

Thomas Clark Whaleboat Captain

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Thomas Clark, Whale-Boat Captain

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THERE ARE VERY few records of naval service during the Revolutionary War period in the office of the Adjutant-General of the State of New Jersey; but among the claims for pension made by widows of men who enlisted in the whale-boat service there are on file four references to Thomas Clark, son of Abraham Clark, the Signer, while he was acting as Captain of a whale-boat.

Thomas Clark was commissioned First Lieutenant, New Jersey State Troops, March 1, 1776; he succeeded to the command of Captain Neil, who fell at the Battle of Princeton, January 3, 1777; and he served as Captain of Artillery in the -
tal Line until he was released "on furlough," July 9, 1779. It is apparent that Thomas Clark was then transferred to a command in the Whale-boat Service.

The four enlisted men whose statements were presented in following applications for pensions, were all from Essex county, New Jersey, the facts being obtained from the Adjutant-General's records at Trenton:

The widow of James Lambert, Jr., in her claim for pension (Widow, No. 859), affidavit for which was taken after her husband's death in 1842 (when he was 87 years of age), and nearly sixty years after the close of the War, makes the following statement: After battle of Monmouth, June 28, 1778, he (Lambert) returned home and served a turn in the militia until a time not stated, when he enlisted at New Brunswick in the two whale-boats of Captain Marriner and Lieutenant Thomas Clark; were all captured and taken prisoners near Staten Island and conveyed to North Church [a British prison in New York] in August, 1780; he was exchanged December, 1780.

David F. Wade, in his claim for pension (Rejected, No. 10981), which was made when he was seventy-one years of age, and more than fifty years after the close of the War, gives the following account: In 1780, he (Wade) enlisted in and served in two whale-boats, commanded by Captain Thomas Clark and Captain William Marriner; enlisted at New Brunswick; captured British vessel called the "Snow," loaded with arms, etc.; shortly after taken prisoner at Brockleface (?) Inlet in a gale, and confined in Jersey Prison Ship, North Church and Sugar House for seven and one-half months, when exchanged.

The widow of Josiah Woodruff, in her claim for pension (Widow, No. 26094), affidavit for which was taken after her husband's death in 1836 (when he was seventy-four years of age), and more than fifty years after the War, makes the following statement: August, 1780, he (Woodruff) enlisted under Captain Marriner and Lieutenant Dickey, who commanded a whale-boat; Captain Thomas Clark commanded another whale-boat; captured three of the enemy's vessels, and at latter part of the month his

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officers, himself and a crew of twenty-eight in all were taken prisoners on Hog Island, and carried to New York, where they were confined in the North Church for three months, when they were removed to the Sugar House; two months after, they were all exchanged, except Captain Marriner and Lieutenant Dickey.

The widow of Joseph Willis, in her claim for pension (Widow, No. 3639), affidavit for which was taken after her husband's death in 1842 (when he was eighty-three years of age), and nearly sixty years after the War, makes the following statement: August, 1779 [this should be 1780; see above], two gun-boats started out from New Brunswick, one under Captain Marriner and one under Captain Thomas Clark; that he (Willis) was under Captain Thomas Clark; near Long Island got aground and all were taken prisoners to New York, and after five months' confinement they were all exchanged.

There is no reason to doubt that the Thomas Clark referred to in the pension applications is the same Thomas Clark whose signature was appended to a letter dated "Provost Condemned Room, December 28, 1780," signed by seven Masters of Whale-boats and addressed to the Honorable Congress at Philadelphia, begging for relief from the cruel persecution of their barbarous imprisonment.

In Sanderson's "Lives of the Signers" (Vol. VI, page 60), it is stated that Hon. Abraham Clark's son, Thomas Clark, a Captain of Artillery, experienced the most cruel persecution when he was immured in a dungeon, and that his release was effected through his father's influence in Congress by the exchange of a British officer. Captain Thomas Clark died May 13, 1789. His headstone in the Rahway Cemetery (New Jersey) stands beside his father's grave; its inscription recites that he died in his thirty-seventh year.