

Source: American Prisoners of the Revolution by Danske Dandridge

CHAPTER XX

SOME SOUTHERN NAVAL PRISONERS

Very little is known of the State navies of the south during the Revolution. Each State had her own small navy, and many were the interesting adventures, some successful, and others unfortunate, that the hardy sailors encountered. The story of each one of these little vessels would be as interesting as a romance, but we are here only concerned with the meagre accounts that have reached us of the sufferings of some of the crews of the privateers who were so unlucky as to fall into the hands of the enemy.

In the infant navy of Virginia were many small, extremely fleet vessels. The names of some of the Virginia ships, built at Gosport, Fredericksburg, and other Virginia towns, were the Tartar, Oxford, Thetis, Virginia, Industry, Cormorant, Loyalist (which appears to have been captured from the British), Pocohontas, Dragon, Washington, Tempest, Defiance, Oliver Cromwell, Renown, Apollo, and the Marquis Lafayette. Virginia also owned a prisonship called the Gloucester. Brigs and brigantines owned by the State were called the Raleigh, Jefferson, Sallie Norton, Northampton, Hampton, Greyhound, Dolphin, Liberty, Mosquito, Rochester, Willing Lass, Wilkes, American Fabius, Morning Star, and Mars. Schooners were the Adventure, Hornet, Speedwell, Lewis, Nicholson, Experiment, Harrison, Mayflower, Revenge, Peace and Plenty, Patriot, Liberty, and the Betsy. Sloops were the Virginia, Rattlesnake, Scorpion, Congress, Liberty, Eminence, Game-Cock, and the American Congress. Some of the galleys were the Accomac, Diligence, Hero, Gloucester, Safeguard, Manly, Henry, Norfolk, Revenge, Caswell, Protector, Washington, Page, Lewis, Dragon, and Dasher. There were two armed pilot boats named Molly and Fly. Barges were the York and Richmond. The Oxford, Cormorant, and Loyalist were prizes. The two latter were taken from the English by the French and sold to Virginia.

What an interesting book might be written about this little navy! Nearly all were destined to fall at last into the hands of the enemy; their crews to languish out the remainder of their days in foul dungeons, where famine and disease made short work of them. Little remains to us now except the names of these vessels.

The Virginia was built at Gosport. The Dragon and some others were built at Fredericksburg. Many were built at Norfolk.

The Hermit was early captured by the British. The gallant little Mosquito was taken by the Ariadne. Her crew was confined in a loathsome jail at Barbadoes. But her officers were sent to England, and confined in Fortune jail at Gosport. They succeeded in escaping and made their way to France. The names of these officers were Captain John Harris; Lieutenant Chamberlayne; Midshipman Alexander Moore; Alexander Dock, Captain of Marines; and George Catlett,

Lieutenant of Marines.

The Raleigh was captured by the British frigate Thames. Her crew was so shamefully maltreated that upon representations made to the Council of State upon their condition, it was recommended that by way of retaliation the crew of the Solebay, a sloop of war which had fallen into the hands of the Americans, should be visited with the like severe treatment. To what extent this was carried out we cannot discover.

The Scorpion was taken by the British in the year 1781, a fatal year for the navy of Virginia.