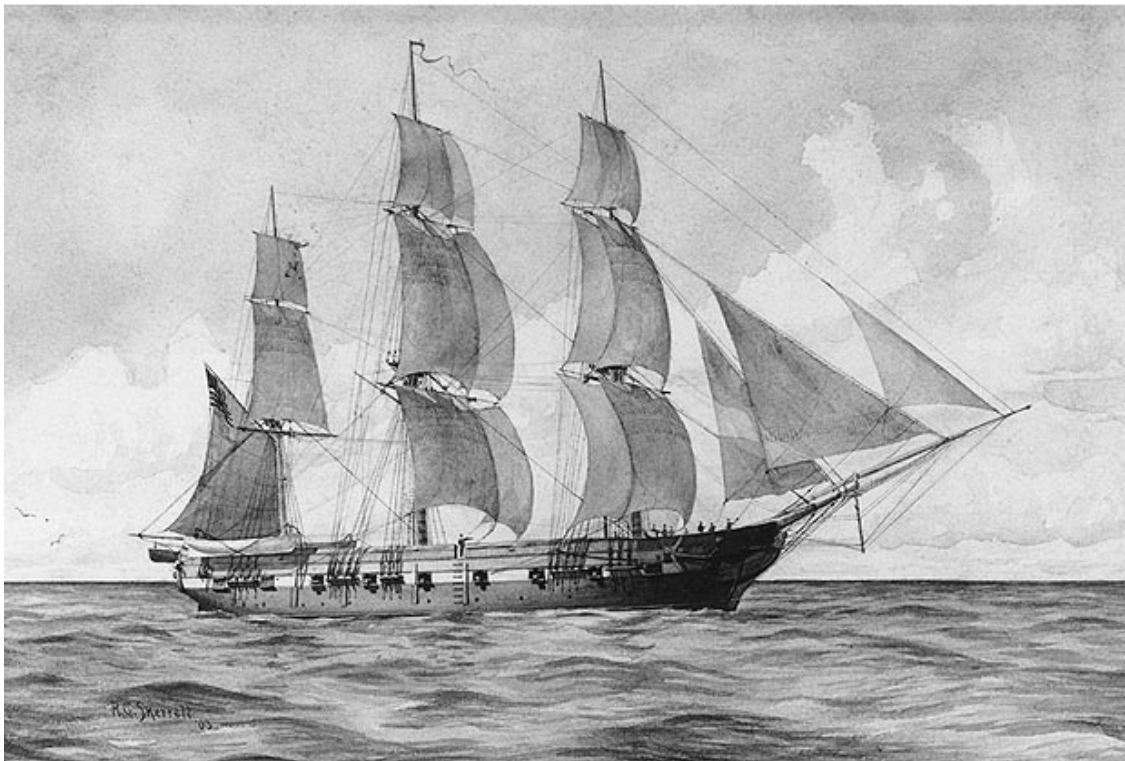


A Biographical Sketch of Presley Garner of Greenville County Va and Richland County, SC  
Revolutionary War Seaman and Planter.

By C Edwin Garner, Ph.D.

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16 Gun Sloop of War (USS Dale)

## **Presley Garner**

Presley Garner (10/26/1757-7/10/1837) was a resident of Brunswick County who moved to Richland County SC after Revolutionary War service. He did not own land in Brunswick or Greenville County. He appeared as a witness of Samuel Garner's sale of land to Brewer (see above) and signed the 1787 petition to alter boundaries between Brunswick and Greenville Counties.

His early adult life was spent away from Greenville County during the Revolution. According to Brumbaugh's Revolutionary Records Presley Garner served as seaman on the sloop of war, "*Tempest*" for three years during the Revolution.

The Virginia armed fleet for 1776 consisted of sixteen small craft adapted chiefly for service in the rivers of Virginia and in Chesapeake Bay. By 1779, the fleet had been expanded to over 35 craft. In 1778 the ship "*Tempest*" of 16 guns was built. Though large, the fleet was poorly armed, incompletely manned. Constantly undermanned, most of its vessels were therefore limited to service in the Chesapeake Bay.

Despite being poorly outfitted at the inception, the Navy offered an excellent opportunity for a young man from the hinterlands to advance rapidly. The General Assembly in the May session of 1779, as an inducement to enlistment, granted seamen and marines additional bounties and pensions. Recruits entering for the rest of the war were now to receive \$750 and one hundred acres of land. They were to be furnished upon enlistment, and once a year thereafter, with a complete suit of clothes.

The Chesapeake was not a backwater and Virginia's naval craft saw considerable action during the early war. During the first half of 1777 His Majesty's ship "*Ariadne*" captured the "*Mosquito*." About the same time the frigate "*Phoenix*" took the "*Raleigh*." The British made two raids into Virginia which were destructive both to the shipping of the state and to private individuals. The first was ordered by Clinton in the spring of 1779; the troops were under the command of Matthews and Collier. At the Gosport shipyard they destroyed five uncompleted vessels, three of which were frigates, besides a large quantity of masts, yards, timber, plank, iron, and other ships' stores. The shipyards on the Nansemond were looted; and twenty-two vessels with a considerable quantity of powder were taken or destroyed on the "South Branch of the navy." Suffolk was burned, and upwards of two thousand barrels of Continental pork and fifteen hundred barrels of flour were destroyed. In all one hundred and thirty vessels were burned.

With the movement of the War to the Southern theatre, there was renewed naval activity in Virginia in the years 1780 and 1781. Savannah and Charleston had surrendered by May, 1780 and consequently the lowlands of Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina were generally in the possession of the British. By mid 1780 British privateers and naval craft lay off the mouths of the Virginia rivers, and captured all her vessels that ventured towards the Bay or the sea.

To protect the Virginia coast the General Assembly came together in May, 1780 and passed "an act for putting the eastern frontier of this commonwealth into a posture of defence." This act called out the militia in the seaport counties, ordered the Governor and Council to direct the Commissioner of the Navy to immediately make ready for service the ships "*Thetis*," "*Tempest*," and "*Dragon*," the brig "*Jefferson*," and the galleys "*Henry*," "*Accomac*," and "*Diligence*." Marines and sailors who enlisted for three years each received a \$1000 bounty.

The *Tempest*, a sloop of war to which Presley Garner was assigned saw considerable action. She was outfitted with 16 guns, and was considered one of the most significant ships in the Virginia Navy. Built at Frazer's Ferry, the *Tempest* was captained at different times by Celey Saunders and John Markham (or Malcolm) with Lieutenants Micheal James, William Steele, and William Harwar Parker. She saw success in battle when she captured a British brig off Hog Island in 1779.

In April, 1781, the British, under Benedict Arnold and Major General William Phillips made their raid up the James, penetrating as far as Richmond. On April 21 and 22, a detachment under Lieutenant-Colonel Abercrombie destroyed the shipyard on the Chickahominy, including a number of naval craft and the warehouses. On April 27, at Osbornes Wharf near Farrar's Island on the James a few miles below Richmond, the Virginia fleet, commanded by James Maxwell, supported by two or three hundred militia upon the shore opposite the British army, drew up to oppose the enemy. It consisted of six ships, eight brigs, five sloops, two schooners, and several smaller craft. Its flagship was the *Tempest*, and other chief vessels included the *Renown* and *Jefferson*. General Arnold wrote of the battle:

*"Finding the enemy had a very considerable force in ships four miles above Osborne's drawn up in a line to oppose us, I sent a flag to the Commodore proposing to treat with him for the surrender of his fleet, which he refused, with the answer that he was determined to defend it to the last extremity. I immediately ordered two 6 and two 3-pounder brass field pieces to a bank of the river, nearly level with the water, and within one hundred yards of the Tempest, a twenty gun State ship, which immediately began to fire upon us, as did the Reknown of 26 guns, the Jefferson, a State Brigantine of 14 guns and several other armed ships and brigantines....the fire of our artillery ...took such place that the ships were soon obliged to strike their colors and the militia drove from the opposite shore."*

A cannon shot cut the anchor cable of the *Tempest*, causing her to drift and exposed the crew to fire from bow to stern. The crew abandoned her, sparking panic among the other ships. After a short engagement, the Virginians scuttled or set fire to several of their vessels and fled to the opposite shore. None of the fleet escaped. The British captured twelve badly damaged vessels, which the Virginians were unable to destroy, and some of the crews. After a battle of less than one hour, the only vessel that remained in the Virginia navy was the armed boat *Liberty*.

The officers and seamen of the Virginia navy, thrown out of employment by the destruction of the fleet, aided the allied forces at the siege of Yorktown in by providing river pilots, lookout boats, collecting supplies and transporting troops. Soon after the surrender of Cornwallis the Virginia General Assembly, recognizing that "during the continuance of the present expensive war it is necessary to husband the resources of the state with the utmost economy," dismissed almost all the officers and seamen, the Commissioner of the Navy, the chaplains, surgeons, pay masters, and all others on the naval staff.

Thus Presley Garner was freed of his duties following the Revolution richer in experience than many of his family members and neighbors and in possession of 100 acres of bounty land and \$1750 in cash.

In September 1783 Presley was issued a land warrant for 100 acres for his service to the Revolution as a member of the Virginia State Navy (Figure 8). He was never listed in census records of Kentucky so he may have sold this property, as was common.

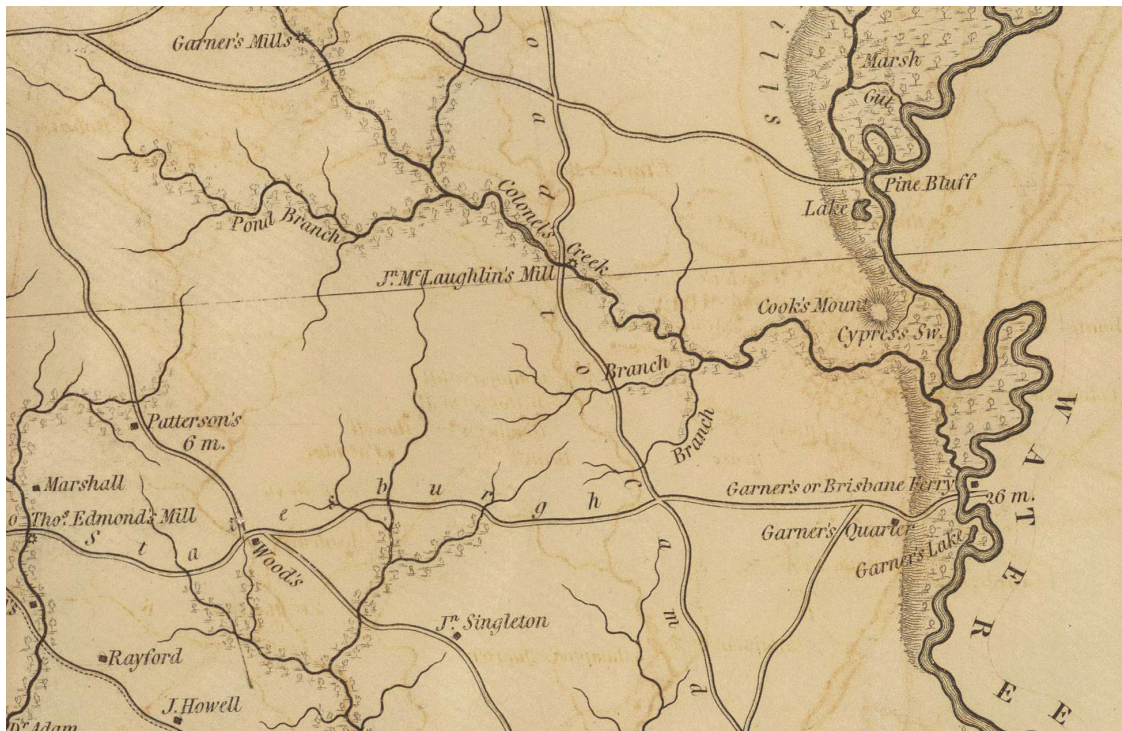
Presley Garner returned home and married Betsy Avent on 27 Mar 1786 in Brunswick County, Virginia. On June 24, 1788, Presley Garner was listed in the Brunswick County Tax with 6 tithable slaves.



*The Battle at Osborns*—Key: A, B, the Queen's Rangers; C, the eightieth and seventy-sixth regiments; D, E, the British artillery, two six and two three pounders; F, Yagers; G, the American vessels; H, the American militia. The ship *Tempest* is at center, closest to the Yagers marked F. (Lossing, 1855)

According to descendents Presley Garner settled in Richland Co., SC and brought his nephews Edmund L. Garner, who served as overseer, and Thomas L. Garner. In the 1790 census, he had 2 males on his property and 4 females, 14 slaves and 4,000 acres of land in Richland, Co., SC.

Presley Garner was a very wealthy landowner and also possessed one of the most important ferries in South Carolina. There were a number of private ferries on both rivers but the public ones shown on Mills' map of 1825 were McCord's Ferry on the Congaree and Brisbane's or Garner's Ferry on the Wateree. McCord's Ferry, formerly called Wright's, was established by John McCord in 1766 for fourteen years and took its name from its owner. Brisbane's Ferry was named for Adam Fowler Brisbane who on November 16, 1783, had the ferry established at a place formerly called Simmons Upper Ferry. The Garner family was evidently living on land adjoining the ferry, since John Garner died in 1792 and is buried on the place. Garner's Inn, a stagecoach inn, where travelers stopped on their way to the Ferry to be carried across the Wateree River by John Garner, was a quaint old place. Though torn down now pictures showed it as a large building, having four rooms on the first floor and two rooms connected by porches on the second floor. Pressley Garner ran the ferry from 1814 and the Inn which was known as Gamer's Inn. In 1840 Sarah Garner, his widow, willed to Thomas Garner, Presley's nephew, three hundred acres of land and the ferry. There is no record of when the name was changed from Brisbane's to Garner's Ferry. The road from Columbia, first called "the road to Stateburgh" took the name of the Ferry and is called Gamer's Ferry Road. Named for Pressly Garner, who from 1810-39, operated the ferry across, the Wateree River, his residence being "Garner's Quarter" on the Richland side of the river. He was succeeded in this enterprise by his widow, Sarah and later by his nephew, Thomas L. (Names in S. C., Vol. I, 2: 5. Tlios. M. Stubbs.)



Location of Presley Garner's property: Garner's Ferry, Garner's Quarter, Garner's Mill and Garner's Lake, Richland County, SC (1831 Mill's Atlas,)

Presley Garner's tomb stone is on his estate near the village of East-over, S. C. and not far from the Wateree River, about twenty miles from Columbia, S. C. It bears this inscription.

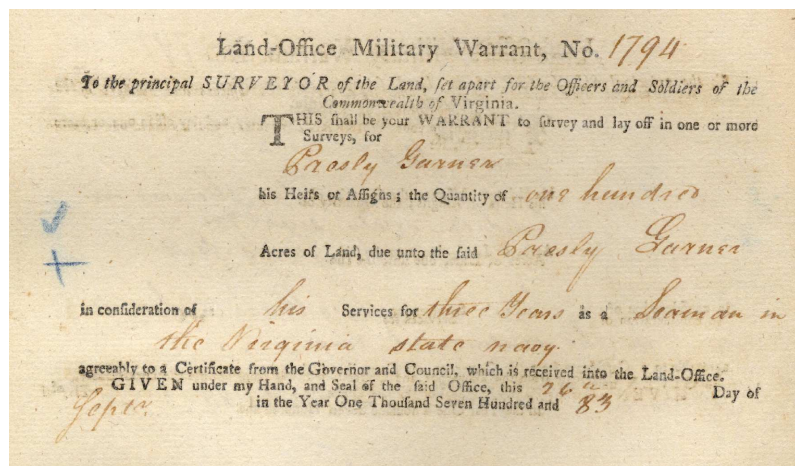
Sacred to the Memory of  
Mr. Presley Garner Who departed this life  
on the 10th of July 1837  
Aged 80 years, 8 months and 14 days.  
In memory of a consort dear  
A mourning wife placed this marble here.

By Betsy he had issue; Elizabeth who married Abraham Sheppard, Jr. and Rebecca, who married Abraham Sheppard, Jr. after her sister's death, and 2nd, after Sheppard's death, Cyrus Morse. She married a third time but the husband is unknown to the author.

His second marriage was to Sarah Harris by whom he had no children. Her will is on file in Columbia, SC 3/21/1840. It and the settlement of Presley Garner's estate 1/11/1838 bears out the above genealogy. In Sarah Harris Garner's will she leaves Presley Garner's watch to Gale Hampton, son of Dr. John Jefferson Hampton. That watch is now in the possession of descendents.

"Whereas PRESLEY GARNER, late of Richland District, died possessed of Land ...2,444 acres on both sides of the Wateree River partly in Richland District and partly in Sumter District bounded by lands of John BRADLEY ..... leaving his widow SARAH GARNER, his dau REBECCA, wife of CYRUS MORSE, his granddaughters JEMIIMA SEAY, wife of Thomas SEAY, & ELIZABETH HAMPTON, wife of Dr. John J. HAMPTON both being children of his deceased daughter, his heirs at law---7 March 1838.

(Will Book D, page 306, Richland County, South Carolina.)



1783 Presley Garner Kentucky Land Warrant (KY Secretary of State Records)



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