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"A MOST SERIOUS WOUND": *The Memorial of George Farragut*

By Robert L. Caleo*

America's first admiral and storied naval hero, David Glasgow Farragut, was born near Knoxville in 1801 and was joined to water from the outset by homesite and heritage. His father, George, operated a ferry service at the family's log house on the Tennessee River and was already an experienced sailor who had served in the United States Navy during the American Revolution.¹ The son of Antonio Farragut, also a seaman, George Farragut was born in 1755 on the Island of Minorca off the southeastern coast of Spain, and no doubt played a critical role in steering his own son toward the sea.² Indeed, George Farragut's life story is an odyssey-like series of adventures that began in the Mediterranean, continued through the American Revolution and the first fragile years of the young American nation, and then ended as a retired U.S. Navy gunboat commander.

While these remarkable series of adventures must have had an impact on the young David Farragut, he admittedly knew little of the details, having been separated from his family at an early age after his mother died.³ Indeed, the story of the life of George Farragut might never have emerged were it not for the interest in

* The author is a retired businessman and an instructor in family history at Ocean County College in Toms River, New Jersey.

¹ Marshall DeLancey Haywood, "Major George Farragut," *Gulf States Historical Magazine* 2 (September 1903): 94-95. The river in front of the Farragut home site was originally known as the Holston, but in 1890 the Tennessee General Assembly determined that stretch of the river was actually part of the Tennessee River and it was renamed accordingly.

² Loyall Farragut, *The Life of David Glasgow Farragut: First Admiral of the United States* (New York, 1879), 1, 4; It is believed George received some early schooling in Barcelona and was introduced to seafaring in the Mediterranean as a cabin boy on his father's ship. See Juan Rotger, "Sineu en la genealogia de David Glasgow Farragut," *Panorama Balear* 6 (1956) and Guillermo Florit Piedrabuena, "Menorca, El Primer Almirante de los EE.UU. David Farragut," *Panorama Balear* 3 (1953). The primary sources for the Rotger article were the parish books of Sineu, a village in Majorca, the largest of the Balearic Islands. George Farragut was born on the nearby island of Minorca. Sineu had been his father's birthplace and home to the Farragut line for a century and a half.

³ David G. Farragut to Lyman C. Draper, September 20, 1853, Draper Manuscripts, Wisconsin Historical Society, reprinted in *American Historical Review* 9 (April 1904): 538-541, hereafter referred to as *AHR*. Draper (1815-1891) was an historian-librarian whose life's work was writing biographies of frontier heroes. He sought much of his information from their living contemporaries and descendants, as he did in soliciting this letter from David Glasgow Farragut concerning George Farragut.

Farragut genealogy sparked decades later by David's daring feats in the American Civil War. Following the death of the admiral five years after the end of the war, his son Loyall compiled the seminal account of his hero-father's life, including a chapter on the family's ancestors but with only meager details about his grandfather George.⁴ Not until 1929, with the appearance of an article by the noted Tennessee historian Samuel Cole Williams, did the full story of the life of George Farragut begin to emerge. In the very first issue of the East Tennessee Historical Society's *Publications* (now *The Journal of East Tennessee History*), Williams brought to light a letter written by George Farragut to the Secretary of the Navy in 1814 to appeal his dismissal from active duty at age fifty-nine. Buried with the letter in the Navy Department's archives was an attachment—George Farragut's own summary of his life and services, poignantly headed *The Memorial of George Farragut, late a sailing Master in the navy of the U. States*. Williams included with his article an edited version of a portion of Farragut's *Memorial*, revealing the remarkable series of events that characterized the life of George Farragut.⁵

Unfortunately, that first issue of the *Publications* has long been out of print and the few remaining copies are not generally available. Yet George Farragut's sketchy, unpolished autobiography is a unique portrayal of a man in constant search of adventure, and it remains worthy of attention. When put in historical context, it reveals that his lust for adventure was satisfied in some of the more momentous events and perilous settings of his time. Obviously, Farragut's motivation for composing his self-memorial was to impress the Secretary of the Navy with his American service, and to influence him, as stated, to "restore an old officer to his Command." Therefore, he included only these few lines about his experiences as a young seaman in the Mediterranean, but they connote an early encounter with history: "From the year 1765 – untill [sic] 72 your Memorialist was employed principally in the Mediterranean Seas and among other duties, whilst in the Russian Service in 71, he assisted in the destruction of the Turkish Fleet at Shimea, and was one of the Crew of the Fire Ship, which introduced the flames among the Turkish Fleet." Apparently, Farragut had participated as a mercenary in one of the most celebrated naval victories in Russian history – the entrapment and burning of a superior Turkish fleet at Chesma on the Aegean Sea.⁶ He likely was recruited for the mission at Port Mahon in Minorca. The island was then under British rule, and the Russian fleet, mustered for Catherine the Great with Britain's help, was allowed to stop there on its way to battle.⁷

Both a dreamer and an adventurer, as a Minorcan genealogist once described

⁴ Loyall Farragut, *Life of David Glasgow Farragut*, 1-7.

⁵ Samuel Cole Williams, "George Farragut," East Tennessee Historical Society's *Publications* 1 (1929): 77-94.

⁶ Charles O. Paullin, "The Father of Admiral Farragut," *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 13 (January 1930): 40n.

⁷ Walter K. Kelly, *The History of Russia: From the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (London, 1855), 2:54-57.



Admiral David Glasgow Farragut at the Battle of Mobile Bay. The history included in this image is part of the Farragut Memorial.

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Admiral David Glasgow Farragut, the first admiral in the United States Navy and the hero of the Battle of Mobile Bay during the Civil War. Although he was born in East Tennessee, Farragut's family history included a strong tradition of seafaring as exemplified by his father, George Farragut.
From the Library of Congress.



Battle of Chios (Chesma) on 24 June, 1770, by Ivan Aivazovsky. The Battle of Chesma, depicted here in an 1848 painting, was perhaps the first battle in which young George Farragut participated.

From Wikimedia Commons, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Chios_aivaz.jpg

rebellion in the North, were planning to subdue the southern colonies. Charleston and Savannah, Georgia, two key ports about one hundred miles apart, were primary targets.¹⁰ No doubt, Farragut's cargo and he were welcomed by the colonists, who were forming a navy to defend against expected British attacks from the sea. As he related, he was "appointed a First Lieutenant in the State Navy of South Carolina in 78" after performing well for a privateer – a trader whose vessel had been armed and drafted into war service.

In the Navy, he played a dual role, helping to build its galleys – shallow-draft vessels designed to defend harbors – and then commanding one of them in key battles

him, Farragut told that early in 1773 he "shaped his course for the American Seas."⁸ There he began as a trader in the Caribbean, but his business ambitions were superseded by idealism when he learned of the American colonists' revolt against British authority. Immediately, he decided to "assist with his Life and Fortune" in their struggle for independence.⁹

He joined the American Revolution at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1776, with a boatload of arms procured in the West Indies. Probably pointed to that colony by its agents seeking weapons in the Caribbean, he entered the war at a most critical time and place. The British, believing they had checked the

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⁸ J. Rotger cites this description of young George Farragut by another Farragut family genealogist (Guillermo Florit Piedrabuena, 1953): "From the time of his birth until his seventeenth birthday . . . the only thing we know is that he was a dreamer and an adventurer." Rotger, 10.

⁹ Desmond Gregory, *Minorca, the Illusory Prize: A History of the British Occupation of Minorca Between 1708 and 1802* (Cranbury, NJ, Toronto and London, 1990). The author, though not specifically mentioning George Farragut, provides the following perspective about his likely motivations: Presumably, he was influenced to leave Minorca by the drop off of sea trade there. He probably heard of more profitable markets in America (see Chap. 7). His passion for the colonists' cause undoubtedly sprung from his own exposure to foreign rule. In Minorca, he and his family had lived under the often-oppressive governments installed by Great Britain and France, which took turns occupying the strategically located island (see Chap. 3).

¹⁰ Benson J. Lossing, *The Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution* (New York, 1860), 2:544; Henry Lumpkin, *From Savannah to Yorktown: The American Revolution in the South* (Columbia, SC, 1981), 247.

¹¹ Gardner W. Allen, *A N*

¹² Lumpkin, *From Savan*

¹³ Lumpkin, *From Savan* after their victory at Cha and controlled, the rest o

¹⁴ Hugh F. Rankin, *Fran*

¹⁵ Lossing, *Pictorial Field*

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He joined the American revolution at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1776, with a boatload of arms procured in the West Indies. Probably pointed to the colony by its agents seeking weapons in the Caribbean, he entered the war at a most critical time and place. The British, believing they had checked the southern colonies. Charleston, hundred miles apart, were proudly welcomed by the colonists, repelling British attacks from the sea. In the State Navy of South Carolina – a trader whose vessel had its galleys – shallow-draft vessels – one of them in key battles

Farragut family genealogist (Guillermo) on his twentieth birthday . . . the only thing we

Occupation of Minorca Between 1708 though not specifically mentioning motivations: Presumably, he was influenced by the prospect of more profitable markets in the West Indies sprung from his own exposure to the oppressive governments installed by the British on the island (see Chap. 3).

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at Savannah and Charleston. From his brief description it can be concluded that he fought in two bitter losses to greater British forces – the capture of Savannah in 1778 and the siege of Charleston in 1780.

The siege of Charleston was considered Britain's most telling victory in the war. The city, then America's fourth largest, was surrounded by land and sea. South Carolina's fleet, even though reinforced by a Continental Navy squadron, was no match for Britain's ships which easily penetrated the harbor. A sacrificial strategy was attempted to keep the attackers from moving up a river alongside the city and bombarding it. Eleven defending vessels, including Farragut's, were sunk to form a barricade in the river mouth. Their cannons and crews were put ashore to bolster the land batteries.¹¹

In effect, Farragut then switched from seaman to soldier. He wrote that he "was assigned the command of a battery" and "burnt as much powder, and with as much annoyance to the Enemy, as any other officer in the American Army." The colonists at Charleston held out for a month, but ultimately the British took the city and some 5,000 prisoners. With other captured officers, Farragut was shipped north to Philadelphia where the British and Americans were exchanging prisoners.¹²

When freed, he returned to the war in the South. By that time, enemy land forces under Charles Lord Cornwallis were beginning the second stage of Britain's southern strategy – thrusting upward from the footholds they had secured at Charleston and Savannah, heading for North Carolina and eventually Virginia.¹³ Farragut's *Memorial* shows he connected with some noted figures as well as historic happenings. Once back in South Carolina after his imprisonment, he served for a time under Francis Marion, the legendary "Swamp Fox," whose hit-and-run guerillas slowed the British advance through the state by disrupting their supply lines.¹⁴ In January 1781, he was at Cowpens, an area of woodlands cleared for cattle pasturing near the border between the Carolinas. There, British and American forces clashed in a classic battle of infantry and cavalry that is sometimes described as a turning point in the Revolution. Farragut had apparently joined one of the militia units headed for the fight, in which troops from five states combined to defeat the British.¹⁵

None of the Americans had a more precarious role than the South Carolina riflemen under Andrew Pickens, with whom Farragut served. They were positioned to meet the first British infantry charge, with orders to hold their fire until the enemy

¹¹ Gardner W. Allen, *A Naval History of the American Revolution* (Boston and New York, 1913) 2:493-497.

¹² Lumpkin, *From Savannah to Yorktown*, 49; Williams, "George Farragut," 80.

¹³ Lumpkin, *From Savannah to Yorktown*, 251. Cornwallis, who took command of British forces in the South after their victory at Charleston, strongly believed that Virginia was his decisive target: if it could be seized and controlled, the rest of the southern colonies would be easily subdued.

¹⁴ Hugh F. Rankin, *Francis Marion: The Swamp Fox* (New York, 1973), 110-111.

¹⁵ Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 430n; Lumpkin, *From Savannah to Yorktown*, 116, 123.



Colonel [William Augustine] Washington at the Battle of Cowpens, January 1781. Copy of print by S. H. Gimber. Upon being exchanged following his capture at Charleston, George Farragut volunteered in a militia regiment and participated in the pivotal Battle of Cowpens. From the National Archives.

ahead.¹⁷ A series of confrontations with American troops and raids by guerillas further eroded his forces on the way to his climactic surrender to George Washington at Yorktown, Virginia.

Farragut was among the raiders. Immediately after Cowpens, he headed for North Carolina, following the course of the war. He saw some early action there as an artilleryman, then formed a volunteer cavalry unit, which, he wrote, "harassed the rear of Cornwallis' army in his march thro' Carolina towards Virginia, & captured many of the Stragglers." His initiatives on behalf of North Carolina won him a commission in a newly created State Cavalry, and qualified him years afterward for a key military-aide role in the development of the offshoot State of Tennessee. For Farragut, the war ended in mopping up the enemy's residue – British troops left behind in the Carolinas and the colonists who had sided with them. Then, "poor and pennyless," as he bemoaned himself, "he again repaired to the Sea for a living."¹⁸

Some seven years later, however, at age 35, he was lured inland to the American frontier by William Blount, a man he described as "his old acquaintance." Blount had been appointed by President George Washington to serve as Governor of the newly formed Southwest Territory, created from lands ceded to the federal government by North Carolina. Blount had served in the North Carolina militia and the State Assembly, and was a partner in a family business engaged in trading with the

reached point-blank range. Pickens' marksmen temporarily checked the charge by aiming mostly at the officers leading it. Then, as planned, they withdrew to a less exposed location from which they sniped at the enemy's cavalry, even shooting the horse of the top British officer out from under him.¹⁶ The battle ended with heavy British losses of men, weapons and horses. It did not stop Cornwallis from reaching North Carolina, but seriously weakened his army for what lay

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¹⁹ William H. Masterson. tory post by Washington Carolina. The territory v liams, "The Farraguts an nario to explain the initia of a vessel owned by Blou

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²² Williams, "The Farrag the West, 118. Although these charges were never improper. According to business (to supplement

²³ William Blount to John Papers, 1790-1795 (Rale ness ventures. His brothe His papers include his co Ogden was a merchant a

¹⁶ Lumpkin, 127-131

¹⁷ Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book*, 436.

¹⁸ Hayward in "Major George Farragut" (92-93) reveals that the State Records of North Carolina show Farragut was owed \$300 for military services performed, but did not begin to receive payments from the state until three years after the war.

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After Cowpens, he headed for the South. He saw some early action there in a cavalry unit, which, he wrote, "harried thro' Carolina towards Virginia, in the name of North Carolina, in the name of the Cavalry, and qualified him years before the development of the offshoot State of Georgia by picking up the enemy's residue - British colonists who had sided with them. He himself, "he again repaired to the

He was lured inland to the American frontier and as "his old acquaintance." Blount was sent to Washington to serve as Governor of the new lands ceded to the federal government by the North Carolina militia and the business engaged in trading with the

West Indies. Any of those activities could have introduced him to Farragut during or after the Revolution.¹⁹

Blount's responsibilities as territorial governor included the office of Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and his many responsibilities included security for the citizens and for the new settlers who were arriving almost daily. He needed a militia to protect early settlers from attacks by Cherokees and other hostile tribes. In Farragut, he no doubt saw the heart and stomach for such a job and granted him one of his first cavalry officer commissions in 1790. Sixteen months later, he promoted him to Muster Master responsible for assembling and training troops in the territory's eastern district.²⁰

Farragut provided just a snippet of information about his experiences as a frontiersman. He only wrote that he "served on an Expedition against the Cherokees in 1793, under Genl. Sevier." This was Sevier's Etowah Campaign, undertaken in response to a Cherokee offensive originally aimed at Knoxville, the town Blount created as his territorial capital. As the brigadier general of the territory's eastern district, Sevier led some 600 mounted soldiers on strikes against Cherokee villages all the way south to Georgia. His offensive and one undertaken by troops in the Nashville area the following year did much to lessen Indian hostilities and draw more settlers to the territory.²¹

Blount's personal correspondence tells that Farragut was often a confidential courier for the governor on both official matters as well as personal affairs. From the outset, Blount relied on Farragut, whom he called "Farrowgood," to carry funds and documents for land dealings along with his executive message and orders, within and outside the territory.²² "I shall leave this on Tuesday or Wednesday accompanied by Ogden and Farrowgood," Blount wrote to one of his brothers as he prepared to depart North Carolina for his first tour of the Southwest Territory in 1790.²³ But shortly

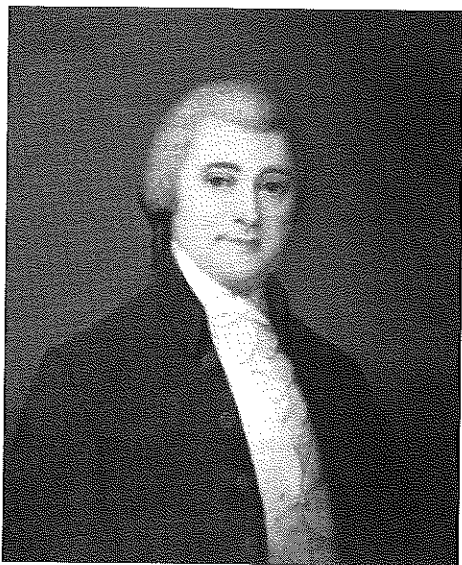
¹⁹ William H. Masterson, *William Blount* (Baton Rouge, 1954), 177. Blount was given the Southwest Territory post by Washington because of his legislative and military experience, and political influence, in North Carolina. The territory was admitted into the Union as the State of Tennessee in 1796. Samuel Cole Williams, "The Farraguts and Tennessee," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 5 (December 1946): 322. A likely scenario to explain the initial relationship between Blount and Farragut is that after the war Farragut was master of a vessel owned by Blount and his brothers in their importing and exporting business.

²⁰ Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States* (Washington, DC, 1936), 4:438, 447.

²¹ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West* (New York, 1896), 4:162-164, 169-170; John H. DeWitt, "Journal of John Sevier," *Tennessee Historical Magazine* 3 (October 1919): 162.

²² Williams, "The Farraguts and Tennessee," 323; Masterson, *William Blount*, 68-70; Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*, 118. Although there were allegations that Blount misappropriated federal funds for his own use, these charges were never proven and Blount's profit-making while governor was not otherwise considered improper. According to Roosevelt, government officials on the frontier were allowed to engage in private business (to supplement their small salaries), provided it did not interfere with their public duties.

²³ William Blount to John Gray Blount, September 5, 1790, in Alice Barnwell Keith, ed., *The John Gray Blount Papers, 1790-1795* (Raleigh, NC, 1959), 2:104-105. John Gray was the general manager of the Blount business ventures. His brothers (and partners), William and Thomas, were more active in state and federal politics. His papers include his correspondence during the time William was governor of the Southwest Territory. Titus Ogden was a merchant and a business associate from North Carolina who settled in the Southwest Territory.



William Blount, Governor of the Southwest Territory, had possibly employed George Farragut in his North Carolina shipping business in the years immediately after the Revolution. Farragut later followed Blount to the territory and eventually operated a ferry on the Holston River. *Courtesy of the Tennessee State Museum, Tennessee Historical Society Collection.*

end of his first year in office, he arranged a face-to-face meeting with the Cherokee chiefs and the Treaty of the Holston, concluded in July 1791, set firm boundaries between Indian and settler lands. Farragut, in 1792, assisted the surveyors appointed to mark them.²⁴ Unfortunately, the boundaries were little respected, and hostilities resumed, even worsened. They did not diminish until General Sevier's 1793 campaign against the Cherokee Nation – the expedition in which Farragut participated.

By 1796, the Southwest Territory's population exceeded 76,000, well over the number qualifying it for admission to the Union as Tennessee, the sixteenth state. Sevier was elected its governor; Blount became a U.S. Senator.²⁵ Farragut for a while was a landed citizen, family man and contractor in Knoxville, the state's first capital. He had purchased property, married a North Carolina woman, Elizabeth

after departing, Blount was diverted north to Virginia to be sworn into office by President Washington. He sent the trusted Farragut west to the Nashville area with the public and private papers he had intended to deliver personally.²⁴

His unflappable courier made the journey of over 400 miles, through Cherokee hunting grounds, with only four companions, whereas Blount went with "twenty-five well chosen, equipped and armed men" when he made his delayed trip over the same route two months later. "The Reason I take a Guard several weak Parties have been killed and plundered on the Kentuckie Road as many as twelve since my arrival," he explained to his brother.²⁵

Cherokee hostilities were persistent problems for Blount. He was directed by federal policy to pacify the Indians, not attack them. By the

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²⁸ Haywood, "Major George Farragut," *Annals of the Maryland Historical Society* (Annapolis, 1941), 5-6. To Lewis, Farragut could be a member of the North Carolina militia, while serving during the Revolution.

²⁹ Farragut to Draper, September 1791.

³⁰ Williams, "George Farragut," 82.

³¹ C. Joseph Bernardo and John H. Harrisburg, PA, 1955), 100-101.

³² Williams, "George Farragut," (Jackson, MS, 1880), 250.

³³ Williams, "George Farragut," 82.

²⁴ Masterson, *William Blount*, 182.

²⁵ William Blount to John Gray Blount, November 27, 1790, *Blount Papers*, 148-149.

²⁶ Williams, "George Farragut," 82.

²⁷ Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*, 170.

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exceeded 76,000, well over the population of Tennessee, the sixteenth state. Farragut, U.S. Senator.²⁷ Farragut for a time lived in Knoxville, the state's first capital, and a Carolina woman, Elizabeth

Shine, and earned a living by building homes in and around the sprouting town.²⁸ But it wasn't long before the man described by friends as brave, reckless and well-suited to pioneer life moved his family from the town to the wilder outlands.²⁹

He built a log home with rifle slots on a river near the main road between Knoxville and Nashville, an area that had not too many years earlier been subject to occasional Indian attacks. There, in an area still visited by Indians, George Farragut farmed and operated a public ferry. It was also there that, in 1801, his wife gave birth to their second son, who six decades afterward would become the naval hero, David Glasgow Farragut.³⁰

As settled as he was in Tennessee, with four children and another on the way, Farragut heeded the call for naval duty in 1807. America seemed fated for its second war with Great Britain. The British, already at war with France, were seizing American ships and seamen trading with the French and their West Indian colonies. Farragut was commissioned, in his words, "a sailing Master in the Navy" and "assigned the command of a Gun Boat." His new station was New Orleans, one of the key ports designated for protection from possible British attack.³¹

His commission was no doubt stimulated by William C. C. Claiborne, a Tennessee judge and legislator whom President Thomas Jefferson had appointed governor of the Territory of Orleans. Claiborne clearly knew and respected Farragut. Years earlier, as a Tennessee congressman, he had personally supported a petition for military pay owed the former Muster Master. And, as later events would suggest, the new territorial governor may have foreseen a diplomatic role for the Spanish immigrant in an area that had been peopled by Spain as well as France.³²

Soon after Farragut settled his family in their new location, his second daughter was born. Months later, his wife succumbed to yellow fever, then a common disease in New Orleans, leaving him with five children.³³ One of them, however, had already been placed with the U.S. Navy, and another would follow. Before his wife died, Farragut had obtained a midshipman appointment at the New Orleans Naval Station for his eldest son, William, age 11. After her death, Farragut accepted the

²⁸ Haywood, "Major George Farragut," 94; Charles Lee Lewis, *David Glasgow Farragut: Admiral in the Making* (Annapolis, 1941), 5-6. In his "Memorial," George Farragut cited 1795 as his marriage year. According to Lewis, Farragut could have first met Elizabeth Shine, the daughter of John Shine, a captain in the North Carolina militia, while serving as a courier on missions for William Blount, or during his service as a soldier during the Revolution.

²⁹ Farragut to Draper, September 20, 1853, *AHR* 9 (April 1904): 540.

³⁰ Williams, "George Farragut," 84.

³¹ C. Joseph Bernardo and Eugene H. Bacon, *American Military Policy: Its Development Since 1775* (Harrisburg, PA, 1955), 100-104.

³² Williams, "George Farragut," 86; J.F.H. Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State, 1619-1817* (Jackson, MS, 1880), 250-251.

³³ Williams, "George Farragut," 86-87.

offer of the Station's commander to raise one of his other youngsters. His eight-year-old boy, the future admiral, volunteered to join the family of Commodore David Porter, and two years later – with Porter's patronage – he was likewise admitted to the Navy.³⁴

Young Farragut left New Orleans with his new family in 1810. Over 40 years later, he recalled, "From that time to the day of his death, Commodore Porter was a father to me and I never saw my father again." In fact, after a few years with the Porters, he changed his given first name (James) to that of his foster parent (David).³⁵

Six months after his son left, the elder Farragut, normally charged with patrolling waters near New Orleans, was given a special surveillance mission. Governor Claiborne had been ordered by President James Madison (Jefferson's successor) to annex West Florida, a neighboring territory still under Spanish rule, but believed by the United States to be part of the land stipulated in its Louisiana Purchase.³⁶

A rebellion by settlers in the disputed area had prompted Madison to seize what the United States had failed to gain through diplomatic negotiations with Spain. The rebels, after overthrowing the Spanish government, first declared themselves independent, then applied for admission to the United States as a separate state. Instead, Claiborne, following the President's orders, began the takeover process – deploying troops to establish the various parts of West Florida as Territory of Orleans parishes (counties).

Farragut, who already owned property in West Florida, became an emissary for the governor in an unruly settlement at Pascagoula on the Gulf Coast, some 100 miles from New Orleans. "Captain Farragut is well acquainted with the coast and the inhabitants, understands the Spanish language, and is thoroughly reliable in any position," reasoned Claiborne.³⁷

At Pascagoula, the rebels were defiant. They greeted Farragut by raising their own flag. When he reported this to Claiborne, he was sent back to West Florida with William Flood, a leading New Orleans citizen, to hasten the annexation. They were armed with Madison's proclamation plus Claiborne's documents of implementation – ordinances establishing the parishes of Biloxi and Pascagoula along with commissions to be conferred on citizens who could qualify as Justices of the Peace and maintain law and order. Unexpectedly, Farragut became one of those Justices of the Peace. When he and Flood reached Pascagoula, they lacked a candidate for the position. "Finding no one able to read and write in the Pascagoula settlement, and the inhabitants expressing great confidence in and attach-

³⁴ Lewis, *David Glasgow Farragut*, 17-19, 23-24.

³⁵ Farragut to Draper, September 20, 1853, *AHR* 9 (April 1904): 540; Lewis, *David Glasgow Farragut*, 7-8, 308-309n.

³⁶ Claiborne, *Mississippi*, 304-305.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 306n.

ment for Capt. George for the parish," Flood

Nearing the end of Farragut was semi-retired at Pascagoula, where, as he was willing to enter on active duty as a magistrate, living on a plantation at the river's entrance into the Mississippi Territory.

To his chagrin, the United States was at war with England. Secretary of the Navy John C. Calhoun, an Individual on whose life is for the present, a memorial, and do to his health had implored names such as Claiborne, pleaded, to "restore an

Characteristically, concluding, late in 1810, forces, then preparing who knew Jackson, a some 50 miles of coast the Louisiana city.⁴²

He was not the only children; my Eldest serving I believed, on Farragut is a midshipman of the *Essex*, and the papers the honorable Farragut had read a public *Essex* against two British Young Farragut was s

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 307.

³⁹ Lewis, *David Glasgow Farragut*.

⁴⁰ Williams, "George Farragut."

⁴¹ Haywood, "Major George."

⁴² Williams, "The Farraguts."

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ment for Capt. George Farragut ... I prevailed on him to accept the commission for the parish," Flood wrote to Claiborne.³⁸

Nearing the end of his military career at age 56 and admittedly in "bad health," Farragut was semi-retired by the Navy in 1811. He was transferred to the Bay of Pascagoula, where, as he wrote, "whenever his health permitted" he was "ready and willing to enter on active Service." Meanwhile, he fulfilled his appointed role as local magistrate, living on a 900-acre plantation alongside the Pascagoula River, close to the river's entrance into the bay.³⁹ Presumably, he remained a Territory of Orleans magistrate until the State of Louisiana was formed in 1812. His land then fell within the Mississippi Territory where he continued as a county magistrate.⁴⁰

To his chagrin, the Navy Department judged him unfit for duty in 1814 when America was at war with Britain.⁴¹ Not willing to accept dismissal, he appealed to the Secretary of the Navy for reactivation, beginning: "The Enclosed memorial is from an Individual on whose feelings you have inflicted a most serious wound, & whose life is for the present, made miserable. Have the goodness I pray you to read his memorial, and do to him as you would be done by." While he assured the Secretary that his health had improved, and also offered some compelling personal references — names such as Claiborne, Sevier and Blount — he could not persuade the Navy, as he pleaded, to "restore an old officer to his command, & to his happiness."

Characteristically, though, he found a way to serve. As the War of 1812 was concluding, late in 1814, he volunteered to scout for General Andrew Jackson's forces, then preparing for an expected British attack on New Orleans. Farragut, who knew Jackson, a former Southwest Territory attorney, was assigned to patrol some 50 miles of coastline thought to be a likely track for enemy ships approaching the Louisiana city.⁴²

He was not the only Farragut in the war. In his *Memorial* he wrote: "I have five children; my Eldest son William A C Farragut is a Midshipman in the navy, & serving I believed, on board the new Sloop of War Frolic; my second Son James G Farragut is a midshipman on Command, under that Gallant officer, Captain Porter of the Essex, and the happiest moment of my Life, was, when I noticed in the public papers the honorable mention Captain Porter made of my Boy." Apparently, Farragut had read a published account of the celebrated sea battle of the U.S. frigate *Essex* against two British warships in which 12-year-old James (David) had fought. Young Farragut was specifically named as one of three midshipmen who had per-

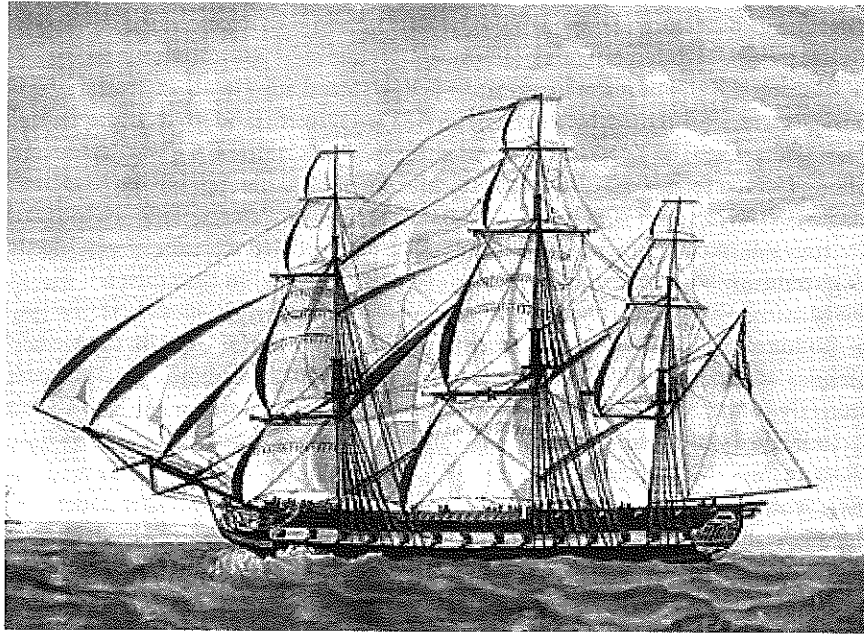
³⁸ Ibid., 307.

³⁹ Lewis, *David Glasgow Farragut*, 18.

⁴⁰ Williams, "George Farragut," 89n.

⁴¹ Haywood, "Major George Farragut," 97-98.

⁴² Williams, "The Farraguts and Tennessee," 325-326



A stylized version of the frigate USS Essex from about 1799. It was on this ship that midshipman David Farragut, at the age of twelve, first distinguished himself in battle. George Farragut later claimed it was "the happiest day of my life" when he learned of his son's heroism.

From Wikimedia Commons, <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Frigate-essex-1799.jpg>

formed commendably under fire.⁴³

Farragut's own fortunes waned following his discharge from the Navy. His service to the nation ended with a lookout role miles from the center of action, New Orleans, where Jackson eventually defeated the British. "I regret not being with you at New Orleans," he wrote to the future president soon after the battle. He also told Jackson he was destitute, farming his plantation without a horse to support himself and the children remaining with him.⁴⁴ One of his children, a third son, George, would accidentally drown several months later, at age 10. Two years after that, Farragut succumbed to an illness worsened by hardship, leaving two daughters as well as his Navy sons.⁴⁵

⁴³ David Porter, *Journal of a Cruise Made to the Pacific Ocean by Captain David Porter in the United States Frigate Essex, in the Years 1812, 1813, and 1814*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1822), 2:169. This work by David Glasgow Farragut's foster father was originally published in 1815. Young Farragut is named as one of the *Essex*'s midshipmen who "exerted themselves in the performance of their respective duties." Since the first edition of Porter's journal postdated George Farragut's "Memorial" (May 1814), it must be assumed that the latter learned of his son's commendation through another source, probably a newspaper or periodical.

⁴⁴ George Farragut to Andres Jackson, March 24, 1815, Andrew Jackson Papers, Library of Congress. Reprinted in *AHR* 9 (July 1904): 766-767.

⁴⁵ Lewis, *David Glasgow Farragut*, 309n., 336n.

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[Enclosure]

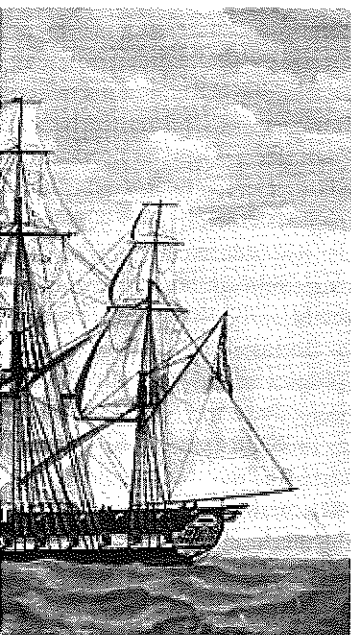
To the Honorable W

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⁴⁶ The original copy of this
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discharge from the Navy. His service in the center of action, New Orleans. "I regret not being with you at noon after the battle. He also told without a horse to support himself his children, a third son, George, age 10. Two years after that, Farragut, leaving two daughters as well

by Captain David Porter in the *United States* (New York, 1822), 2:169. This work by David Glasgow Farragut is named as one of the *Essex's* "their respective duties." Since the first edition (1814), it must be assumed that the latter was probably a newspaper or periodical.

New Jackson Papers, Library of Congress. Re-

George Farragut went to his grave unheralded, like the mass of early Americans who fought in the Revolution and then braved the frontier. Years afterward, however, when his Memorial was unearthed, he came to light as an individual who exemplified the spirit of his time, and whose exploits may have provided some bearing for the derring-do qualities of his son – David Glasgow Farragut.

Sailing Master George Farragut to Secretary of the Navy Jones⁴⁶

New Orleans May 20th 1814

Dear Sir,

The Enclosed memorial, is from an Individual on whose feelings you have inflicted a most serious wound, & whose life is for the present, made miserable.-- Have the goodness I pray you to read his memorial, and do to him as you would be done by.-- Altho' not personally known to you, you Sir, or at least your Character is well known to me.-- Your Heart never erred, and your head seldom leads you wrong. But on the present occasion you have been too precipitate; Exercise the powers with which, it has pleased your Country to vest you & by an act of Justice, restore an old officer to his Command, & to his happiness. I am Sir with the greatest respect Your obedt. Servt.

Geo. Farragut

[Enclosure]

To the Honorable William Jones Secretary of the Navy of the United States.⁴⁷

The Memorial of George Farragut, late a sailing Master in the navy of the U. States, respectfully represents.

That the late removal from office of your memorialist, is an act of Injustice, which the President of the U. States & the Honorable Secretary would never have sanctioned, had they been advised of the just pretensions of your memorialist to public

⁴⁶ The original copy of this letter and the enclosure lie at the Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, DC.

⁴⁷ William Jones, of Philadelphia, was Secretary of the Navy for two years (1813-1814). During that time, he also served as Acting Secretary of the Treasury for nine months. Like George Farragut, he was a veteran of land and sea fighting in the Revolution.

patronage & Confidence. Your Memorialist was born in the Island of Minorca in the year 1756,⁴⁸ -- and is by profession a Mariner; From the year 1765--until 72 your Memorialist was employed principally in the Mediterranean Seas and among other duties, whilst in the Russian Service in 71, he assisted in the destruction of the Turkish Fleet at Shimea,⁴⁹ and was one of the Crew of the Fire Ship, which introduced the flames among the Turkish Fleet--

Early in Seventy Three, your memorialist shaped his course for the American Seas, and after trading between Havanna & vera Cruz for some time, he came to new-Orleans in 1775, when for the first time he heard of the difficulties between England & her Colonies, & immediately determined to assist with his Life & his Fortune in the Struggle for American Independence--In pursuance of this design, your memorialist proceeded from new Orleans to Port-au Prince, where having exchanged his Cargo, for Cannon, Arms, Powder & Ball, he sailed for the U States & Landed at Charleston South-Carolina in the year 76.--

There he entered as Lieutenant on board of a Letter of Marque of 12 Guns, commanded by a Captain Newton and in this employ, having given much satisfaction to his Captain & particularly during an action with a British Privateer of superior force, in which the Englishman was much worsted, your Memorialist was afterwards at the recommendation of Captain Newton, appointed a First Lieutenant in the State Navy of South Carolina in the year 78.-- Having superintended the Building of the Galleys at Charleston, your memorialist was Appointed to the Command of one of them, & reflects with pleasure that in that Character, he rendered much service to his adopted Country.

Your memorialist fought a severe action in Savanna River in 78 and did not quit the Deck of his vessel until it was covered with the dead & the dying. In 1799,⁵⁰ if his memory serves him right, as to the year, your memorialist assisted in the defence of Savanna, & faithfully did his duty--your memorialist was also actively employed during the Siege of Charleston first on water, but when the Galleys were dismantled & the Cannon brought to the Lines your memorialist was assigned the Command of a Battery, & he has the pleasure to believe, that during the Siege he burnt as much powder, and with as much annoyance to the Enemy as any one Officer in the American Army.-- General Lincoln,⁵¹ if living, can bear testimony to my Conduct

⁴⁸ According to church and family records, George Farragut was born in September 1755; see Loyall Farragut, *Life of David Glasgow Farragut*, 1.

⁴⁹ Various historical sources have identified the battle site as Tschesme, Chesme, or Cesme. "Shimea" was obviously a misspelling by Farragut, based perhaps on faulty phonetic recall. He was also in error regarding the year of the event. The battle occurred in 1770.

⁵⁰ Should be 1779, when fighting again took place at Savannah after its capture in 1778.

⁵¹ Benjamin Lincoln was then commander of Continental Army forces in the South. He, too, was taken prisoner at Charleston. After his release, he took part in the last fighting of the war at Yorktown and was appointed Secretary of War.

at Charleston and new-Orleans in 18... Captain Parker of Charleston, died in your memorialist a Privateer bound arm badly shattered his Surgeon, & sa memorialist, & during your memorialist, way to General M acted as a volunteer ton,⁵⁷ & on that n present Genl. Per memorialist proceeded by Governor Nas soon after engaged Lord Cornwallis volunteer Cavalry towards virginia, lina having soon appointed a Capt

⁵² Probably Alexander

⁵³ Part of Farragut's text

⁵⁴ Probably Richard P. *Encyclopedia of Virginia*

⁵⁵ Farragut is most likely founders of the Medical Revolution was at time *Eighteenth Annual Meeting*

⁵⁶ Farragut misspelled

⁵⁷ Lt. Col. Banistre Tar as a result of his slaughter, May 29, 1780. Morgan at Cowpens,

⁵⁸ Another misspelling with some 150 volunteers ship in the battle earned

⁵⁹ Abner Nash was elected quickly created a war

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Mediterranean Seas and among other
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forces in the South. He, too, was taken
fighting of the war at Yorktown and was

at Charleston and also Colonel Parker⁵² of Virginia, the same officer who I saw in
new-Orleans in 1808 at the Head of a R[egiment] . . .⁵³ [T]his Gentleman was then
Captain Parker of the Virginia [L]ine and his Brother Colonel Parker⁵⁴ who fell at
Charleston, died in the Arms of your memorialist.-- Taken a prisoner at Charleston,
your memorialist remained inactive until exchanged, when leaving Philadelphia in
a Privateer bound to Charleston, your memorialist in an Engagement had his right
arm badly shattered, with a musket Ball;-- Doctor Ridgely⁵⁵ now of Kentucky was
his Surgeon, & saved his arm, but to this day, the Limb is of little use to your me-
morialist, & during foggy weather, occasions him much pain.-- From this moment
your memorialist, during the war, no more was employed on the Seas;-- he made his
way to General Merians⁵⁶ Head Quarters in South Carolina where he for a short time
acted as a volunteer; - He arrived at the Cowpens, the day before the defeat of Tarl-
ton,⁵⁷ & on that memorable occasion, served as a volunteer under Col. Perkins⁵⁸ (the
present Genl. Perkins) of South Carolina; the day after the Battle of Cowpens, your
memorialist proceeded on to Wilmington, North Carolina, where he was appointed
by Governor Nash⁵⁹ to the Command of a Company of volunteer artillery, & was
soon after engaged against a Detachment of the Enemy at Beaufort Bridge.-- when
Lord Cornwallis invaded North Carolina, your memorialist raised a Company of
volunteer Cavalry, harassed the rear of Cornwallis's army in his march thro' Carolina
towards virginia, & captured many of the Stragglers.-- The assembly of north Caro-
lina having soon afterwards raised a Legion of Horse & foot, your memorialist was
appointed a Captain of State Cavalry.

⁵² Probably Alexander Parker, whose brother, Richard, served in the same Virginia regiment.

⁵³ Part of Farragut's text is missing here due to a tear in original document.

⁵⁴ Probably Richard Parker, who was killed by artillery fire during the siege. See Lyon Gardiner Tyler, ed.,
Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography (New York, 1915), 2:30.

⁵⁵ Farragut is most likely referring to Dr. Frederick Ridgely, originally from Maryland and later one of the
founders of the Medical Department at Transylvania University in Lexington. Ridgely's service during the
Revolution was at times very close to that of Farragut. See *Transactions of the Kentucky State Medical Society*,
Eighteenth Annual Meeting (Louisville, 1878), 219-222.

⁵⁶ Farragut misspelled the surname of Francis Marion.

⁵⁷ Lt. Col. Banistre Tarleton (1754-1833), commander of a British Legion, was detested by American soldiers
as a result of his slaughter of the Third Virginia Continentals after they had surrendered at the Battle of Wax-
haws, May 29, 1780. Tarleton was in command of the British forces defeated by American General Daniel
Morgan at Cowpens, January 17, 1781.

⁵⁸ Another misspelling by Farragut. He was referring to Colonel Andrew Pickens who arrived at Cowpens
with some 150 volunteer riflemen, see Lumpkin, *From Savannah to Yorktown*, 126. Pickens' front-line leader-
ship in the battle earned him a promotion to brigadier general in South Carolina militia.

⁵⁹ Abner Nash was elected North Carolina's governor in 1780 as British forces were headed for the state. He
quickly created a war board to expedite military preparations.

Mr. Mason⁶⁰ now of Congress was then a member of the assembly, and knows this fact.-- With my command of Cavalry, I assisted General Merian in enforcing the Tories of South Carolina to observance of a proper Conduct, & obtained on this occasion, the thanks of the Governor of that State, & of Genl. Merian [Marion]. The peace which soon followed, left my adopted Country free & Independent;-- But your memorialist poor & penniless;-- He again repaired to Sea, for a living until in 1792,-- his old acquaintance the late Wm. Blount, then Governor of the South Western Territory, now the State of Tennessee, invited him to Knoxville, where being appointed a Major of Militia, he served on an Expedition against the Cherokees in 1793, under Genl. Sevier⁶¹ now a Member of Congress.-- In 1807, President Jefferson appointed your memorialist a sailing Master in the Navy, & in the same year your memorialist reached New Orleans and was assigned the command of a Gun Boat. Your memorialist was married in 1795; his Wife died in new Orleans in 1808, and left him five Children,⁶² who are still living.-- Your memorialist enjoying bad health was ordered in 1811 by Commodore Shaw,⁶³ & with his permission, retired, to the Bay of Pascagoula, where for the most part your Memorialist has since resided;-- Whenever his health permitted, your Memorialist was ready & willing to enter on active Service; But it is too true that the Constitution of your Memorialist is much impaired & that with increase of years & hard Services, his Lamp would some time since have burnt out, but for the little relaxation he lately experienced at Bay of Pascagoula.

When your Letter of dismissal arrived, it found me in better health that I had enjoyed for Eight Years past, and am now willing and able to serve my Country with zeal & activity.--The Representation to my Injury made by a certain Edwin Lewis,⁶⁴ is not worthy of your attention;-- my life has been devoted to honorable pursuits;-- Lewis's to the basest acts;-- No Gentleman I ever knew, but takes me by the hand in friendship;-- No Gentleman without degrading himself, could associate with Lewis.--

⁶⁰ Farragut apparently meant Nathaniel Macon, see Paullin, "Father of Admiral Farragut," 42n. Macon had sat in the North Carolina legislature during the 1780s. He was representing the state in the U.S. Congress at the time Farragut wrote his "Memorial."

⁶¹ In the Southwest Territory, John Sevier was considered the most feared Indian fighter; see Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*, 161. After serving as Tennessee's first governor and a state senator, he was elected to the U.S. Congress in 1811, where he stayed until his death in 1815.

⁶² Farragut's five children were: William, b. 1797; James Glasgow (David), b. 1801; Nancy, b. 1804; George, b. 1805; Elizabeth, b. 1807, see Lewis, *David Glasgow Farragut*, 7, 13, 309n.

⁶³ John Shaw, a U.S. Navy commander, was ordered to New Orleans in 1806 to develop a gunboat fleet for coastal defense. As a gunboat master, Farragut reported to him, see Williams, "George Farragut," 88.

⁶⁴ Edwin Lewis, apparently a Pascagoula resident, wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Navy in December 1813, complaining that Farragut was not performing, and was incapable of doing, the duties for which he was being paid. He also claimed gunboat officers were stealing cattle from civilians. Upon investigation, Secretary Jones learned from the commander of the New Orleans Naval Station that Farragut had for some time been "out of actual service, tho' drawing full pay and rations," see Paullin, "Father of Admiral Farragut," 43n.

Commodore Patterson's opinion (in writing five Children; in serving I believed Farragut is a man of the Essex, and Papers the h[on]orable my two Sons, my example and pattern lest it may hereafter of you Sir, the Ju naval Command active duty, to all have served my Country should immediately in this Station, to render me most Congress, & the friend of the United Secretary of the Treasury the Honble. Mr. of Representatives they all believe h

Your Memorialion,-- & for the

⁶⁵ Daniel Patterson to officer who became f

⁶⁶ William Farragut. of naval service. He d see Lewis, *David Gla*

⁶⁷ George W. Campbell "Memorial." All three Blount. The "Govr. E founder. Willie was g

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Commodore Patterson⁶⁵ can tell you, the Character I support, & will send you the
 opinion (in writing) of the people of Pascagoula of the Slander Edwin Lewis.-- I have
 five Children; my Eldest son William A C Farragut⁶⁶ is a Midshipman in the navy, &
 serving I believed, on board the new--Sloop of War Frolic;-- my second Son James G
 Farragut is a midshipman on Command, under that Gallant officer, Captain Porter
 of the Essex, and the happiest moment of my Life, was, when I noticed in the public
 Papers the h[onor]able mention Captain Porter made of my Boy.-- I trust in God
 my two Sons, may deserve well of their Country;-- I have always gave them a good
 example and patriotic precepts;-- my dismission is the more terrible to my feelings,
lest it may hereafter be cast up to my Boys as a reproach.-- I ask of the President and
 of you Sir, the Justice to reinstate me in my Command, & with Instructions to the
 naval Commander on this Station, that when age & Infirmities incapacitate me for
 active duty, to allow me half pay;-- I ask not this as a favour; I claim it as a right;-- I
 have served my Country long & faithful;-- now that I am getting old & am poor, my
 Country should serve me-- one good turn deserves another.-- If I cannot be reinstated
 immediately in the Command, I ask you Sir, to Instruct the naval Commander on
 this Station, to employ me in the Navy yard, in such a manner as my capacities may
 render me most useful.-- Be at the trouble Sir, to ask the Tennessee Representative in
 Congress, & they will assure you, that I have in my time, been an active & zealous
 friend of the United States--General John Sevier, the Honorable Mr. Campbell Sec-
 retary of the Treasury, Governor Claiborne of Louisiana, Govr. Blount of Tennessee,
 the Honble. Mr. Anderson of the Senate & the Honorable John Rhea of the House
 of Representative have long known your memorialist,⁶⁷ & he is proud to believe that
 they all believe him an honest Man, and deserving well of his Country.

Your Memorialist tenders to you his best wishes for the honor of your Administra-
 tion,-- & for the contin[uation] of the Successes, & the Glory of the American Navy.--

Geo. Farragut

New Orleans May 20th 1814.--

⁶⁵ Daniel Patterson took command of the New Orleans Naval Station in 1810, succeeding David Porter, the
 officer who became foster father to David Glasgow Farragut.

⁶⁶ William Farragut, in contrast to his brother, never rose above the level of lieutenant during some 50 years
 of naval service. He died an invalid, crippled by rheumatism contracted on long tours in the Gulf of Mexico,
 see Lewis, *David Glasgow Farragut*, 260, 278, 357n.

⁶⁷ George W. Campbell, Joseph Anderson, and John Rhea were federal officeholders when Farragut wrote his
 "Memorial." All three had roots in Tennessee, as did the other individuals he names: Sevier, Claiborne, and
 Blount. The "Govr. Blount of Tennessee" cited was Willie Blount, half-brother of William Blount, the state's
 founder. Willie was governor from 1809-1815.