land bounty in Ohio. (*Journal*, p. 276-277).