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## Memoir of General John Cropper of Accomack County, Virginia

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# MEMOIR

OF

# GENERAL JOHN CROPPER

OF

ACCOMACK COUNTY, VIRGINIA,

BY

BARTON HAXALL WISE.

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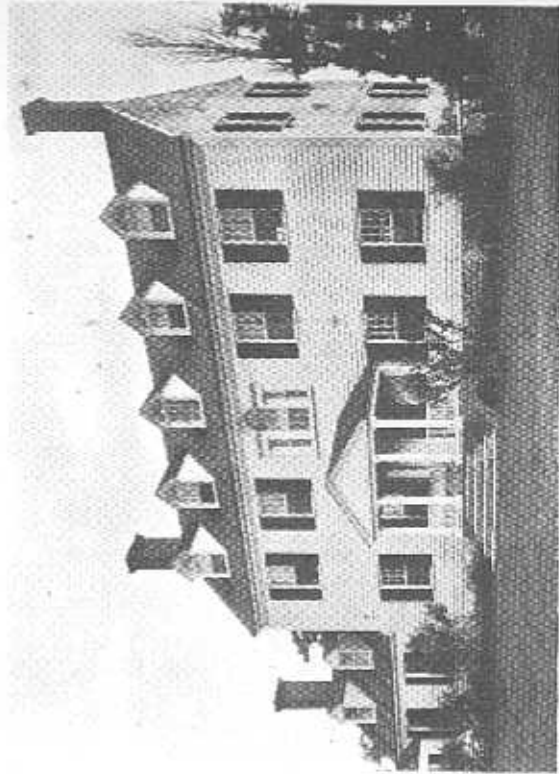
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GENERAL JOHN CROPPER AND MRS. CROPPER

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BOWMAN'S FOLLY, ACCOMACK COUNTY

From photograph made by  
Miss Frances Benjamin Johnston.



MEMOIR OF  
GENERAL JOHN CROPPER,  
OF  
ACCOMACK COUNTY, VIRGINIA.

I.

Across the Chesapeake, from the mainland of Virginia, a narrow peninsula runs southward from the Maryland boundary to Cape Charles. Though separated from the rest of the State by the width of the bay, the Eastern Shore of Virginia has always belonged to it, and the people that inhabit the counties of Accomack and Northampton have been from the first, distinctively Virginian in their customs and sentiments. This region was originally called "Accowmake," or "Accawmacke," after the Indian chief who ruled there; and in the year 1634, when Virginia was divided into eight shires, this territory formed one of them, to which the name Accomack was given. On account of its detached position, the old grants and orders of the king were addressed to his "faithful subjects in ye Colonie of Virginia, and ye Kingdom of Accawmacke."

This name was changed to Northampton in 1642 through the influence of Colonel Obedience Robins. Later on, in 1662, the Eastern Shore was divided into two counties, the lower retaining the name Northampton, and the upper one being called

Accomack, from the old Indian name. Among the early immigrants to the latter county was Edmund Bowman, an English gentleman, who was granted an estate upon Folly creek, which received the name of "Bowman's Folly."<sup>1</sup>

Bowman was a man of wealth and position; a justice of the peace in 1663, a sheriff, Burgess, and had in addition, successively, the military titles of Captain and Major. He had two daughters, one of whom became the wife of Colonel Southey Littleton, and the other, Gertrude, married John Cropper, a young Scotchman, who had come to the colony. The family estate was left to Mrs. Cropper (who, after the death of her husband, married Daniel Esham); and from her it descended to her son, Sebastian Cropper. Sebastian Cropper married Rachel Parker, daughter of Peter Parker, and had a son, Bowman Cropper, who inherited the estate. Bowman Cropper married, and the property passed to his son, Sebastian Cropper, Jr. Sebastian, Jr., married Sabra Corbin, the daughter of Colonel Coventon Corbin and Barbara his wife, of Chincoteague farm, and their son was John Cropper, the subject of this sketch. He was born at "Bowman's Folly" on the 23d of December, 1755, and his early years were passed at the old family homestead. In the month of March, 1775, the Second Virginia Convention met in St. John's church, Richmond, and authorized the organizing of independent companies in each county, as the initial provision for the general defence, to consist of one or more companies of infantry and horse, to be in training and ready to act on a short notice; from which fact they were called "minute men." Throughout the remainder of that year the Virginia people proceeded to arm themselves in anticipation of the coming conflict, and the first company raised in Accomack chose John Cropper, then a boy of nineteen, as its captain. On the 5th of February, 1776, shortly after attaining his twentieth birthday, he received his commission, signed by the Committee of Safety for the Colony,<sup>2</sup> and his company was attached to the Ninth Virginia regiment on the Continental establishment, of which Thomas Fleming was the colonel, George Matthews the lieutenant-colonel, and John Scayers major. This regiment was made up of five companies from

Accomack, two from Northampton, and three from the Western Shore of Virginia.<sup>3</sup> In the autumn of 1776 they marched from Accomack to the north to join the army at Morristown, New Jersey. The year 1776 proved an eventful one for the boy-captain, the subject of our sketch. In August of this year he was married to Margaret Pettit, commonly called Peggy, at the house of Mr. George Abbot, where she resided, being an orphan at the time, Rev. William Vere, the Episcopal minister in the county, officiating. Shortly after this his father, Sebastian Cropper, Jr., who had been made a major by the Committee of Safety, died suddenly, and just before the departure of our hero for the army, his mother, Sabra Cropper, had died in his arms. In the month of December he took leave of his young wife, then in a delicate condition, and, at the head of his company, marched from home, in the Ninth Virginia, to join General Washington. On the march northward the colonel, Thomas Fleming, died, the lieutenant-colonel, George Matthews, succeeding to his position, and the major, Scayers, becoming lieutenant-colonel, the office of major became vacated.

There were three captains from Accomack, John Cropper, Levin Joynes and Thomas Snead, who though young men, were the seniors in point of service, and each of whom aspired to the majority, and were recommended to the commander in chief by their different friends. The adopted rule of promotion was that each subaltern must rise to the rank of captain in his own regiment, but above the grade of captain they were entitled to promotion according to seniority in any regiment of the *line* of the State to which they belonged. When the Ninth regiment finally reached headquarters there were three vacancies for major in the Virginia line in the Fifth, Seventh and Ninth regiments; and Captains Cropper, Joynes and Snead were each entitled to promotion. General Washington<sup>4</sup> decided that as their commissions as captains all bore date on the same day, they were to take rank as amongst themselves according to the time their respective companies were first mustered into service. According to

<sup>1</sup> Sketch of Thomas R. Joynes by Dr. Levin S. Joynes, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of Thomas R. Joynes to Governor H. A. Wise, *Southern Literary Messenger*, June, 1857.

<sup>3</sup> *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, Vol. I, p. 271.

this grade they were to fill the vacancies. By this rule, Cropper, who had raised the first company in his portion of the State, ranked first, Joynes next, and Snead third.

On January 4th, 1777, Cropper was commissioned<sup>4</sup> major of the Seventh Virginia, by Congress, and his commission signed by John Hancock, the president of that body.

Joynes became major of the Ninth, and Snead also was promoted. The vacant captain's commissions were filled by Henderson, Morris and Oldham. Shortly after his arrival in the north, Cropper wrote to his wife in a letter dated Philadelphia, January 12th, 1777:

"DEAR PEGGY:

This Day I am leaving Philadelphia with the Regiment to go to Camp. Last night we heard the king's seventh regiment was entirely taken. To Day we hear by a Major who comes from Camp that there has been a great Battle in the Jerseys, and that Howe's army is half taken Prisoners and killed. Soldiers are flocking from every part, which I hope will put an End to the War this Winter, if our People behave as well as they have. Within three Weeks two thousand Hessians and Englishmen have been brought to this City. Inclosed I send you a Saturday's Paper. Give my love to all Relations and Compliments to Friends, and write by the first opportunity direct your Letters to be left at the \_\_\_\_\_, in Philadelphia, and I shall get them. I expect to be home in about 3 Months. beg Mr. Abbot to write to me. Our Soldiers are all dressed in Regimentals at the Expense of the Continent, and have received all their Wages. God bless You and my Brothers.

I am your most Affectionate Husband where ever I goe,

JOHN CROPPER."

Cropper fought under Washington as a major at Brandywine and Germantown, and as lieutenant-colonel commanding the Eleventh Virginia (Daniel Morgan's regiment) at Monmouth, in June, 1778, and became devotedly attached to the commander-in-chief, whose friendship and confidence he enjoyed till the day of Washington's death.

At the battle of Brandywine, in September, 1777, the Seventh Virginia was almost cut to pieces. In this fight the command of the regiment had devolved upon Cropper; the action was long and bloody, and when the American army was ordered to retreat

Cropper's regiment could not muster over two hundred men, and these were so worn out and exhausted as to be scarcely able to withdraw from the field, Cropper himself being wounded in the thigh by a bayonet thrust.

They took shelter in a piece of woods near by, which had been newly cut down, and shortly before daybreak Cropper marched them off the field.

The ensign had been killed in the fight and the colors captured. Cropper drew a ramrod from a musket, and tied his red bandana handkerchief to the end and hoisted it for a flag.<sup>5</sup> They marched to Chester, and on Chester bridge met Generals Washington and Woodford. Woodford recognizing Cropper, alighted from his horse, and pressing him to his bosom said "the boy we thought lost is found," and Washington publicly commended him for his gallantry. Cropper served in nearly all the leading engagements in the north, and was with the Virginia troops during the long and bleak winter at Valley Forge. In April, 1778, he was ordered by La Fayette to command the Eleventh Virginia regiment, Woodford's Brigade, Lafayette's Division; the original autograph of this order is now in the possession of John S. Wise, a descendant of Colonel Cropper. This was Daniel Morgan's regiment of riflemen, Morgan himself being absent at the time. The roll of officers at White Plains in September, 1778, gives Morgan as Colonel; Cropper, Lieutenant-Colonel, and Thomas Posey, Major.

Among the captains was John Marshall, afterwards the Chief Justice of the United States.

This regiment was composed in part of the Culpeper Minute Men, troops from other portions of Virginia, and subsequently from other States.

The Culpeper Minute Men had been early organized after the breaking out of the war in 1775. As they marched from their home to Williamsburg they are said to have terrified the country people as they passed along, by their warlike appearance. They were clad in green hunting shirts with the words "Liberty or Death" in large white letters across the breast, and in their hats wore buck-tails, while tomahawks and scalping-knives were

<sup>5</sup> *Casler's Recollections of Washington*, p. 170.

<sup>6</sup> *State Papers*, Vol. 1, p. 275.

stuck in their belts. Their flag was not less unusual in appearance than their uniforms, it being designed with a rattlesnake in the centre, the head of which was to represent Virginia, and twelve rattles the other Colonies, and over this was inscribed: "Don't tread on me." Among their officers who marched with the corps as they left home were General Edward Stevens and Lieutenant John Marshall, afterwards the Chief Justice. John Randolph, "of Roanoke," said of them in the United States Senate: "They were raised in a minute, armed in a minute, fought in a minute, and vanquished in a minute."

Daniel Morgan, the colonel of the Eleventh Virginia regiment of riflemen, was over six feet in height, a man of unusually handsome and commanding presence, and of remarkable strength and endurance. A native of New Jersey, he had in his eighteenth year removed to Charlestown, Jefferson county, Virginia, and his military career was begun as a teamster under Braddock. One of the stories we have of his early career was a punishment inflicted upon him of five hundred lashes for knocking down a British lieutenant, who had struck him with the flat of his sword. He was made an ensign by Governor Dinwiddie, and figured in perilous encounters with the Indians. Later, in 1762, he received a grant of land near Winchester, where he made his home, calling it "Soldier's Rest," and thenceforth devoting his time to farming and stock-raising. In 1775, when Congress called for ten companies of riflemen, Morgan was chosen captain of a Virginia company, and in the summer of that year took part in Arnold's march through the wilderness of Maine against Quebec.

On the night of December 31st, 1775, the troops made a desperate assault upon the fortress, in which Montgomery met his death, and Arnold was severely wounded in the leg.

Arnold was one of the bravest of the brave. Some time after his desertion from the American army an armistice was signed, and in company with several British officers he was met by some American officers, who had advanced between the two camps. Arnold perceiving that his former friends were displeased at his presence, remarked that he was surprised at this, for though he was then fighting against them he had lost a leg in the American service. Upon this, one of the Americans replied: "We remem-

ber it quite well, and if ever you fall into our hands your wooden leg shall be deposited in the Capital to remind our descendants of the heroic courage you displayed when fighting for the independence of your country, after which we shall hang the remainder of you on a gallows as a warning to traitors." (*Memoirs of the Baron de Mörbof*, Vol. II, p. 436).

Morgan, who had stormed the battery opposite him, fought his way into the city, where he was surrounded and taken prisoner. The following summer Carleton released him on parole, and he returned to Virginia. Congress, at Washington's request, made him a colonel, and early in 1777, having been exchanged in due form, he recruited a regiment of riflemen and joined Washington at Morristown. In the campaign against Howe his services in reconnoitering were of great value, and later, under Gates at Stillwater and Bemis Heights his picked riflemen bore a conspicuous part. After the surrender at Saratoga, Burgoyne, who was introduced to Morgan, said to him: "Sir, you command the finest regiment in the world." In November of this year, Morgan rejoined Washington at Whitemarsh, near Philadelphia. To give his career is almost to write the history of the war, for he figured gallantly in nearly every great fight in the Northern and Southern campaigns, and when, after the Revolution, blanks were sent out to the surviving officers with the request that they fill them up in order to ascertain the time and places of their service, Morgan wrote on his blank simply: "Fought everywhere; surrendered nowhere."

Thomas Posey, the major of the Eleventh, was a gallant Virginian, and the fit associate of Morgan and Cropper in the command of the regiment. He had served in Andrew Lewis' division of Dunmore's army, and taken part in the fight at Point Pleasant. He had entered the Revolution as captain in the Seventh Virginia Continental line, and joined the army at Middlebrook early in 1777. He served in various commands, and after the war became distinguished as an itinerant politician, being at one time a member of the State Senate in Kentucky, at another a resident of Louisiana, and United States Senator from that State; and again, at a later period, a governor of the Territory of Indiana, finally ending his career as an Indian agent in Illinois. The list of captains contained the names of Gabriel

Long, Peter B. Bruin, Charles Porterfield, William Johnston, John Marshall and Jesse Davis.

The captain-lieutenant was Philip Slaughter, who also rendered efficient service as paymaster and clothier, though from all accounts his duties in the latter position were not onerous.

Some amusing stories are told of Slaughter, and among others, it is related<sup>6</sup> that from his spirit of generosity he had, like a number of other officers, given all of his spare clothes to the privates, who were half-clad and miserable, so that while in Valley Forge camp he was reduced to one shirt only. While this one was in wash he would go wrapped in his blanket like an Indian brave; but determining to make the best use of this single garment he cut out a piece of the bosom, with which he made a collar and cuffs, so that when on parade he was able to present a dapper appearance. During this dreary winter the army dragged out a miserable existence, being wretchedly clad and fed. The Virginia troops were camped on a hill, almost opposite Washington's headquarters, back from the river. General Washington would invite the officers, by turns, to dine with him, from which many of them were deterred from not being presentably clad. Slaughter never failed to be present when opportunity offered, his collars and cuffs being *en règle*, and declared that his regiment might have the satisfaction of feeling they were represented. The drooping spirits of the weary soldiers must have been greatly revived when the spring came again, and when, in May, the news of the alliance with France was promulgated in camp.

The troops were drawn up in line, and the men placed in specified positions, to fire a salute with muskets and cannon. They fired from right to left, huzzaing "Long live the King of France." Then from left to right, and "Three cheers for the Dauphin." Then another three cheers for the "Independence of the American Colonies," and then it was ordered that full rations of rum be furnished the men, and they drink the health of the King of France, to which they added, "and to our commanding General."

<sup>6</sup> Howe's *Historical Collections of Virginia*, p. 238.

During this period Cropper's name often appears as officer of the day, and upon one occasion we find him the president of a court-martial held to try a Virginia officer for gaming. Washington at times issued orders forbidding gambling in camp, and yet one of these he closed singularly with a mention of the fact that a few tickets in the Continental Lottery were still for sale, and could be obtained upon application at headquarters.

At the battle of Monmouth, Morgan was not present, and Cropper, as lieutenant-colonel, was at the head of the Eleventh, and his men fought throughout that hot and sultry June day, when the American troops suffered so for water that many died from thirst, and when Washington, losing his temper, swore, according to a gallant officer, "like an angel" at General Charles Lee.

On the morning after the retreat of the British, the Virginia riflemen followed on the trail of the enemy, making a number of captures, and among other things the coach of a general officer.

In the fall of 1778, having been absent from home several years, and being anxious to see his wife, as well as look after his private interests, Cropper applied for and received a furlough of one hundred and ninety days for that purpose.

On his return to Accomack, he saw for the first time his infant daughter, Sarah Corbin, who had been born several months after his departure for the north, and who was more than eighteen months old when he first beheld her. He was not, however, destined, as subsequent events showed, to gain a rest from his duties as a soldier, by his return to "Bowman's Folly." The counties of Accomack and Northampton were peculiarly exposed throughout the Revolution to the ravages of the enemy, with whom there were a large number of Tories in sympathy. The Eastern Shore is intersected on the Chesapeake and the Atlantic side by navigable creeks, which are in reality mere arms of the sea. By way of these the British could sail up, to the very door of the farmer in many instances, and the militia in consequence were called upon frequently to protect the people from the enemy, who ruthlessly burnt their houses, after robbing them of their contents, taking away the live stock, and in addition carrying off the negro slaves of the planters, and

<sup>7</sup> *Recollections of G. W. P. Carter*, p. 226.

endeavoring to incite them to insurrection. Cropper's diary for the year 1779 is in the possession of the writer, and the entries contained in it exhibit the exposed condition of the Accomack people and the numerous conflicts they had with the enemy. However, despite the trying ordeals to which they were subjected, he and his wife appear to have dined out frequently, and enjoyed social intercourse with their neighbors. The following items are copied as they appear in the original:

*January 1st, 1779*—"Pretty day. Wm. Pettit and myself divided our negroes." (This Pettit was his wife's brother.)

*2d*—"Peggy and I went from Mr. Wilkin's to Accomack Court-house. I bought old Jacob, and hired three of my brother Tom's negro's."

*6th*—"Tory Tom Parker had his trial, and was sentenced to go over to Gen'l Court for further trial."

*15th*—"Nilil."

*Sunday, 17th*—"Deep snow on the earth. I went down the Creek to see in what situation Major Simpson's boat lay in the marsh.

A British Cruiser that came within the inlet last evening for a harbor, sent her boat up to Folly landing this evening to cut out and destroy what vessels they cou'd,—but she failed in her attempt."

*21st*—"I wrote a cover to Mr. Lyon, enclosing a letter each to Col. Morgan, Capt. Slaughter, and Lieut. Barnes at Camp; dated November (I think)."

*23d*—"Went to Court-house—Col. Simpson, *éti*, and promised me some muskets for my defence."

On February the 12th, 1779, we find the following: "R—A. M. F. P. M. A motley crew of pirates, in the service of Britain, belonging to the Thistle Tender, a Bermudian built sloop commanded by an infamous tar, Capt. Thomas Byron Williams, (the surgeons name Gramble) came up and beset my house, and then plundered, pillaged and broke to pieces my property, as well as insult and savagely threaten my wife."

Upon this occasion Cropper had quite a perilous adventure

with the enemy. The account given by him here is but a brief mention of what in reality took place. It seems that the British belonging to the Thistle Tender had entered into an agreement with a tory named Dunton to pilot them to "Bowman's Folly." In the dead of night they rowed up Folly creek with muffled oars to within a short distance of the house, and before Cropper was aware of what was taking place they had completely surrounded his house, and rushing in the hallway knocked upon his chamber door. Before he could scarcely put on his underclothes they broke in and seized him, and pulled the cover off the bed, where his wife and infant daughter were lying. They immediately proceeded to destroy the furniture and pocket the family jewels and whatever valuables they could put their hands on, and getting into the wine cellar they began to drink freely of the wines and liquor contained in it, so that in a short while a number of them were uproarious. Cropper himself meanwhile was in a room, the doorway of which was guarded by two men with muskets in their hands. Stealthily raising the latch, he leaped over the heads of the men, who were partially stupefied with drink, and before they were aware of what he was attempting, he had gotten away in the darkness. He ran two miles in his underclothes to the house of a neighbor, who was a soldier of the war, whom he persuaded to arm and come with him. They loaded three old Tower muskets and made their way as rapidly as they could to Cropper's house. When in sight of the dwelling Cropper's friend became alarmed at the noise and sight of so many lights, and dropping his gun took to his heels. Cropper picked up this gun, and with the two stole up to the house, and firing them off in quick succession, cried out at the top of his voice, "Come on, boys, we have got them now." This ruse proved successful, for it surprised the British so they fled as rapidly as they could to their boats near by, and rowed out of the creek.

Cropper got back just in time, for at the moment he had appeared in sight of the house his wife with her infant daughter, Sarah Corbin, had been removed to an out-house, and a train of powder was being laid to blow up the main dwelling. Thus he was able to save the house, but the enemy had broken up his furniture and crockery, besides defacing the house in various



ways, and had bound and carried to their boats about thirty of his slaves. As a matter of course the affair of this night greatly upset his wife, and intensified his hatred of the British.

*February 13th*, he writes: "A number of the militia came to my house."

A few days later his diary mentions that Peggy and himself had removed to "Latin House." This was a place owned by Colonel Cropper, much nearer the court-house, and to which he probably went for greater safety, fearing at "Bowman's Folly" another such attack as that on the night of the 12th.

*Tuesday, February 23d*—"Went to Court. Caned Wm Dun-ton and John Kellam."

*Wednesday, 24th*—"Plan'd an expedition to Cedar Island to intercept Capt. Thos. Byron Williams sloop Tender, and a small schooner of which R. Morris was Lieutenant."

The next entry is Friday, the 26th, when he says: "About 8 o'clock I landed a brass four pound gun on the N. end of the island, and proceeded with all possible expedition to the S. end; when I came there, after reconnoitering the point, and finding it to deceive my expectations in ev'ry respect, a gust of rain coming up, my small company of militia, (at first but 35) continually deserting; want of provision, water, and excessive fatigue, having worn out the rest, I determined to withdraw the gun as far as possible, which was about one mile, left her there under the care of Major Simpson, and went off to the main almost dead wt. fatigue."

*Saturday, February 27th*—"I am almost dead with fatigue. At ten o'clock P. M., Col Parker came to the Latin House, and informed that Col. Corbin had landed a four pound iron gun on Parramore's Beach, and was endeavoring to prevent the going out of the tenders.

"I collected my neighbors and went on to Cedar Island with a four pound iron gun."

*Sunday, 28th*—"3 o'clock the tenders made sail and engaged the fort on the beach, and passed out after an obstinate struggle, one of them having her hull and rigging torn to pieces."

He had been successful in being revenged on his enemies, for the privateer after passing out of the inlet, though her pumps were constantly going, was yet in a sinking condition, and the Accomackians as they stood on the shore, saw her sink with all hands on board.

*Saturday, March 13th*—"I set off to go to muster, but played billiards all day with Messrs. Isaac and Thorowday Smith."

*Saturday, 20th*—"Went to Edmund Custis's at Onancock to go over the bay."

*Sunday, 21st*—"Edmund Custis and I crossed the bay, and lodged at Isaac Lanes' on Piankatank."

*Monday, 22d*—"Rainy, dirty forenoon. We sailed from Piankatank, and lay in the bay all night."

*Tuesday, 23d*—"Landed at York, dined at Mrs. Gibbons, and supped in company with Mr. Henry."

*Wednesday, 24th*—"Mr. Custis and I went to Wmsburg. Very cold day. Lodged @ y' Raleigh."

*Friday, 26th*—"I got a warrant from the Treasury for money due me from the State."

*Saturday, 27th*—"Mr. Custis and I rode from Wmsburg to York in a chariot of his upon our way home. Embarked about 8 o'clock P. M. on board Wm. Walkers boat, in company with himself, & Mr. Ker, for the E. S."

*Sunday, 28th*—"Clear and pretty breeze. We landed at Pungotague, and dined at Mr. Tho'd. Smith in camp with several ladies, and gentlemen. I went home to 'Latin House.'"

On March 20th, while in Accomack, Colonel Cropper's commission as lieutenant-colonel of the Seventh Virginia regiment, Continental line, to take rank from October 27, 1779, was signed by John Jay, president of Congress.

*Saturday, 24th April*,—he writes, "Peggy and I returned to Bowman's Folly to live, the gally diligence Captain Watson having arrived in Metompkin for the place's protection."

On the same date, 24th of April, 1779, Gen. Woodford wrote<sup>a</sup> to Col. Cropper from Middle Brook :

"DEAR COLONEL:

Yours of the 1st of March was only delivered me a few days ago. I am truly sorry for your Loss and could wish you had muster'd a few of your neighbors in time to attack those plunderers—if a single muster could effect so much, what might not be expected from a dozen hearty fellows—I immediately waited upon his Excellency, who was touched with your misfortune, and desired that I would write you that had permission to be absent till the first of June, but hopes you will then returned prepared to resume your office in the army; let me add my wishes that this may be the case. You know our Line is considerably thin'd of some of its best Field officers—and I mean not to flatter when I say your loss will be materially felt—even should your affairs require a months longer absence. I have no doubt upon your writing, our good Genl. would still prolong you indulgence.

\* \* \* \* \*  
With my compliments to Mrs. Cropper, believe me to be with much esteem,

Dr. Sir, Your most obedient humble Servant,

WM. WOODFORD."

*Lieut. Col. John Cropper, Accomack County, &c. etc.*

DIARY CONTINUED—*May 3rd*—"Yesterday a schooner with 90 Hds. of rum, Capt. Mosely arrived here from St. Ustatia—To-day another schooner boat with 40 hds. of rum, Capt. Dillingham, arrived from the same place. Sunday, May 9th, he was at Bellhaven in the lower part of the County, & Wrote 'Very heavy cannonade this morning towards York.'"

*Saturday, 15th*—"Capt. Kendall and brother and Col. Corbin met me at Court-house about the deserters of 9th Virg. Regt., and went home with me."

*Tuesday, 25th*—"Court. Alarm of a Tender coming into Onancock."

*Monday, 31st*—"Rainy day. I went to Smith Meison's, and purchased of him 1,000 lbs. of tobacco at 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ ."

*Thursday, June 3rd*—"Peggy and I dined on board the diligence galley."

<sup>a</sup> *State Papers*, Vol. I, p. 317.

Most of the entries throughout this month are concerning visits to his neighbors, or of them to him, a very constant social intercourse appearing to have been kept up.

*Monday, 14th*—"Sent Jno. Abot again to Mr. Ker's to borrow money. I dined on board the diligence galley. Major Custis had a cock fight at Folly landing."

*Wednesday, 30th*—"Borrowed pr. my overseer 1,000 pounds of Mr. Edw'd Ker, in loan office certificates."

*Sunday, 4th July*—"Anniversary of Independence. An elegant ball at the courthouse to-morrow evening."

*Monday, 5th*—"An elegant ball and entertainment at courthouse."

Soon after this date Colonel Cropper's furlough was to expire, and we find him making his way on horseback to army headquarters in the north, and sending in his resignation to John Jay, president of Congress, at Philadelphia.

*Friday, 16th*—He writes: "Peggy and I set off for camp. Went to Mr. Abbot's."

There is no mention of his wife after this, and it is probable she only drove with him as far as Mr. Abbot's, at whose house she probably remained after taking leave of him, she having resided there before her marriage. The diary continues :

*Saturday, 17th*—"I went to Horn Town. Stayed a. n. wt. Uncle Corbin. Wm. and Polly Broadwater stayed *ditto*."

*Sunday, 18th*—"I lodged at Branten's, 22 miles above Snow-hill."

*Monday, 19th*—"Lodged at Evan's, 8 miles beyond Clower's."

*Tuesday, 20th*—"Breakfasted at Mrs. Peterkin's, dined at Dover, and lodged at Cross-roads."

*Wednesday, 21st*—"Breakfasted at Cantwell's Bridge, dined at Red Lyon, and lodged at Wilmington wt. Mr. Edmund Randolph, delegate from Virginia to Congress, together with several officers of horse."

*Thursday, 22d*—"Mr. Randolph and myself breakfasted at Chester, and dined in Philada. I took my lodging at Mrs. Swords, in Lodge alley."

*Friday, 23d*—"The gentlemen of my lodgings are Doct'r Shields, a gentleman just from Ireland with a large quantity of

goods; Mr. Curson, a St. Eustasia merchant, and a Monsicur De Luce, a French gentleman."

*Wednesday, 28th*—"I set off for camp—lodged at Vandegriff's, Shammy Ferry."

*Thursday, 29th*—"Breakfasted at Trenton, dined at Trenton, and lodged at Sklimans, beyond Rocky Hill."

*Friday, 30th*—"Passed the village of Sommerset. Dined at \_\_\_\_\_, at Col. McDaniels, with Doctr's Smith, Jenipher and Tennant."

*Saturday, 31st*—"Got into Morris Town about 11 o'clock; stay'd a. d. to rest my horse; dined with Mrs. Kemper, and lodg'd at Mrs. Norris's."

*Sunday, August 1st, 1779*—"I set off from Morris Town for camp."

*Monday, 2d*—"Arrived at the Virginia camp, a place called Suffering's. The troops are healthy and in high spirits, and are commanded by Lord Stirling. Drank tea wt. Gen. Woodford."

*Tuesday, 3d*—"Nothing. Only I dined wt. Major Porter-field upon fish at Gen. Woodford's qrs."

*Wednesday, 4th*—"Dined with Lord Stirling. Doct. McHenry, his Excellency's Secy, there."

*Thursday, 5th*—"Good day. I dined with General Woodford."

*Friday, 6th*—"Capt. Shepherd and myself set off for H'd Quarters. Had a most fatiguing journey over the mountains and rocks to New Windsor, and a tedious rainy passage down the river to the Light Infantry. We passed H'd Quarters and West Point, and arrived at the Light Infantry about one o'clock. We lodged with Ensign Linot in a thin tent that let through the rain and made it very uncomfortable."

*Saturday, 7th*—"Capt. Shepherd and myself dined at H'd Quarters and lodged at N. Windsor, in company wt. Capt. Ebenezer Finly."

*Sunday, 8th*—"I set off for camp, and fell in wt. Major Forsyth and a Virginia gentleman two miles below N. Windsor, on their way to join Major Lee at Paramus."

*Monday, 9th*—"Stay'd all day wt. Lord Stirling's division. Din'd with Gen'l Woodford."

*Tuesday, 10th*—"I set off for Philadelphia—lodged at Mr.

VanCortlands at \_\_\_\_\_penny, four miles from Morristown. Was very agreeably entertained in company with Governor Livingston's son."

*Wednesday, 11th*—"Went to Morristown. Stayed all day (being kept by the rain), and dined at Mr. Kemper's."

*Thursday, 12th*—"Resumed my journey, dined at Emmens, a dutch house, and lodged at Larbecaux."

*Friday, 13th*—"Got into Philadelphia about dark—a most fatiguing journey. Supped at my lodgings, Mrs. Sword's."

*Sunday, 15th*—"Captain Nicholson and myself went to sermon at Christ Church to hear the Rev. Parson White."

There is no further entry in his diary until the Saturday following, but the letter here presented addressed by him on the 16th to John Jay, Esq., president of Congress, will explain his purpose in tarrying in Philadelphia:

PITTSBURGH, August 16th, 1779.

"SIR:

Necessity obliges me to interrupt the precious time of your Excellency and Congress on the following subject. Early in the present controversy, I had the honor to be appointed a Captain in the Virginia line of the Continental Army, and have served until I have attained the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel; but my affairs at home together with the present establishment of the army absolutely demand that I should quit that service, in which I have spent the most happy and honorable part of my life; therefore, I humbly and earnestly request permission to resign my commission and assign the following reasons:

First. That I have a young and increasing family, whose situation and circumstances require my presence at home, to improve the remaining part of my patrimony for their maintenance.

Second. That my pay is not one-tenth part adequate to the necessary expenses, in supporting the dignity of my commission.

Third. The high taxes in Virginia which fall very heavy on me, being obliged to pay for the present year, four hundred pounds or upwards, for over cultivated lands, that do not yield me one single sixpence profit per annum; nor does profit arise from any part of my property in my absence.

Fourth. That a New York Privateer in Feb. last, at night landed her crew at my plantation on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, destroyed and carried off great part of my property.

Fifth. That my Regiment (the seventh Virginia) is highly reduced to a Captain's command, by expiration of enlistments, deaths, etc., and

that for the good of the service, it will probably soon be incorporated with some other regiments, when great part of its officers become supernumerary of course.

I hope your Excellency and Congress will pardon this intrusion; and believe me to be with all possible admiration, respect, and esteem,

Your Excellency's

Mo. Obedient

Humb. Servant,

JNO. CROPPER, JR."

"The New York Privateer," referred to above, is evidently the Thistle Tender, whose crew attacked him the night of February 12th, and which he then described as a "Bermudian built sloop," and "in the service of Britain."

Having finished his business in Philadelphia, he prepared to set off Southwards, for on Saturday, 21st, his diary tells us: "I set off for Virginia; lodged at Chester." The return trip was over practically the same route as the outward one—viz., by way of Red Lyon, Cantwell's Bridge, Dover, Mamma Peterkins, Snowhill, and Horntown.

*Tuesday, 24th*—He complains of his "horse being terribly galled with the breast-plate of the harness," and says he left his at Brawten's, above Snowhill, Colonel John Dennis being good enough to lend him one of his own.

*Thursday, 26th*—"Breakfasted at Horn Town, arrived at Geo. Abbots about 4 o'clock."

This was the house he had first stopped at on his outward journey on July 16th, and where he was probably greeted by his wife on his return, though he does not mention the latter circumstance.

*Friday, 27th*—He states: "Peggy and I went to Bowman's Folly—lodged at Latin House."

There is appended an outline of his ride, with a calculation of the "Road and stages from New Windsor on the West bank of the Hudson river to Accomack Courthouse, on the E. S. of Virginia." This distance he calculates, by the route he took, as being 534 miles.

*Saturday, 28th August*—"Nothing, only that I moved my furniture from Latin House to Bowman's Folly."

*Friday, September 10th*—"Tom Bayley's and Oldham's boats came from Phila. Bayley brought my 5 Winsor chairs and Mahogany salver."

*Saturday, 11th*—"Muste day at Courthouse."

*Thursday, 16th*—"I amused myself during the excessive high tides, (occasioned by the N. Easter) shooting curlews, willets, and other birds."

Throughout the remainder of September and during October there are regular entries, most of them recording his neighbors' visits, or his visits to the Courthouse.

*November 2d*—"The schooner Capt. Bowman got around at the mouth of Folly Creek."

*Wednesday, 3d*—"Vendue at Levin Rodger's estate. I bought 14 pictures very dear."

*Thursday, 4th*—"There is a cruiser off the inlet, which this day attempted to cut out Capt. Bowman's Schooner but failed."

*Thursday, 9th*—"The Schooner Capt. Bowman sailed for France."

*Saturday, 13th*—"A race at Molly Beech's field. Lady Legs got beat by Taylor's horse. I lost 100 dollars."

*Friday, 19th*—"Race at Onancock between Capt. Parramores and Edmund Custis's horses."

*Friday, 26th*—"Major Simpson came down to his boat lying in Folly Creek, and brought me 147 lbs of iron at 2 dollars pr. lb."

*Monday, 29th*—"Before day my Joshua run away."

*Wednesday, 1st December, 1779*—"I bought Bob attached by the Sheriff to pay Mr. Miffin's assessment, a £1,710."

*Saturday, 11th*—"I set off very early from home and got to Duke's by one o'clock. Rented Benston's house for £180. Hired George for 193, Joshua 114, Comfort 106, and Charity 50, Virginia money."

*Friday 25th*—"Christmas. Mr. Abbott and myself went to Assawaman Church. Snowy day."

The diary concludes with the year 1779, and if he kept one later it has not been preserved.

It appears probable from letters of Colonel Cropper that his resignation, submitted in August, 1779, was never accepted, but that he was allowed to remain at home, in Accomack, till the end of the war, on indefinite leave of absence, in view of his past service in the northern campaigns, and his not being drafted for the Southern army, under General Green. In August, 1781, he wrote to Governor Thomas Nelson, Jr., acknowledging the receipt of his appointment as county lieutenant of Accomack—a position that he filled with great energy and ability to the end of the war. He was in constant correspondence with Governor Nelson and Colonel William Davies, a son of the Rev. Samuel Davies, and the Virginia Commissioner of War, who is reputed to have been a man of rare ability, and to have furnished invaluable service to the State in the supplying of provisions to and equipment of the troops, and in directing the finances. During this period particularly the Eastern Shore people were exceedingly harassed by the enemy. Colonel Levin Joynes wrote to Davies, September 10, 1781: "We have had most alarming times this summer, all along shore, from a set of barges manned mostly by our own negroes who have run off. These fellows were really dangerous to an individual singled out for their vengeance whose property lay exposed." The people of Accomack for their greater protection organized a volunteer troop of horse, under the command of Captain Thomas Parramore, which Cropper described as "composed of single gentlemen, and they are gentlemen of the first fortunes and characters among us; ever since their appointment they have been on constant duty, under which they have shewn a most cheerful obedience to the strictest discipline, and do, in my opinion, render very essential service." They were mounted and equipped at their own expense, the people receiving but scant aid from the State, and the threatened withdrawal of the few Continental troops from the Shore made it necessary for the inhabitants to resort to every possible means for their preservation.

Among the characters with whom Cropper had to deal was the Rev. John Lyon, whom Bishop Meade<sup>3</sup> says was a Rhode Island man, and the Rector of St. George's Parish in Accomack as early as 1774.

<sup>3</sup> *Old Churches and Families of Virginia*, Vol. 1, p. 266.

Lyon was brought before a court martial at which Cropper presided, and Colonel George Corbin (an uncle of Cropper's) filled the position of Judge Advocate. He was charged with having furnished the enemy with provisions, giving them aid and comfort and dissuading the militia from doing duty in defending the State. Colonel Corbin wrote to the State department communicating the intelligence of Lyon's case, transmitting the depositions, and asking for leniency towards him, which was doubtless largely on account of Lyon's wife, who was of a prominent Accomack family, in sympathy with the American cause. Colonel Cropper, however, did not seem to entertain similar sentiments towards him, for on August 25th, in a letter to Colonel Davis,<sup>4</sup> he writes: "I have before me your affectionate letter to my uncle Corbin, and thank you for your favorable sentiments of me. It was with the greatest reluctance I quit the army, but the peculiar circumstances of my family compelled me to it.

\* \* \* You'll see my sentiments in respect to Mr. Lyon's case, and notwithstanding my uncle's request in his letter, was he to lay aside his excessive humanity and tenderness of heart (of which perhaps he has the largest share of any person living) he would think that a halter was hardly too severe for the parson. On the same date he wrote to Governor Nelson<sup>5</sup> and continued as follows, "As to the case of the Rev. John Lyon, I beg leave to make the following observations: There was not so much in testimony against him as was expected, but from character he is certainly a very bad man. He has undoubtedly long and constantly traded with the enemy—a vessel of his in that trade was taken and made prize of by a Philadelphia barge, and I would risque whatever property depends on me, that it might yet be proven that not long since, he himself delivered a cargo of oats and provision to the British Commissary at Portsmouth. The disaffected of his neighborhood (the best acquainted with his political character) absolutely will not give testimony against him, and the inoffensive Whig, in the character of a peasant, is actually afraid of the parson's influence to destroy him. He has married into a good family, thro' which the few persons of good character have signed

<sup>4</sup> *State Papers*, Vol. II, p. 358.

<sup>5</sup> *State Papers*, Vol. II, pp. 359-60.

upon his part, Cropper weighing in the neighborhood of two hundred pounds. Latchom was at the time a slave, and was purchased and set free by Colonel Cropper, who befriended him in every way he could, as an evidence of his gratitude, till Latchom's death. In September of this year (1781) Governor Thomas Nelson, Jr., wrote to Cropper telling him of the great need in the army of spirits, and calling on him to procure all he could on his side of the bay. Nelson wrote that the exhausted state of the treasury would not permit of the purchase of the article, and the only mode left was the disagreeable one of impressing, and for this purpose he enclosed him a warrant.

It is to be doubted whether Cropper often resorted to this means of obtaining supplies, as the farmers naturally were very indignant at it, they having to give up corn, oats, meat and horses as well as liquors. The troops across the bay were furnished, among other things, with a quantity of peach brandy, which was formerly one of the leading products of the Eastern Shore, and which was widely celebrated for its flavor and excellence.

The isolated situation of the people of Accomack and Northampton, caused them to be ignorant often of the laws passed by the Assembly for some time after their passage, and in addition they received less protection from the State probably than the people of any other section of it. Notwithstanding this they were frequently called on for supplies from the Western Shore, while all the time striving to maintain and defend themselves at home from the invasions of the enemy. Throughout all the hardships to which they were subjected, the majority of them remained devotedly loyal to the American cause, and Cropper himself spent the bulk of his fortune in supplying the troops, coming out of the war a comparatively poor man. During the year 1782, the condition of the county was even worse than the year preceding. Early in May, Colonels Cropper and Corbin were writing to Colonel Davies, the head of the State War Department, protesting against the removal of the few Continental soldiers then in Accomack, and declaring the Shore would be ruined. Cropper states that four of the enemy's barges were then on the coast, capturing vessels and plundering the inhabitants. The presence of a small force, he said, would enable the

the petition drawn in his favor. Everybody is sorry for the family, but I believe his greatest advocate cannot but acknowledge him a man of very bad private character. I beg leave to offer it your Excellency as my sincere and unprejudiced opinion, that the people will not, with their consent, permit Mr. Lyon to remain in their Parish, and at the same time that they wish no further punishment, than for him never to be seen in the County, after a reasonable time to settle his affairs." On the 30th, of September, he sent Lyon with some other prisoners, those who had opposed the draft, to the Governor, and wrote Davies, "By the vessel in which these prisoners come I have sent to the Commissary-General a thousand gallons of Rum, and one tierce of Port wine for the use of the army, and in a short time they may expect much more." At this date, Colonel Cropper appears to have related towards the parson, probably at the solicitation of Lyon's family, for he encloses a petition signed by George Corbin, Edmund Custis, Levin Joynes and George Parker, all of whom were men of prominence in the county, and adds himself, "since his confinement, he has often expressed to me his desire of becoming a good citizen, and should be indulged with any degree of liberty of wishing to spend the remains of his life with people of known attachment to the independency of America."

Among the attacks of the enemy from the barges was one near Henry's Point, where they landed from their boats, and were met by the militia, under Cropper. During the fight the militia retreated, leaving Cropper and a negro named George Latchom, who were in advance of the rest, engaged actively with the invaders. These two kept up the firing, until the foe were within a few rods of them, when they were compelled to fall back. Cropper had to retreat through a sunken, boggy marsh, in which he stuck fast up to the waist in soft mud, the enemy at the time being so close as to prepare to bayonet him.

At this critical juncture the faithful colored man fired and killed the foremost man, and seized hold of Cropper and dragged him by main strength out of the mud, and taking him on his back carried him safely to dry land. This required great strength

militia to attend to their farms a portion of the time, instead of being constantly called out. Colonel Corbin writes of a conspiracy of the Tories, British and negroes, who had prepared themselves "with ropes as instruments of death and had marked their devoted victims." This plan was discovered by the master of one of the slaves engaged in the plot, and the ring leaders strung up. In November of this year, occurred one of the bloodiest fights of its kind that took place in that neighborhood during the war. Commodore Kidd had established a rendezvous at Hog Island, off the coast, to which place he was in the habit of taking his plunder. At that time each State had its separate fleet for purposes of defence, Commodore Barron commanding the Virginia, and Commodore Whaley the Maryland flotilla. On the 28th of November, Colonel Cropper received from Commodore Whaley a letter telling him that he proposed attacking Kidd's barges, then off Onancock in the bay, and asking the assistance of some volunteers from Accomack to aid him in his fleet.

The request was immediately complied with, and Colonel Cropper, with twenty-five of the Accomack militia went aboard his boats. Cropper thus describes the action in a letter to Davies, dated December, 6th :<sup>12</sup>

"On the 30th, at the head of Cagney's Straits we fell in with and engaged the enemy. When we approached them within about three hundred yards, and the fire began to be serious, our barges all run away except the Commodore's (the *Protector*), in which was Major Smith Sneed, Captain Thomas Parker, Captain William Sneed, myself and five other volunteers.

"This dastardly conduct of our comrades brought on our barge the whole fire of the enemy which was very severe, and it was as severely answered by the *Protector*, until the enemy's six barges were within fifty yards, when most unfortunately, the cartridges of our short eighteen pounders caught fire amidsthips; the explosion of which burned three or four people to death, caused five or six more, all afire, to leap overboard, and the alarm of the barge blowing up made several others swim for their lives. The

enemy almost determined to retreat from our fire as they told us afterwards, took new spirit at this disaster and pushed up with redoubled fury. On the other hand our people opposed them with the most daring resolution; there was one continual shower of musket balls, boarding pikes, cutlasses, cold shot and iron stantials for eight or ten minutes, till greatly overpowered by numbers, and having all the officers killed and wounded, we struck to them, after having wounded their Commodore, killed one Captain, wounded another, killed and wounded several of their inferior officers and killed and wounded fifteen of the Kiddappers Crew, the barge which first boarded us.

"Commodore Wally was shot down a little before the enemy boarded, acting the part of a *cool, intrepid, gallant* officer. Captain Joseph Handy was badly wounded.

"There went to action in the *Protector* sixty-five men, twenty-five of them were killed and drowned, twenty-nine were wounded, some of which are since dead, and eleven only escaped, being wounded, most of which had leaped in the water to save themselves from the explosion.

"After the surrender, I entered into an agreement with Commodore Kidd to take ashore such of his wounded as chose to go, and to have them nursed and attended to at the public expense, upon condition that he would parole all our prisoners as well the unhurt as the wounded, which agreement will meet the approbation of his Excellency in Council and the Assembly.

"Being very much disordered with my wounds, I am scarcely able to write, therefore, I beg leave to subscribe myself."

Then follows a list of the wounded to which he adds, "Myself was wounded by a cutlass on the head, slightly by a pike on the face and thigh, slightly by a cutlass on the shoulder, and after the surrender was knocked down by a four pound rammer, the blow of which was unfortunately near upon the same place where the cutlass hit.

"You will do me a most singular favor to excuse the sally I took in the barge, and have me exchanged as soon as possible.

"Yours affectionately,

"J. CROPPER, JR."

The reader after this will not wonder that he was very much disordered by his wounds as he expressed it, or that Colonel

<sup>12</sup> *State Papers*, Vol. III, p. 391.

Davies could do other than excuse the sally he took. It is related, however, that his wife did not, for after his exchange, while his wounds were being dressed by friends at Onancock, she appeared on the scene with her infant daughter in her arms, and broke forth, "you deserve it, a Continental officer to leave your wife and children to fight sailors on the water." Colonel Cropper always referred to her as a "keen ground razor," and it would seem that she justified the title.

The account of the battle of the barges given by Cropper to Davies was, of course, in the main an official one, and several interesting incidents of the fight are well worth being recorded. A second time his life was saved by a negro slave, but on this occasion the negro was on the side of the enemy. It seems this man, who had belonged to Cropper's father, was a good fellow, but at the same time was desirous of tasting the sweets of liberty. He had run away from home, and was one of Kidd's crew. There was also on the British side an Irish soldier, who had some time previously been taken prisoner by Cropper's men, who had treated him kindly.

This Irishman and the negro had become friendly with each other, their attachment for Colonel Cropper forming a tie between them, and when the British first boarded the *Protector*, these two were among the foremost men. They proceeded towards the stern, where Cropper lay wounded, when the negro stopped suddenly, overcome with surprise on recognizing his old master's son, and called out, "My God, Massa John; and I will die before they shall lay hands on him;" and "I am with you," said the Irishman. They both faced about, and sword in hand, kept back the boarders, declaring no one should harm him. This probably saved Cropper's life, as there was an indiscriminate massacre about this time, 'til Kidd, who had been knocked senseless, came to, and order was restored among his men. This man was given his freedom by Colonel Cropper, who obtained for him a situation in Baltimore. After being removed to one of the enemy's barges, Cropper was laid down in the after part of the stern, faint with loss of blood and nearly insensible of what was passing. Near by lay a wounded Englishman, whose peculiar behavior attracted his attention. This man was seemingly endeavoring to raise himself as if to take a better look at the colonel, but being weakened by his wounds,

fell back several times, and laid to all appearances exhausted. But he had not entirely lost his strength, for on the third or fourth attempt to get up he seized hold of the "four-pound rammer" alluded to by Cropper, and dealt him a severe blow on the head, on the same spot where he had been previously hit by the cutlass. This came near putting an end to his life, and he remained senseless for some time. Care, however, was taken to prevent a repetition of this violence, and the belligerent Briton placed in a safe place.

The Captain, Thomas Parker, who had volunteered with Cropper and others from Accomack to accompany Commodore Whaley, was known among the Tories as "Hangman Tom." Along with Colonel Levin Joynes and numbers of others from Accomack, he had been taken prisoner at Germantown, they belonging to the Matthews regiment, which was mostly recruited on the Eastern Shore.

It is related<sup>14</sup> of him that when Earl Harcourt rode along the line of rebel prisoners, who were ragged, worn and drooping, asking each one what his occupation had been, Lieutenant Parker stood erect, and when the question was put to him by the Earl, replied: "I am as my father before me was, a gentleman, and be d——d to you; who are you?"

On December 3d, Commodore Kidd wrote to Colonel Cropper, as follows:

SIR:

Trusting to your Honor, We have sent all the Prisoners that was wounded, as also the Prisoners that is Not Wounded, not Doubting but you will fulfill your agreement with us in regard to the wounded. And as to the Prisoners that are not Wounded, We Do Expect all the men that was taken in the *Sally Tar*, Comm'd by Capt. Brooks, and immediately to be sent to Hog Island with a Flag to stay our coming.

We remain, Dear Sir, with Friendship, Yours.

JOHN KIDD,

WM. A. PERRY,                      Comm'd of the Fleet of British Barges.  
Comm'd *Perryorgt.*

Shortly after, on January 12th, 1783, Natham Adams, a captain of one of the British barges, wrote to Cropper in regard to

<sup>14</sup> *Seven Decades of the Union*.—Henry A. Wise, p. 196.



his exchange, and adds in postscript, he "would be glad if Col. Cropper would send him two barrels of flour and twenty galls. of spirits at the market price. Sends his compliments to him and his Lady, and hopes the time may come when he may have the opportunity of seeing them in peace and quietness."

It is not probable that the British barges remained long in the neighborhood after this date, for the surrender at Yorktown had occurred as far back as October, 1781, and the definite articles of peace were signed at Paris the very day of the fight with Kidd. Cropper's troubles, however, were not yet at an end, for some time after the fight, while at his home, the wound in his head, which had nearly cost him his life, opened afresh.

His wife was engaged in dressing it, and had taken off the bandage, at the same time holding several pins in her mouth. One of these she accidentally swallowed, and met her death in consequence. This proved a great blow to him, and the effect upon his mind was very depressing, so much so that his condition gave his friends serious apprehensions for several years afterwards.

The gallant Whaley, who had so bravely led the Virginians, was interred with military honors on Onancock creek, at what is now a place called "Scott Hall," at one time the residence of Dr. Thomas Bagwell. It is said the spot is unmarked, and has been well nigh forgotten.

Colonel Cropper sent in a petition to the speaker of the House of Delegates, praying that that body would grant him relief for the sums of money he had been compelled to expend as County Lieutenant for the support of the troop of horse and Continental troops, afterwards raised by act of assembly. He states that he had drawn large sums of paper money out of the hands of the commissioners, who received money under that act, and also out of the hands of the sheriff, which he paid into the hands of the Continental Commissary for the county, who had accounted for it to the Commissary General.

In the returns made to the Auditor he stood charged with £71,318, 12s, paper money. Having no other resource, he was obliged to draw upon them, or else suffer the Eastern Shore to be utterly ruined, not doubting that the Legislature would approve his conduct. He farther recites that owing to the treaty

entered into with Kidd to take care of his wounded men and furnish them with medical attendance, he had expended £189, 18s, 3d specie. Colonel Cropper relates in his petition, "that in addition to the calamities of war and cruelties exercised; the plundering of our property, and the burning of our habitations, so successfully and so wantonly practiced by the British Barges on this shore, we had to struggle with and to combat the secret machinations of internal enemies, more dangerous, if possible, than those open and avowed ones. In the year 1781, it was discovered and undoubtedly certain that we had a party amongst us that acted in concert with the barges then on the Islands; some of them were even so daring as to attack several houses in the middle of the country; and not only plundered, but shed the blood of the inhabitants. That they opposed and actually prevented the execution of an act of Assembly for raising the State's quota of troops to serve in the Continental Army, by appearing at the Court-house armed, on the day appointed for the draft." It is not known to the writer to what extent the Legislature made good the expenditures of Colonel Cropper, but on other occasions he contributed largely out of his private means to the aid of the cause, and came out of the war impaired in fortune.

Colonel Cropper was chosen to represent his county in the House of Delegates, which he did from 1784 to 1792; and in 1785, Patrick Henry, then Governor, called on him to again undertake the duties of County Lieutenant. In May, 1793, Governor Henry Lee (Light Horse Harry) made him Lieutenant-Colonel of the Second regiment militia. As such, he had to call out the troops to enforce the embargo resolutions of the next year, and arrested several vessels in Assawaman and Metompkin inlets.

Upon one occasion a brigantine was lying off the latter inlet, preparatory to putting to sea, having taken on her cargo. Cropper expeditiously equipped four boats, and at dawn rowed out to her, being at the head of his men, and boarded her, taking her by surprise before sunrise. In June, 1794, Governor Lee appointed him agent of the Ninth Brigade district, which included the Eastern Shore, the county of Princess Anne, and Borough of Norfolk, in pursuance of an act for the collection of the

arrears of taxes and duties. This required of him and his sureties to enter into a bond of £17,000, lawful money of the Commonwealth, payable to the Governor, for the faithful performance of his duties.

Governor Lee wrote that the exhausted state of the treasury demanded relief, and urged him to use unremitting exertions in compelling payment of delinquents. In 1798, during the threatened war with France, John Adams, then President, wrote to Washington, who was in retirement at Mt. Vernon, inviting him once more to take command of the American army, then to be raised. To this General Washington consented, and addressed not many months before his death, a letter to Colonel Cropper, placing him at the head of the lower counties, and requesting him to forward a list of suitable men to be officers in the brigade, thus virtually committing to him the selection of all the officers in that part of the State. The letter is as follows :

MOUNT VERNON, June 17, 1799.

SIR:

Was I not well assured of your Patriotism and firm attachment to the Government of our Country, I should think it necessary to apologize for the trouble I am about to give you.

The Secretary of War has signified to me that the President of the United States thinks it highly expedient that no time should be lost in selecting proper Characters to Officer the Twenty four Regiments of Infantry, authorized to be *eventually* raised by a law of the last Congress; and has requested me to furnish him with a list of the names of such persons as are best qualified and willing to serve in the respective Grades of four of these Regiments, which is the proportion allotted to Virginia.

Having been absent from home for about twenty-five years, with short intervals only, and in these intervals a necessary attention to my private concerns confining me almost entirely to my own Estate, I find my acquaintance with the Citizens of this State, particularly with the rising generation, very limited indeed. And, therefore, ready as I always am to do anything in my power to promote the public weal, I find it impossible to perform this task without the assistance of others on whom I can place a reliance.

As these troops are all authorized to be raised only in case of an actual war with a foreign power, or of imminent danger of Invasion of our Territory by such power, it is to be presumed that, in such an event every good citizen would hold himself in readiness to take the field, if necessary, whether belonging to the eventual army or not. I, therefore,

flatter myself that when the President's intention of appointing the Officers for this Army shall be fully known, we shall find many of the valuable officers *who* served with reputation in the Revolutionary war, as well as others, step forward and *offer* their services in grades which they would not accept if their object was to pursue a military career for life, or to continue in the service beyond the exigency which might call them forth. This leads me to hope that, instead of *seeking* for those who are willing to receive appointments, we shall find the best spirits of our country *offering* their services in those grades where their talents and influence can be useful without feeling themselves bound by the scrupulous punctilios of Rank which officers observe when arms are assumed as a profession.

But, in order to place the matter upon certain ground and to pursue it with system, it becomes necessary to make the selection before mentioned; and as the propriety of drawing the officers from different parts of the State, observing as nearly as may be a due proportion to the respective population, is obvious, I must, of course, obtain my information from various sources and combine the result in the best manner I can.

I therefore, sir, take the liberty to ask if you will be so good as to furnish me with the names of such characters as are, in your opinion, qualified to fill the several offices in one Regiment of Infantry, a Battalion or part thereof, and who would be willing to receive these appointments, annexing to their names the respective grades, and the places or counties of their Residence.

To facilitate this selection and to observe the proportion before mentioned, I have thought it best to follow the four Grand Divisions of the State, as laid off by the Inspector-General for the purposes of recruiting, and to endeavor to select the Officers of one Regiment from each. In that case the Division in which you reside will comprehend the counties of Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, Charles City, James City, Matthews, Gloucester, York, Warwick, Elizabeth City, Accomac, Northampton, Caroline, King & Queen, Essex, King William, Middlesex, Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, Westmoreland, and King George. To these Counties, then, you will be pleased more particularly to confine your attention. But if suitable characters are known to you in other parts of the State, I will thank you for the names of them also. As these Counties form a large district and may comprehend more valuable characters than the acquaintance of any one person in it extends to, it is left with you to advise with others, or from such Counties therein as your intimacy is greatest to select a proportionate part. In a word, Sir, paying some attention to the policy of distribution, to select, in whole or in part, such characters as would do honor to the service, and would be gratifying to your own feelings to command:—a measure, though it cannot be asked, is

highly to be wished, and would have been gladly embraced in the arrangement of the twelve Regiments now recruiting, if anything had appeared at that time indicative of your inclination to re-enter the Military line.

You will readily see that these names must be handed to the President of the United States for his approbation, and afterwards confirmed or rejected by the Senate; it is therefore proper that no assurances of *appointment* be given to the parties which will render a change impracticable without wounding their feelings too much.

Where you are not personally well acquainted with such Characters as are fit and willing to serve, you will be so good as to obtain the best recommendations and such as you can rely upon. And every cautionary measure is necessary to guard against errors which frequently result from the ease with which recommendations are generally obtained, the partiality of friends and a delusive hope that men of bad habits, by being transplanted into the army, will become good men and good officers.

I have ventured, Sir, to give you this trouble, because from your former services in the Military line, I could confide in your knowledge and judgment of proper Characters to be brought forward at this time, and believing that I might readily count upon your best exertions to render a service to your country.

I will thank you for an acknowledgment of the Receipt of this letter as soon as it gets to your hands, and for your observations on the subject of it, so far as you may then be prepared to give them.

With very great esteem,

I have the honor to be Sir,  
Your most obt. St.

GO. WASHINGTON.

*Colo. John Cropper.*

To this Colonel Cropper sent the following reply :

ACCOMAC COURTHOUSE, *4th July, 1799.*

SIR :

I have received your favor of the 17th ultimo by the last mail. The opinions entertained by you of my services in the American war, and the confidence expressed of my patriotism and judgment are a most precious addition to the approbation of my fellow citizens within the circle of my acquaintance. Many more marks of approbation have been bestowed upon me by my countrymen than my services have merited, but not more than will be gratefully remembered to the latest hour of my existence.

After serving my native country for sixteen years, partly in a military and partly in a civil capacity, I resigned in the year 1795 all pretensions

to public office, and prescribed to myself the pleasure of enjoying the remainder of my life in domestic tranquility.

But, sir, I have remained a faithful tho' feeble friend to the Government of the United States, and am one of those who have approved of the administration of it. I believe this Government has been established with as much wisdom, and conducted with as much integrity as any other in the world.

Therefore, considering the critical situation of public affairs at this juncture, and the sacred obligations which bind a dutiful citizen to his country, I shall take upon me the duties assigned by your letter, and perform them according to my best ability.

You may name me to the President of the United States to fill such grade in the provisional army as I may be thought to suit and deserve.

My knowledge of the military characters of the Western Shore part of the division to which I am allotted is very contracted, and, as far as my reflections have gone, shall be much at a loss to ascertain a competent judgement of those with whom I am personally unacquainted.

I am with the greatest respect & esteem,

Your Obt. Humble Servant,

JNO. CROPPER, JUN'R.

[Addressed]

*His Excellency*

*General Washington,*

*Mount Vernon.*

The trouble with France came to an end, and the army was never raised, but this mark of confidence on the part of Washington was highly appreciated by Cropper, who is said to have treasured the letter as a miser does his gold. Only his intimate friends and relations were ever permitted to read it, and it was till the day of his death one of his most highly prized possessions, and increased, if possible, the love he had for the Father of his Country.

In 1801, Colonel Cropper was called on to serve his county as sheriff, being commissioned by Governor James Monroe.

During the war of 1812 Colonel Cropper again left his home, at Bowman's Folly, to defend his country. In March, 1812, he wrote to Governor James Barbour, announcing the death of Brigadier-General Thomas Mathews, and continues: "As by this melancholy event the command of the Ninth brigade devolves on me as senior officer, I feel it my duty to give your Excellency

immediate notice thereof." In November following, he writes from home, on his return from Norfolk, of a tour in attending to the training of the officers and reviewing the regiments of the Ninth brigade, with which he expresses himself as pleased. These and other troops were stationed at Fort Nelson and Fort Norfolk. The history of the Eastern Shore during the period of the second war with England, appears to be in a great measure a repetition of that of the Revolution, although the attacks of the enemy were not perhaps as severe or as frequent. In March, 1813, he writes to the Governor, telling him of a consultation held with his brother officers in regard to the exposed condition of the Shore. He affirms the willingness of the militia to do all in their power, but complains of their utter lack of adequate supplies of the implements of war. Some idea of their condition and that of the State War Department will be gained from the following extract: "About half of the eighteen hundred cartridges obtained by me at Richmond in June last proved to be good for nothing except the bullets; they appear to be those of the Revolutionary war; the paper and powder mouldered to the finest dust."

Tangier Island, in the Chesapeake, is southeast of the Potomac, and above the mouth of Onancock creek, in Accomack. It was occupied during the war by the British fleet under Cockburn, and it is said the sand redoubts thrown up by the red-coated enemy, are still to be seen.

Again the people of Accomack and Northampton were subjected to the attacks from the barges and tenders cruising in the bay.

In May, 1813, Colonel Cropper wrote to Governor Barbour: "The Legislature of Virginia, at their last session, thought proper to place over my head a gentleman not long since promoted to the rank of major and recently to that of colonel—a man without military experience, I am informed. I entered the army of the Revolution at the age of nineteen, served during the war, and have held the highest military command on the Eastern Shore ever since. My capacity and conduct were always approved of, as I believe. Under the circumstances it becomes my duty to resign the command of the Second regiment; the right to do so, I trust, will not be doubted. The Ninth brigade

in particular, as well as all the militia you command, will carry with them my best wishes for their honor and prosperity.

Your Excellency will no longer consider me bearing a militia commission, but I beg you to accept my sincere respect for the attention you have paid to that part of the State in which I reside and to myself as an officer." Governor Wilson Cary Nicholas afterwards, in January, 1815, commissioned him a brigadier-general of the Twenty-First brigade.

Colonel Cropper represented his district in the State Senate from 1813 to 1817, and was vice-president of the Virginia branch of the Cincinnati Society. Later on, in 1816, he was chosen president, to succeed Colonel John Pryor, and acted for several years in that capacity. The Cincinnati in Virginia, however, did not long survive, for it failed to adopt the hereditary feature in vogue in other States, and as time went on the old Revolutionary officers died off one by one, and their ranks were soon thinned in a way that the soldiers of the Southern Confederacy are unfortunately destined to be in the not far distant future. The Virginia Society disbanded about 1824, and gave all of its funds in hand to Washington College, now Washington and Lee University.<sup>15</sup> Probably the most marked trait in the character of General Cropper was his ardent admiration of, and devotion to Washington. He could not bear to hear anything said in his presence derogatory of the character and fame of that great man, and upon several occasions he was engaged in personal difficulties in consequence. Once, while in the State Senate, he was at a public dinner in Richmond, when a man present proceeded to roundly abuse General Washington. Cropper, whose temper was not of the mildest sort, grabbed a carving-knife and told him "if he didn't shut up he would cut his ears off close to his head," which threat he was happily prevented from putting into execution by his friends, who seized him.

Upon the occasion of Washington's visit to Richmond he was tendered a grand ball by the citizens at the Eagle Tavern. The ball was opened by the minut, which General Wash-

<sup>15</sup>This fund was deposited in the State Treasury, and was engrossed in the default of the treasurer, Jerman Baker. About 1850, after a long pending suit, \$25,000 was recovered from the sureties of Baker and paid to the college.—E.D.

ington danced with Mrs. McClurg, the wife of Dr. James McClurg, and one of the handsomest and most accomplished women in Virginia. It is related as an evidence of Washington's devotion to Cropper that, after leading his partner to a seat, he crossed to the opposite side of the room, where he espied him, and taking him by the hand saluted him in the presence of the whole assembly. Many stories are told about General Cropper, relative to General Washington and the love he bore him. It is said that during the latter years of his life he would gather his children and grandchildren about him at "Bowman's Folly," and on the Fourth of July read to them the Declaration of Independence; and on the 22d day of February he would compel them to listen to the "Farewell Address" complete, while at all times he would read to them from *Marshall's Life of Washington*, this book almost taking the place of the family Bible.

During the period that he was in the Legislature, General Cropper was frequently at dinners and banquets, where various healths were proposed and given. When he was called upon for a toast he would arise and give the only one ever heard from his lips: "*God Bless General Washington.*"<sup>16</sup> He died at his residence, January 15, 1821, after a short illness, leaving a widow, seven children, and ten grandchildren. He had been in the public service about forty-five years, and was a brigadier-general of the Eastern Shore brigade at the time of his death.

His first wife, as already stated, was Margaret Pettitt, the daughter of William Pettitt, a farmer living on Occohannock creek, in Northampton, who had died some years before his daughter's marriage. Of this union there were two children—both daughters. The elder of these, named Sarah Corbin, afterwards married Major John Wise, a prominent lawyer of Accomack and speaker of the House of Delegates in 1797 and 1798. She became the mother of several children, among them Henry A. Wise, whose childhood was partly passed at "Bowman's Folly." The second daughter, called Margaret Pettitt, married Thomas M. Bayly, of Accomack, and was the mother of Thomas H. Bayly, who was a member of the State Assembly, a circuit

<sup>16</sup> *Recollections of G. W. F. Curtis*, p. 170.

judge, and later on elected to Congress from the Eastern Shore district for six terms, succeeding his cousin, Henry A. Wise, who had represented the district the previous six, and who had resigned to become the Minister to Brazil.

General Cropper's second wife was Catherine Bayly, the sister of his son-in-law, Thomas M. Bayly. Of this marriage there were six children, who survived.

*I.* Anna Corbin Cropper, married Major John Savage. No issue.

*II.* Elizabeth Washington, married Joseph W. Gibb, and had issue.

*III.* John Washington, married Mary Savage. Children all died in infancy.

*IV.* Catherine Bayly, married Augustus W. Bagwell, and had issue.

*V.* Thomas Bayly Cropper, married Rosina Mix, and had issue, as follows: Catherine Elizabeth, Rosina Mix, Thomas Henry (died in infancy), and John.

*VI.* Coventon Hanson Cropper, married twice. No issue living.

By his will, written January 10, 1821, five days before his death, General Cropper left his estate, "Bowman's Folly," to his wife, Catherine Cropper for life, along with his slaves and most of his personal property. The remainder of his property, including his military lands in Kentucky and Ohio, which had been granted him by the State as bounty for his services, was to be divided among his children with the exception of Mrs. Bayly, for whom he had provided otherwise. His friends Richard D. Bayly, John G. Joynes and Thomas R. Joynes were named as his executors. After his death his estate, "Bowman's Folly," became the property of Thomas R. Joynes, Mrs. Cropper renouncing the will and taking as her dower portion a farm called "Edge Hill," near the courthouse where she resided for some years.

Mr. Joynes, who was a son of Colonel Levin Joynes, was the county clerk of Accomack for a period of seventeen years, an able lawyer, and a prominent member of the Virginia Convention of 1829-'30, to which he was chosen as a delegate from his district, his colleagues being Colonel Thomas M. Bayly, Judge Abel P. Upshur and Dr. Calvin H. Read. He was the father of Judge

W. T. Joynes of the court of appeals and Dr. Levin S. Joynes, of Richmond. He moved to "Bowman's Folly" in 1822, which he called "Montpelier," and resided there until his death in 1858.

The following letter from William Wirt, Attorney-General of the United States, was written by him to General Cropper's daughter Eliza, afterwards Mrs. Gibb.

WASHINGTON, February 6th, 1827.

"I offer you my sincere condolence, my dear Miss Cropper, on the death of your excellent father, of which sad event your obliging letter of the 20th of last month brought me the first intelligence. I have lost a friend in him, and you an affectionate father; but Heaven, I trust, has gained another inhabitant, and it would be rather selfish in us to lament at a change which has ushered him into unspeakable and never-ending happiness. Besides, we are taught by an authority which cannot err that the separation is not eternal, unless we choose to make it so. Upon the supposition then, that we shall do our duty on this earth as well as I trust he has done his, the separation will be but a short one. He has only set out a little before us on a journey on which we shall certainly follow him in a few short years, and I trust we shall hereafter have a far more joyful meeting than we have heretofore experienced on this earth.

Your father, my dear Miss Cropper, has left few men behind him who would not gladly compound for such a life and such a death; a life of so much utility, public and private, and a death which came not to call him until he seemed to have accomplished every purpose for which he had been sent upon this earth. He has, indeed, acted well his part in all the relations of life, and in this, we are told and truly told, lies all the honor. So far as I could judge him, I have never known a man who was more scrupulously punctilious in the discharge of every duty, public and private, and that such, too, was the opinion of his country is proven by the honorable marks of her confidence, which he enjoyed till the day of his death. To live and to die, beloved, honored and respected; to live to a good, old age, and to leave behind him a large family, the heirs of his respectability, as well as most respectable in themselves, amply provided for as to this world and with the fairest opportunities and hopes for the next; to spend his last moments with a memory lingering on the brilliant retrospect of a life well spent, and to die, with Faith pointing his way to Heaven—who would not feel rather disposed to envy such a fate than to mourn over it?

The account you give me of the little incident about three weeks before his death of requesting you to trace with him the military map of New Jersey, and the old war songs with which he closed the ideal

excursion, is very interesting. The soldier's heart beat in his bosom to the last, and those scenes were the freshest, as well as sweetest, to his recollection, in which he had in the morning of life, drawn his sword in his country's cause, under the banners, too, of the immortal Washington. Ere this they have met and recognized each other. Think what a meeting! Can Death be a calamity which brings about such an interview as this—and more especially when even the joy of such an interview is faint in comparison with the brighter and more inconceivable joys that surround him.

\* \* \* \* \*  
Mrs. Wirt and my daughter desire their respectful compliments, and I pray Heaven to bless you both here and hereafter.

(Signed)

WILLIAM WIRT.

The portrait of General Cropper and that of his wife, Catherine Bayly Cropper, with other family relics, are in the possession of his grandson, Mr. John Cropper, of Washington, D. C. The likenesses were executed by Charles Wilson Peale in the latter part of the year 1792. Peale himself had been a soldier in the Revolution, and was an old army friend. Prior to this period he had gone to London to study under West, and for a considerable time before and after the war he is said to have been the only famous portrait-painter in America, Smybert and Copley having disappeared, and Trumbull and Stuart not then become familiar. He painted the first likeness of Washington in 1772, Washington being a Virginia colonel at the time, besides a dozen or more other ones of him later on, and over a hundred portraits mostly of celebrated Americans connected with the Revolution or Continental Congress.

Cropper's portrait was taken when he was about thirty-six years of age. It represents him as a stout man, with a ruddy complexion and marked features, and with brown hair and blue eyes. He is dressed in his uniform of Continental blue, with scarlet facings, and is holding the handle of his dress, silver-mounted rapier, the blade of which rests across his arm. His wife appears a handsome woman, with beautiful auburn hair and lovely complexion. A number of souvenirs of General Cropper are in the possession of his family, among them his sword, a light, triangular rapier—the one that is taken in his portrait—his original diploma as a member of the Cincinnati, signed by Washington, and his badge of the same order. There were among

others a number of pieces of cannon captured at Yorktown of French make. A dozen of these were presented to La Fayette, which he in turn gave to his favorite officers. One of these was a brass four pounder that had been cast in France, bearing a number of mottoes and devices inscribed upon it, with the name "Junon" at the muzzle. This he gave to Colonel Cropper, and it is still in his family." The Marquis and Cropper corresponded at intervals, and there were several of La Fayette's letters among the latter's papers after his death, which are not now to be found.

General Cropper's death was a great loss to the people of the Eastern Shore, whom he had long served, and to the old soldiers of the Revolution, whom he befriended in every way.

The condition of the Virginia people is said to have been even worse after the Revolution, than after the Civil war in 1865. Poverty and destitution were widespread, and but few people had the money to buy what they needed. He was often appealed to, and not in vain, to aid his more unfortunate countrymen. His remains were interred at "Bowman's Folly," where he was born, which has within the last year or two again passed into the hands of a Cropper, and is owned by his grandson, who bears his name.

The original house built by Edmund Bowman, the ancestor of General Cropper, and which was standing during the Revolution, was pulled down about the year 1815, and the present one, which in that day was considered very grand, constructed upon the former site. Before the dwelling was built, General Cropper

"A number of these brass guns of various sizes were brought to America by our French allies during the Revolution. The period of their manufacture was during the reign of Louis XIV. They were richly ornamented in design, chased by the hand and chisel. Several of these guns, 24 pounders, and mortars of large size, were an attraction of the armory grounds at Richmond prior to the late war. All of them save two, which were sent to the Virginia Military Institute, at Lexington, were melted and recast into light field pieces to meet the exigencies of the Confederate States Army. If the gun mentioned in the text was captured at Yorktown it must have been one previously taken by the British from the Continental Army. An account of the "Old French Guns formerly at the Virginia Armory" with others, was published by the present writer in *Richmond Standard*, October 5, 12, 19, 1878.—Ed.

per's slaves were taken from their usual labors on the plantation and made to haul earth for several months to make the mound on which it was constructed, the ground along Folly creek being naturally perfectly level. The county of Accomack generally is too flat to be a really picturesque country, but to those who love the southing of the pines, and the murmur of the ocean, the peninsula land of Virginia has many charms, and General Cropper was devoted to his home. When he returned from his journeyings abroad he would roll on the grass beneath the tall, overhanging boughs of the trees surrounding his house, and where the breeze coming in from the ocean would sweep over him, and he would declare it to be the dearest spot on earth. He sought to make his home attractive, and a beautiful park of stately trees, where the deer roamed at will, was one of its features. Across the road, at some distance from the house, and at the end of a long lane, was "Cropperville." This place was part of the original tract, which he had given to his brother Thomas, of whom he was very fond, and on which he had built a house for him. General Cropper was a patron of education, and was one of the founders of Margaret Academy, a high-grade classical school, at which many of the leading men of the Eastern Shore have been educated. It was given its name, "Margaret," as a tribute to his beloved wife, Peggy Pettitt, whose memory it was designed to perpetuate.

In politics General Cropper was a staunch Federalist, as were a majority of the Virginia gentlemen of that period. He was in war a gallant soldier, well suited to the times in which he lived, and in peace a country squire, and belonged to a civilization now as dead as that of the Medes and Persians.

His story, however, serves to recall the hardships and privations of our ancestors during the infancy of the country, and is a reminder of the mighty struggle with England, in which

"The old-time Continentals,  
In their ragged regimentals,  
Faltered not."

*Richmond, Virginia.*

BARTON HAXALL WISE.

Copies 4

CREDITS

Special thanks are due to Miss Ellen Wright Wise for permission to republish her father's book.

Thanks are also due to the Virginia Historical Society for permission to reproduce the illustrations, and to Mr. and Mrs. B. Drummond Ayres of Accomac for providing access to the Cropper Crest.

NOTES

(1) Commodore Whaley.

It is stated in the latter part of the account of the Battle of the Barges that the spot where the gallant Commodore Whaley is buried is unmarked and has been well-nigh forgotten.

Fortunately that is not now the case. His grave, as stated, is near to Scott Hall in Onancock, and is clearly marked by a stone reading:

Commodore Whaley, U. S. Navy  
Revolutionary War.

It is close to that of:

Revolutionary Soldier,  
Colonel George Corbin,  
1744-1753.

These markers were placed by the efforts of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Chapter of the D.A.R.

Other graves in the vicinity include those of:

Thomas Poulson Bagwell, - 1805 - 1866  
Sally Hamilton Bagwell - - 1804 - 1887  
Elizabeth Douglas Wise - - 1795 - 1871  
Martha Wise Riley - - 1799 - 1870

(2) General Cropper's Hat.

The Historical Society of the Eastern Shore of Virginia has many mementoes relating to General Cropper displayed in its Museum at Kerr Place, Onancock. Among them are his bed, his cradle, his cellaret, and his cockaded hat, dating from 1812. This hat was preserved in the family, and in the War Between the States it was in 'Rolleston', the Wise home near Norfolk. When Federal troops raided 'Rolleston', their General asked Miss Belle Stiles of Savannah, Georgia, if she would please return a 'Captured Hat' to the late owner's descendants, which she duly did.

Inscription on the tombstone of General John Cropper

In memory of

gen. JOHN CROPPER,  
eldest son of Sebastian and Sabra  
was born at Bowmans Folley in the  
County of Accomac E. S. of Virginia  
December 23rd 1755.

He was an officer in the revolutionary  
war and continued until the end

He died January 15th 1821 being 65  
years and 22 days old leaving a wife  
seven children and 10 grand children