

Maxwell, James

Saint Paul's Churchyard Inscription No. 258 ([Altar Guild Book](#))

Saint Paul's Churchyard Inscription No. 85 ([Tazewell Journal](#))

In Memory of

CAPT. JAMES MAXWELL

Who was Born in Northumberland, England,

But Became a Resident of This Borough in the Year 1767.

And Afterwards Served the Commonwealth of Virginia in the Revolutionary War.

(list of his service)

Died on the 4th Day of October

A.D. 1791

In the 62th Year of His Age

Revolutionary War Service:

Superintendent of the Navy Yard, Commissioned in the Navy.

Pension Claim of the descendants of James Maxwell (See online [Appendix](#))

The History of Virginia's Navy of the Revolution by Robert Armistead Stewart,
pages 223 and 224

The

HISTORY OF VIRGINIA'S NAVY OF THE REVOLUTION

—BY—

ROBERT ARMISTEAD STEWART

large man of war and mounted as many as 18 guns. Massenburg also served on the Henry Galley, Capt. Tompkins; later on the Nicholson: captured and imprisoned till 1783. USP. Mrs. Anne Payne recalled seeing Massenburg and Dr. Johnston in their respective uniforms at the Liberty Ball, in Hampton. George G. Massenburg was one of his heirs. Among the documents in the USP is a letter from John Darby, of Richmond Co. with excerpt from pay roll of Brig Liberty, Capt. Lilly, July 30, 1777.

MASENBURG, WM. H. D. October, 1795, 16, 60. Mariner. Heir, Geo. Massenburg.

MASSEY, PETER. Dragon. R. C.

MASTER, ELLISTON. Aud. Acct. XXX, 168.

MASTERTON, THOMAS (commonly called "Marsden"). Midshipman, Tempest, Feb. 12, 1776. Lived on the Island in the lower part of Lancaster Co. In LBP, his only heirs at law were Thomas and John Marsden "who now reside in said Island".

MAUGHON (Moughon), GEORGE. Boatswain. In R. C. John N. Sale attested in 1835, that George Maughon md. a Miss Adams of Matthews Co. and left two children: Wm. and George. Elizabeth Sadler (nee Maughon) stated that she had been informed by her uncle George Moughon, her father John Maughon, her uncle John Nuttall, said to be a gunner in the Va. Navy, and by many others that George Maughon was boatswain upon a lookout boat of the Dragon, commanded by Lt. Joshua Singleton; that they were taken as prisoners of war to the West Indies and not released until end of War; her uncle George died about 1815, and left a will. In the petition of Mathias Moughon appears: "George H. Moughon is residing in the county of Gloucester and Wm. N. Moughon has been at sea for several years without returning home."

MAUGHON (Moughon-Mohon), JOHN. Marine. BH, 1191.

MAXWELL, JAMES. Superintendant General of the Shipyard; Commissioner of the Navy; not entitled to bounty land. Commanded a trading ship, the Cormorant, at the end of the war. She was once lying at Broadway above City Point.

- Maxwell wore "a cockade in his hat". Will probated in Norfolk, Oct. 25, 1795, USP. Wm. Maxwell, administrator in 1845. See also BH, 1048.
- MAYNES, WM. Manley Galley.
- MAYS, JAMES, of Charlotte Co. Marine under Capt. Hanway. Served three years. In LBP, 1783, Nancy Chaffin, Sarah Mays, Elizabeth Chaffin, Prudence P. Mays, Jane Dunton, and Tabitha Green, children and only heirs at law of James Mays.
- MAYS (Mayes), WM. Carpenter. Ship Tartar.
- MEALS (Meale), SAMUEL. Aud. Acct. XVIII, 117.
- MEARS (Meers), BARTHOLOMEW, of Accomac Co. Quartermaster and then Gunner. Enlisted Aug. 6, 1777. 2d Mate, Accomac Galley. BH, 653-4.
- MEARS, EDWARD.
- MEARS, SOUTHY. N's Accomack, 35.
- MELONY, JEREMIAH. N. A. B.
- MELSON, LEVIN. Carpenter's Mate. Accomac Galley. MC III, 166. Heirs in 1830, Levin Melson, Nancy White, Henry Cary, and Thos. Melson. N's Accomack 20; BH, 1160.
- MELVAN, MATHEW. N 8, 39.
- MENER, ISAAC. War 5, 133.
- MENIR, JOHN. Certificate of Byrd Chamberlayne.
- MERCER, ISAAC. USP. Sailing Master of the Safeguard; continued till the boat was dismantled; Lt. commanding the Boat Nicholson, NBJ. In 1786, in Lancaster Co. William, and George Garner, and Martha Morris, heirs of Isaac Mercer, decd. MC II, 230.
- MERCER (or Menos), SAMUEL. Boatswain's mate, Boat Liberty.
- MERIWETHER, JAMES. Appointed Nov. 5, 1776, 2d Lt. marines in Capt. Thos. Meriwether's Company. On Brig Northampton. On Irish vessel captured by the Liberty. 2d Lt. State Service. Feb. 19, 1777. Lt. in Capt. John Rogers' company of cavalry until June 1, 1781, after which he was in the continental service. Jefferson Petition, Nov. 9, USP. G. W. Meriwether stated that there were two James Meriwethers in service; one the son of David Meriwether, the

James Maxwell was the first husband of Helen (Calvert) Maxwell Read and is prominent in her memoirs.

<http://www.awiatsea.com/Officers/Officers%20M.html>

MAXWELL, JAMES

VA

Superintendent General of the Shipyard, Virginia Navy

Commissioner of the Navy, Virginia Navy

Captain, Virginia Navy

James Maxwell had been a Master in the Royal Navy, serving aboard HM Frigate *Launceston*. While this ship was in port in Norfolk, Virginia, he met Helen Calvert, daughter of Maximilian Calvert, mayor [Cross, 36] of Norfolk. They married in 1767. The bride's father, as a wedding present, gave them a ship called the *Two Sisters*, with which Maxwell began his merchant marine service. The father-in-law called him an "honest, sensible and industrious man." [Cross, 38]

On 7 January 1777 Maxwell was appointed by the Virginia Navy Board as "Superintendent General of the Shipyard," at an annual salary of £300, to supervise the construction and fitting out of its naval vessels. [Cross, 36] In March 1777, when the Virginia Navy Board purchased land on the Chickahominy River to establish a shipyard, Maxwell moved his family there and made it his headquarters. [Cross, 38]

Maxwell wore "a cockade in his hat." [Stewart, 224]. James Maxwell named Commissioner of the Navy under the Board of War. [Cross, *A Navy for Virginia*, 53] 30 June 1779. Appointed as Commissioner of the Navy, 3 July 1780 [Stewart, 87]. Attempt to contact French fleet and battle [Stewart, 96-97].

Although the Virginia Assembly virtually disbanded the Virginia Navy in November 1781, specifically eliminating the office of Commissioner of the Navy, [Stewart, 120] Maxwell seems to have continued as a Captain, commanding the *Cormorant*, [Cross, 79; Stewart, 120] described as a trading vessel. [Stewart, 223] *Cormorant* and *Oliver Cromwell* (Harris), serving as troop transports, moved a number of Washington's troops to head of Elk following the Yorktown siege, where they were subjected to an assesment by Maryland authorities, [Stewart, 121] "contrary to the law of nations," said Governor of Virginia, who added "A Vessel in pursuit of the enemy would have to stop at the state line, for fear of being treated in so degrading a manner." [Stewart, 121-122] In May 1782, the Virginia General Assembly appointed three commissioners to superintend the work [Paullin, 415] of protecting the Bay. The *Cormorant* and Virginia Navy Schooner *Liberty* to be prepared for this service.[Paullin, 416] *Cormorant* was assigned a Captain of Marines, JOHN HARDYMAN, who with two Lieutenants of Marines, JOHN CLARK and LEWIS WEBB, began recruiting. Another Lieutenant, JOSEPH or SAMUEL SELDEN, may have been a naval lieutenant. At this time, about May 1782, *Cormorant* was lying at Hampton, [Stewart, 122] above Broadway and City Point. [Stewart, 223] In October 1782 *Cormorant* was ordered sold, presumably ending Maxwell's active service. [Cross, 79; Stewart, 126]. He died about 1795. [Stewart, 224]

APPENDIX

NORFOLK CITY HUSTINGS COURT (1784-1800)

Abyvon, Marian 1795w; Allen, Hugh 1790w; Anderson, Robt. 1786w; Archer, Dinah 1794w; Archer, John 1794w; Armstrong, Jno. 1799i; Avery, Isaac 1799w; Bacon, Samuel 1794w; Bacon, Samuel 1795w; Ballentine, Eliza 1792w; Bathgate, William 1798w; Bayley, Wm. Armstead 1792w; Biggar, Matthew 1794w; Blaws, Thos. 1798w; Boggess, John 1790w; Booth, Thos. 1791w; Boush, Jno. 1792w; Boyer, Elias 1798w; Bradley, Jas. Whital 1786i; Brehm, Chas. 1794w; Brown, John 1785w; Brown, Bristol 1788w; Brown, Francis 1792i; Browne, Jas. 1796w; Bruce, Jno. 1799a; Brunet, Peter 1797w; Brunet, Peter 1798w; Burke, Saml. 1795w; Butler, Jno. 1792w; Calvert, Thos. 1785w; Calvert, Jonathan 1793i; Calvert, Jno. Savage 1796w; Campbell, Donald 1795w; Campbell, Duncan 1795w; Campbell, Wm. 1792i; Campbell, Alex. Jr. 1796i; Carter, Lemuel 1795i; Clark, Wm. 1796w; Cody, Simon 1796i; Cornick, Henry 1794w; Cowan, Ebenezer 1799w; Cunningham, Wm. 1797i; Denby, Jas. 1794w; Diack, Patrick 1789n.w; Donayhua (Donahoe), Edwd. 1797w; Donnell (Donald), Hugh 1790w; Driscoll, Thos. 1796w; Edey, Solomon 1789w; Faulder, Thos. 1797a; Finn, Jas. 1794i; Flyn, Jas. 1785i; Frazer, Robt. 1799w; Gibbs, Polly 1798i; Godfrey, Nathaniel 1797w; Gow, Anne 1797w; Gornto, Nathaniel 1797w; Gwyn, Thos. 1788w; Hall, Armestead 1797w; Hand, Jos. 1795i; Harwood, Peggy 1796w; Hatteredge, Robt. 1792w; Hatton, Thos. 1797w; Hayes, Robt. 1796i; Hunter, Jas. 1795w; Hunter, Jno. 1795w; Hutchings, Eliz. 1792w; Inkson, Eliz. 1799w; Ivy, Mason 1794w; Jones, Saml. 1798w; Keith, Ann 1796i; Kelley, George 1796w; Kelsick, Eliz. 1789w; Lathbury, Geo. 1786w; Lee, Jno. 1797w; Leitch, Jas. 1787w; Lindsay, Wm. 1798w; McClod, Geo. 1799a; McFarlain, Alex. 1799n; McGown, Archd. 1792w; McNeal (McNeil), Jno. 1792w; McNeil, Jno. 1792w; Maclean, Jno. 1799i; Maxwell, Jas. 1795w; Maxwaul, Simon 1791i; Mayle, Lydia 1792w; Miles, Chas. 1796w; Moore, Jno. 1793w; Morris, Thos. 1789w; Nassaw (Nashaw), Richd. 1785w; Nichols, Jas. 1787w; Neilson, Jos. 1784i; Newton, Thos. 1795w; Ogbourn, Wm. 1795i; Owens, Edwd. 1795w; Parker, Patrick 1796w; Payne, Isaac 1795w; Peters, Jno. 1797i; Phil, Herman 1791i; Portlock, Saml. 1788w; Portlock, Saml. 1790w; Precious, Matthias 1791w; Price, Thos. 1786w; Price, Lydia 1788w; Pryor, Jno. 1792w; Ramsay, Jas. 1797w; Rea, Sampson 1794w; Redman, Isaac 1796w; Reid, Jas. 1795w; Reid, Jno. 1795w; Reynolds, Saml. 1798w; Robertson, Jno. 1795a; Robinson, Jno. 1796a; Rothery, Danl. 1795w; Ross, Jno. 1793i; Ross, Jno. 1795i; Russell, Jesse 1796w; Scott, Robt. 1795w; Selden, Mary Ann 1799w; Sharp, Alex. 1798i; Shellsman, Jno. 1796i; Smallwood, Jno. 1799i; Smith, Jno. 1794i; Smith, Temperance 1797a; Smith, Wm. 1785w; Smith, Wm. 1790i; Stetson, Geo. 1796w; Street, Benj. 1797i; Sweeney, Anne 1790w; Talbot, Diane 1789w; Terry, Thos. 1784a; Thompson, Francis 1794i; Tucker, Gawen Corbin 1789i; Valentine, Jno. 1796a; Vaughan, Jas. 1797w; Walke, Mary 1798w; Walker, Jas. 1796i; Wallace, Wm. 1799w; Watson, Jas. 1789w; Webb, Jno. 1794i; West, Charlotte 1795w; Williams, Jacob 1784i; Williams, Mary 1789w; Williams, Fredk. 1796i; Willoughby, Geo. Abyvon 1791w; Winter, Jas. 1796a.

<http://leearchive.wlu.edu/papers/letters/transcripts-gw%20delegates/html/DIV0327.html>

Sender: Richard Henry Lee

Recipient: James Maxwell

Philadelphia 1t Decr. 1776

Sir,

The Congress having resolved immediately to undertake the building of two Ships of War of 36 guns each in Virginia, I am directed by the Marine Committee to apply to some proper person in that State to superintend the business.¹ You Sir have been recommended so strongly to me by Gen. Stephen and others, as a person of great fitness for this business; and not doubting but that you may comply with this, altho you are the same way employed by our Government, I do in the name of that Committee request you will, taking the advice of the Navy board in Virginia, determine on the most safe, and in other respects most fit place or places to put these ships upon the Stocks at.² Safety against the enemy is a very necessary object, and proper water for Launching. Convenience for getting proper timber you will consider. I suppose it will be no objection if both these Vessels are put upon the Stocks at the same place but in determining on the place or places, not private or local but public considerations alone are to govern. A Master Builder with 4 or 6 Workmen will soon go from hence to Virginia for this business, and I have no doubt a sufficiency of other workmen will be to be had in that state to carry on the work briskly. The Builder desires that the Trees may be immediately felled whilst the Sap is down, that a quantity of Locust Trunnels be split 1 1/2 inches, and in length from 18 to 30 inches. That Sawyers be employed to get up plank (white oak) of 3 1/2 inches. These things and whatever else may be immediately necessary for the right pursuit of this business you will take care to have done, and your drafts for the expence created by the same, on the Chairman of the Marine Committee of Congress, shall be duely honored. One or more Associates will be joined with you in this Agency, but for the present you will singly do what is necessary, and for your trouble you will be liberally compensated by Congress. The Board of Assistants are directed to prepare a proper draught of these Ships which shall be forwarded to you when ready. Let me have your answer to this letter by return of Post.

I am Sir your most humble servant,

Richard Henry Lee

P.S. The Builder tells me that Cedar, Locust, Pitch Pine, or Wild Cherrytree, will be the proper Timber for upper works.

Notes:

Receiver's copy, owned by C. Stribling Snodgrass (1973), Leesburg, Va.

¹ See the November 20 resolve in JCC, 6:970.

² James Maxwell, (1735–95), of Norfolk, Va., was a captain in the Virginia navy, commissioner of the Virginia navy board, and superintendent of the Virginia navy yard. William Maxwell, "My Mother," *The Lower Norfolk County Virginia Antiquary* 3 (1901): 46n. Upon Maxwell's recommendation, the Virginia navy board ordered the Continental frigates to be built at Gosport. Morgan, *Naval Documents*, 7:1065–6.

Ceremony Commemorative Printed Program Paragraph:

Maxwell, James. Born in Northumberland, England, he became a Norfolk Borough resident in 1767. He was the first husband of Helen (Calvert) Maxwell Read and is prominent in her memoirs. In January 1777, Maxwell was appointed by the Virginia Navy Board as "Superintendent General of the Shipyard" to supervise the construction and fitting of its naval vessels. He was named Commissioner of the Navy under the Board of War in June 1779 and appointed as Commissioner of the Navy in July 1780. Known to wear "a cockade in his hat," he died October 4th 1791 at 62 years of age.