



25 of 39: Richard Nicken/Nickens (S5830) is a veteran of the Virginia State Navy, having served three years split evenly between ships Hero and Tempest. He was head of a free colored household at the 1810 census. The Nicken family sent at least twelve members to the Revolutionary War. The 950-page "Forgotten Patriots" (2008) (Origins explained in "How a Black Woman...Changed the DAR," "Hartford Courant," Maurice Barboza, 2023, and "We Need to Learn More About Our Colorful Past," "The New York Times," co-authored with Gary Nash, 2004) lists ten who served as seamen, one as a drummer and one as a substitute. All were free. Nine resided in Lancaster County and three in Northumberland and Stafford, all within 90 miles of each other.

According to the remarkable "Free African Americans," a study of thousands of free southern Black families, by Paul Heinegg, Richard is a great grandson of Richard "Black Dick" Nicken and Chriss Nicken. Both, enslaved by John Carter, they were freed in his will of June 4, 1690. By 1775, the number of his descendants could have reached 300. Heinegg's research tracks multiple generations, from the late 1600s to the mid-1800s.

Planter Carter did not simply free the Nickens and leave them to fend for themselves, he offered a thoughtful foundation upon which they could survive in the near term and grow into a family. They received a cow, a calf, and three barrels of corn. For the long-haul, Nicken received the lifetime right to farm property Carter added to his acreage. Four generations later at least a dozen descendants—likely more under other surnames—fought for independence (see Karen E. Sutton, "The Nickens Family, Non-Slave African

American Patriots"). The Nickens One-Name Study also traces the family's migration and notes that 3,246 persons had the unusual name as of the 2010 U.S. census.

Born around 1750, Nicken may have been 27 when he enlisted as a private and proceeded to Hampton to join Hero with the officer who recruited him, Thomas Pollard. A ship propelled by oars and sails, it was stationed in Hampton Roads and operated along the coast under Captain Philip Chamberlayne. Captain Celey Saunders led Tempest, a 16-gun ship. Nicken, according to his pension application, was engaged in many skirmishes but no major battles. He was discharged at Chickahominy Shipyard, now an archaeological site.

In March 1820, Nicken appointed Thomas Carter as his attorney to collect a \$50 relief payment from the Virginia State Treasury. In August 1821, the court certified that he was alive and receiving a state pension. Eleven years later, in 1832, Nicken (spelling on application), then 82, appeared in court in December 1832 to apply for a pension under the Act of June 7, 1832. However, he no longer had his discharge papers and said no witnesses remained.

The Southern Campaigns transcriber notes at the bottom of the application that "The state file contains numerous documents similar to the above, the last dated 18 May 1835."