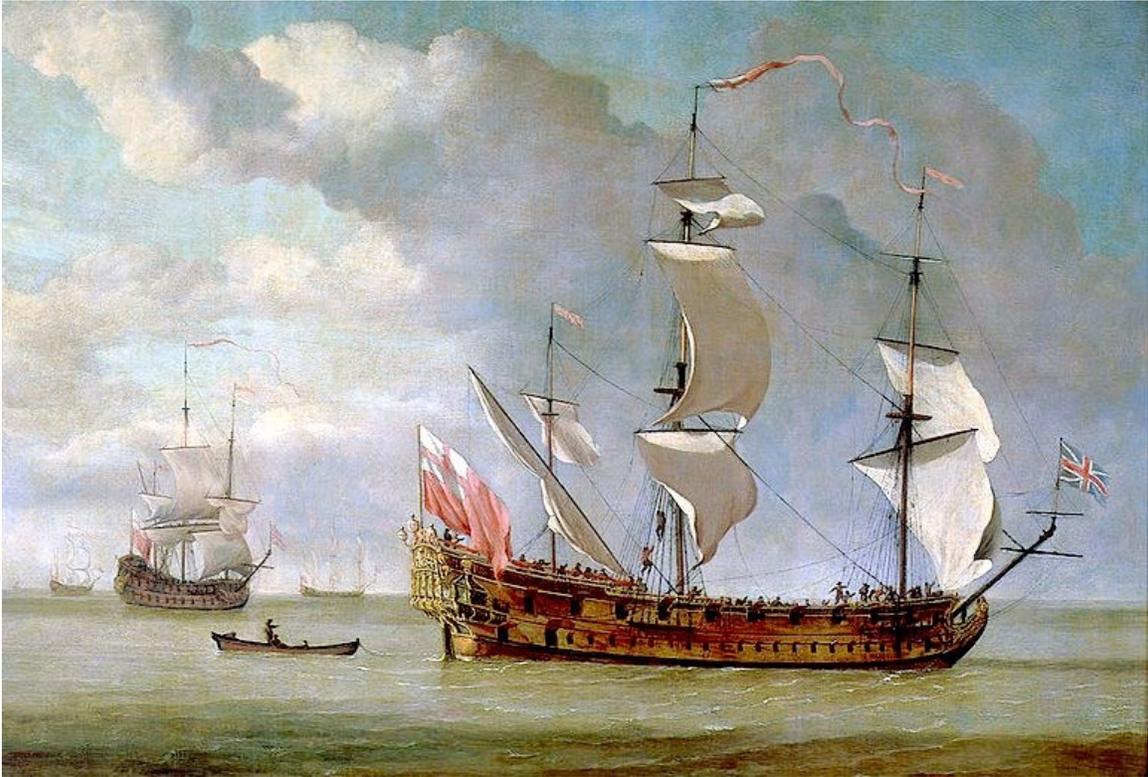


The Story of the "Dasher"



Adventure Gallery

The story of the loss in Lynhaven Bay of the galley ship Dasher and the capture of the officers and the crew was given by the oath of Captain Willis Wilson to Samuel Thorogood. The Captain and his men were confined in the Provost Jail at Portsmouth, Virginia, and after his release he made public the secrets of that Prison House, by the following deposition, which is copied from the original document. "The deposition of Willis Wilson, being first sworn deposes and sayeth: That about the 23rd July last the deponent was taken a prisoner of war; was conducted to Portsmouth (Virginia) after having been plundered of all his clothing, etc., and there lodged with about 190 other prisoners, in the Provost. This deponent

during twenty odd days was a spectator to the most savage cruelty with which the unhappy prisoners were treated by the English. The deponent has every reason to believe there was a premeditated scheme to infect all the prisoners who had not been infected with the smallpox. There were upwards of 100 prisoners who never had the disorder, notwithstanding which negroes, with the infection upon them, were lodged under the same roof of the Provost. Others were sent in to attend upon the prisoners, with the scabs of that disorder upon them.

" Some of the prisoners soon caught the disorder, others were down with the flux, and some from fevers. From such a complication of disorders twas thought expedient to petition General O. Hara who was then commanding officer, for a removal of the sick, or those who were not, as yet, infected with the smallpox. Accordingly a petition was sent by Dr. Smith who shortly returned with a verbal answer, as he said, from the General. He said the General desired him to inform the prisoners that the law of nations was annihilated, that he had nothing then to bind them but bolts and bars, and they were to continue where they were, but that they were free agents to inoculate if they chose.

"About thirty agreed with the same Smith to inoculate them at a guinea a man; he performed the operation, received his guinea from many, and then left them to shift for themselves, though he had agreed to attend them through the disorder. Many of them, as well as those who took it in the natural way, died. Colonel Gee, with many respectable characters, fell victims to the unrelenting cruelty of O. Hara, who would admit of no discrimination between the officers, privates, Negroes, and felons; but promiscuously confined the whole in one house. They also suffered often from want of water, and such as they got was very muddy and unfit to drink." "Willis Wilson." Source: American Prisoners of the Revolution by Danske Dandridge