

Teaching *The Hudson River Valley Review*
African American Soldiers at New Windsor Cantonment:
Historic Preservation and the Importance of Historic Documents

Teaching About

“Substitutes, Servants, and Soldiers: African American Soldiers at New Windsor Cantonment”
-Matt Thorenz

Lesson Plan Introduction:

- Students will use the [*Hudson River Valley Review* \(HRVR\)](#) article, “Substitutes, Servants, and Soldiers: African American Soldiers at New Windsor Cantonment” to develop an understanding of the importance of primary sources and historic preservation. Lesson activities will scaffold students’ understanding of the articles: use of primary sources, what the sources are, where the sources are found, along with the importance of historic preservation. Each activity below can be adapted according to the student’s needs and abilities.

Suggested Grade Level: 11th grade US History: Regents level and AP level.

Objective:

Students will be able to:

- Read and comprehend the provided text.
- Understand the importance of historic preservation and NYS History.
- Explain and describe the theme and primary sources used in *The Hudson River Valley Review* article, “Substitutes, Servants, and Soldiers: African American Soldiers at New Windsor Cantonment” by Matt Thorenz

Standards Addressed:

Students will:

- Use important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs, and traditions from New York State and United States history to illustrate the connections and interactions of people and events across time and from a variety of perspectives.
- Develop and test hypotheses about important events, eras, or issues in United States history, setting clear and valid criteria for judging the importance and significance of these events, eras, or issues.
- Use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States.

Central Focus:

- Students will be able to dissect *The HRVR* article, “Substitutes, Servants, and Soldiers: African American Soldiers at New Windsor Cantonment” (Pages 88-97). Students will specify the primary sources and construct a short paragraph to explain the significance of historic preservation of primary source information.

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Time Allotment:

One 40 minute period

Vocabulary:

See attached glossary

Teacher Resources:

The Hudson River Valley Review article, “Substitutes, Servants, and Soldiers: African American Soldiers at New Windsor Cantonment” –Matt Thorenz

Materials Used:

- *The Hudson River Valley Review* article, “Substitutes, Servants, and Soldiers: African American Soldiers at New Windsor Cantonment” (included below)
- Pen/Pencil
- Paper

Activities Menu

Activity 1: Students will read *The HRVR* article, “Substitutes, Servants, and Soldiers: African American Soldiers at New Windsor Cantonment” (Pages 88-97). Students will identify the primary sources imbedded in the text, inputting their findings into a T-Chart graphic organizer.

Procedure

- Students will read *The HRVR* article, “Substitutes, Servants, and Soldiers: African American Soldiers at New Windsor Cantonment” (Pages 88-97).
- Teachers can choose to have students read independently, or in small groups.
- Teachers should instruct students to create a T-Chart graphic organizer to record the important information.
- Students should record the following in their graphic organizers: what is the source, where did the sources come from, and a short summary of the source.
- See attached glossary for challenging vocabulary.

Enrichment

- Upon completion of the textual analysis of the primary sources students should participate in a class discussion.
- Students should compare the information recorded in their graphic organizers.

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Activity 2: After students discuss the primary sources embedded in the text, teachers should begin a conversation about historic preservation of primary sources.

Evaluate

Teacher should pose the following discussion questions to the class:

- *Define/describe primary sources.*
- *Describe where primary sources are found.*
- *Consider if you think there are undiscovered primary sources.*
- *Consider primary sources within your family.*
- *Debate the importance of historic preservation.*

Follow Up

- After the class discussion the lesson should conclude with an exit slip.
- Teachers could instruct students to write a paragraph on the significance of historic preservation of primary sources and how primary sources tell the story of history.
- Teachers should leave five minutes at the end of class to allow students to construct their responses.
- Teachers should assess these written responses to monitor student comprehension.

Assessment:

- Formative assessment of student progress and submitted work will display student comprehension and understanding of lesson objectives.
- Class discussions will also serve as formative assessment of student understanding.
- Assessment of student understanding of lesson materials through exit slip from the follow-up activity will serve as a concrete product displaying student's ability to apply the knowledge gained through this lesson sequence.

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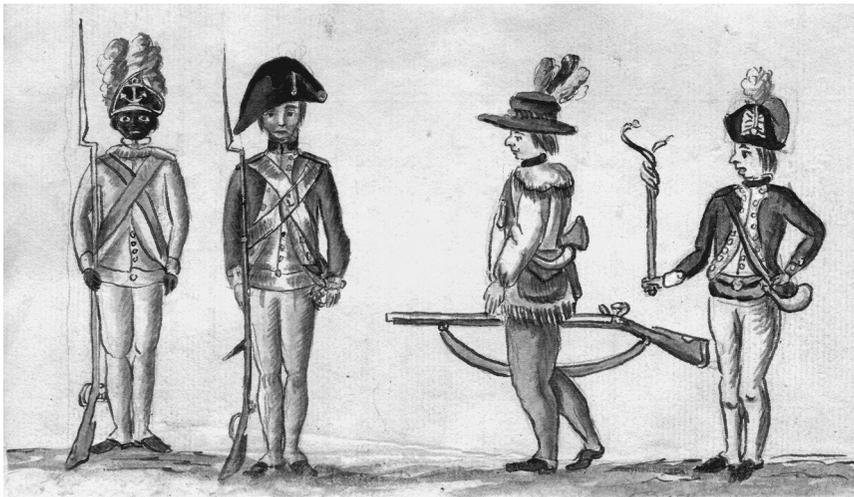
Glossary

“Substitutes, Servants, and Soldiers: African American Soldiers at New Windsor Cantonment”

<i>Term</i>	<i>Page #</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Cessation	94	The fact or process of ending or being brought to an end.
Court Martial	92	A military court: a court for people in the military who are accused of breaking military law.
Disbandment	94	To end, or break up, an organization or group.
Fortification	92	The act of building military defenses to protect a place against attack: the act of fortifying something.
Garrison	90	A military camp, fort, or base. A military post, a group of soldiers who are living at a garrison.
Infirmity	90	The quality or state of being weak or ill especially because of old age.
Manumission	90	To release from slavery.
Militia	89	A group of people who are not part of the armed forces of a country but are trained like soldiers.
Regiment	92	A military unit that is usually made of several large groups of soldiers.
Subjugation	89	To defeat and gain control of (someone or something) by the use of force: to conquer and gain the obedience of (a group of people, country, ect.)

From the Editors

With Pete Seeger's passing last year, the Hudson Valley—and the world—lost a musical and environmental icon, as well as a strong moral compass. A fascinating essay in this issue of *The Hudson River Valley Review* illustrates how Pete kept fighting, in this case for songwriters' royalties, to the very end of his life. Another article on a 1943 case involving anti-Semitism in Rockland County will acquaint readers with an equally dedicated but far less renowned civil libertarian, the lawyer Arthur Garfield Hays. Additional features cover Native and African Americans; the Dutch, Quakers, and Shakers; and two centuries of military history—making this an extremely full and historically kaleidoscopic issue.



On the cover:

Soldiers in Uniform by Jean Baptiste Antoine de Verger, 1781-1784.
Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library

Jean-Baptiste Antoine de Verger (1762-1851) served in the American Revolutionary War as a member of the *Expédition Particulière*, commanded by General Jean-Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau. While in America, de Verger kept a journal of his wartime experiences; here he depicts a black soldier of the 1st Rhode Island Regiment, a New England militiaman, a frontier rifleman, and a French officer.

Notes & Documents

This article was initially presented as the lecture "Black Patriots Revealed: African Americans in the Continental Army," February 12, 2012, at New Windsor Cantonment State Historic Site.

Substitutes, Servants, and Soldiers

African American Soldiers at New Windsor Cantonment

Matt Thorenz

On the morning of April 19, 1775, Cato Bordman, a "negro" from Cambridge, Massachusetts, answered the call to arms as a member of Captain Samuel Thatcher's Company of militia. Facing him was a column of 700 to 1,500 British redcoats under the command of General Thomas Gage. Although his service lasted one day, Bordman nonetheless participated in what is arguably the most important day in American history. Two months later, on June 17, another African American, Philip Abbot of Captain Benjamin Ames' Company, Colonel James Frye's Regiment of militia, was killed while defending Breed's Hill from the frontal assault of General William Howe's army of over 3,000 British regulars. Philip was believed to have been a servant of Nathan Abbot and was acting as substitute in his master's stead.¹ From the first shots fired at Lexington Green in the spring of 1775 to the final discharge of troops at New Windsor and West Point in the summer of 1783, African Americans played an important part in defending a revolution that championed freedoms and independence to some, while justifying the subjugation and enslavement of others, namely themselves. The stories that can be gleaned from the historic record of those Black soldiers that served in the Massachusetts and New Hampshire lines at the New Windsor Cantonment of 1782-1783 are just some examples of how African Americans found common ground among their white comrades in the service of their country while living in a time of slavery and inequality.

In an October 5, 1775, letter from Philadelphia to General William Heath, John Adams wrote of the American army around Boston:

It is represented in [Philadelphia] by some persons, and it makes an unfriendly Impression upon Some Minds, that in the Massachusetts Regiments there are great numbers of Boys, Old Men and Negroes, Such as are unsuitable for service. . . . I should be glad to know if there are more of these in Proportion in the Massachusetts Regiments, than in those of Connecticut, Rhode Island and New Hampshire, or even among the Rifle Men."²

Adams' feelings reflected those of his fellow representatives in the Continental Congress, who feared they were paying for troops who, because of age, infirmity or race, were otherwise unable to fight and defend the revolution effectively from the might of the most powerful army in the world.³ However, the individual "rights" afforded to slaves and freed Blacks varied from province to province. In Massachusetts, where more money was made off the importation and sale of slaves than the use of them as labor, slaves were given the right to own property, testify in court against whites, and even sue for freedom.⁴ However, one cannot assume that slavery in New England was less harsh and more liberal than Southern practices. Slaves were still treated as property and status symbols by their owners.⁵ ⁶ Slaves caught as runaways were subject to the same forms of brutal punishment that characterized Southern plantation culture.⁷ However, there were ways by which slaves could "win" their freedom.

Despite living under harsh conditions, New England slaves were able to obtain their freedom, under a master's consent or otherwise. Jude Hall of Kensington, New Hampshire, ran away from his new master, Nathaniel Healy, because he "resented being sold."⁸ Cato Fisk of Epping, New Hampshire, possibly won his freedom via manumission, being legally set free. Upon the death of his master, Dr. Ebenezer Fisk, Cato was appraised at 25 British pounds on January 2, 1777. In May of that year, he enlisted in Captain William Rowell's Company, 2nd New Hampshire Regiment for three years. Both Jude Hall and Cato Fisk were members of this regiment while it was garrisoned at New Windsor in 1782-1783.

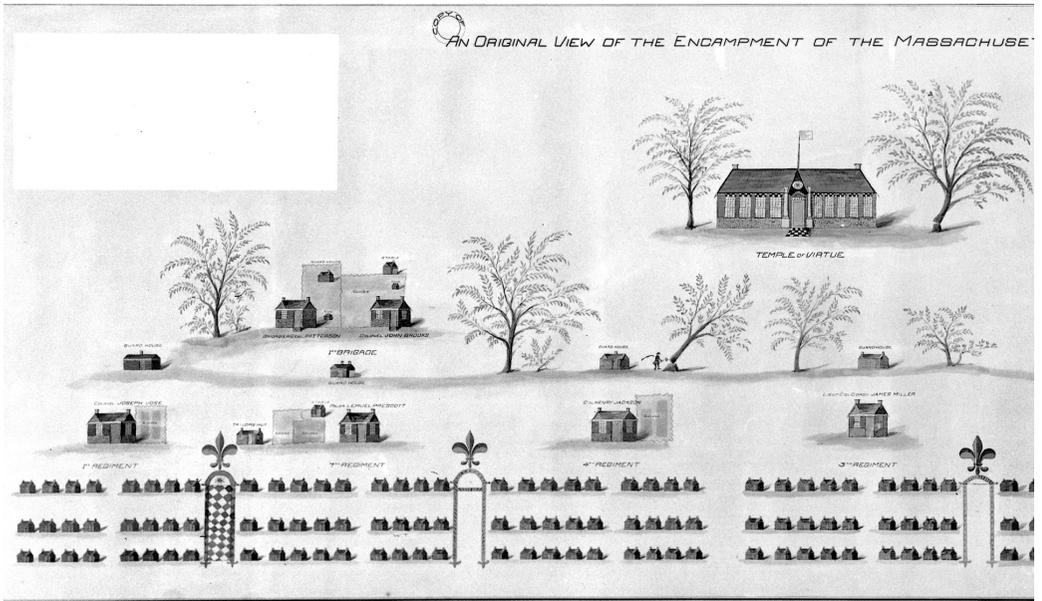
The enlistment and arming of free and enslaved Blacks was looked upon with suspicion by some members of the Continental Congress and patriot sympathizers, who feared Blacks lacked a basic knowledge of the "virtues of liberty" as they were born into slavery and would be inclined to incite violence against whites once they were armed.⁹ Several months before the shots at Lexington and Concord were fired, two Blacks by the names of York and Joe conspired to murder the inhabitants of Kingston, New York, while setting several fires throughout the city with the help of neighboring slaves and Native Americans. The plot was later found out by Joe's owner, resulting in the imprisonment of twenty conspirators. In May 1775, the Town Council of Newburgh, New York, fearing a slave revolt as a result of white preoccupation with the war resolved that "any person owning Negroes in this precinct shall not on any account whatever, suffer them to be absent from his dwelling . . . the daytime off their farm without a pass; and in case any house or farm after sundown . . . Negroes be found abroad, contrary to the above . . . they shall be apprehended and caused to receive 35 lashes or any number less as the said committee shall deem proper."¹⁰

However, as the war progressed, more Continental Army recruiters looked to free and enslaved Africans as an alternative pool of enlistees to fill the depleted and understrength ranks of Washington's forces.¹¹ The army that had grown to over 20,000 troops "Fit and Present for Duty" in July 1775 had dwindled to around 7,556 by February 1778.¹² Until June 1778, the American army had only a pair of moral victories at Trenton

and Princeton, New Jersey, to show for the loss of Long Island, New York City, and Philadelphia, where the Continental Congress convened and delegated. The army's first winter encampment at Valley Forge also "thinned the herd" of over 800 troops, lost through sickness and starvation. Worse still, Britain herself was offering slaves an opportunity to gain their freedom by enlisting in the British armed forces. This strategy used Congress's reluctance to arm blacks to undermine the rhetoric of the Revolution's most ardent supporters. With the cause of independence in question and without strong, able-bodied men to raise the strength of Washington's beleaguered army, the hopes of America winning its independence were dimming.

The Congressionally authorized troop quotas of 1777 induced officers to seek African-American recruits, and a 1779 law giving recruiters a ten-dollar bounty per head further increased enlistment. By April 1778, Massachusetts only exempted Quakers from the draft, legally allowing Blacks to serve in the Continental Army.¹³ Towns throughout New England established enlistment committees that actively drafted African Americans to meet their quotas.¹⁴ Towns such as Wallingford and Stratford, Connecticut, were able to bring in thirteen and fourteen Black recruits out of a pool of 132 and 114 enlistees, respectively, while 200 soldiers of African descent would be recruited in Rhode Island to furnish that state's famous 1st Rhode Island Regiment. This shift in the racial composition of the American army can be seen in the observations of a diarist in central Massachusetts in 1777, who stated he encountered no regiment without "a lot of Negroes." In return, Black enlistees were promised their freedom (if presently enslaved), as well as monetary compensation and land bounties. One such example was that of five Blacks from New Hampshire who were paid twenty pounds in addition to a mileage allowance of 16s., 8d. in return for their enlistments. Cato Freeman of Andover, Massachusetts, was promised "Freedom in three years," and duly enlisted in the 9th Massachusetts for three years to meet the January 1, 1781, quota.¹⁵ ¹⁶ Nineteen-year-old Drummer Jabez Jolly, a sailor and/or farmer from Barnstable, Massachusetts, enlisted "For the War" in Rufus Lincoln's Company of the 7th Massachusetts in either November or December 1779 by Lieutenant Freeman. It is interesting to note that while at New Windsor, the same officer was implicated in several charges of assault on a fellow officer and noted in Private Thomas Foster's diary as beating a Sergeant Howard of the 7th Massachusetts Regiment.¹⁷ ¹⁸

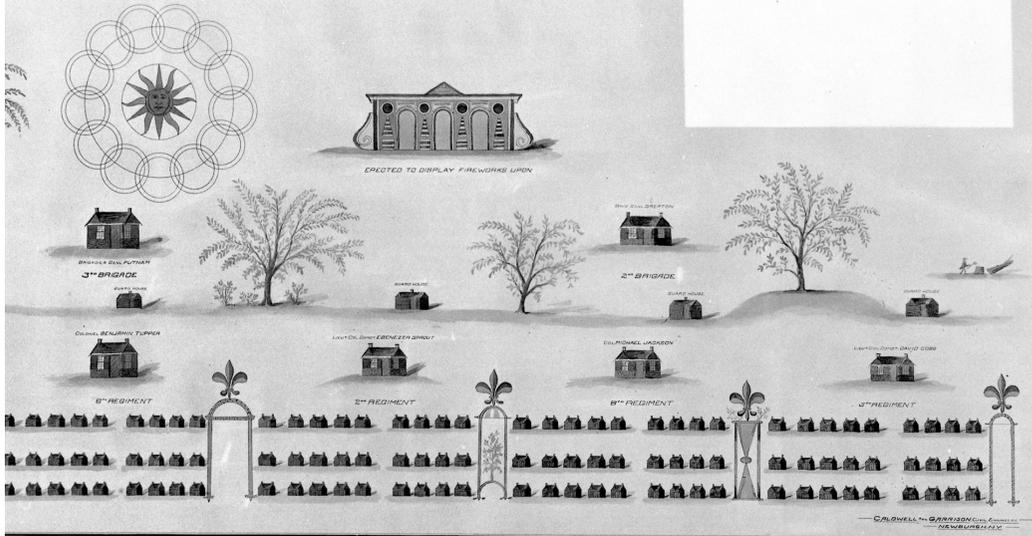
The training regime Washington's soldiers underwent at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777-1778 built the foundations of a strong professional army that would prove itself throughout the latter half of the American War of Independence. Despite this, the actions of some officers and soldiers continued to challenge this newly instilled sense of discipline. During the winter encampment of 1782-1783 at New Windsor, both white and Black soldiers found themselves before general court-martials for infractions ranging from being absent without leave to insubordination, assault, and theft. Cato Fisk, now re-enlisted in the 2nd New Hampshire, had been charged with overstaying his furlough and was listed as "Deserted" on his company's muster rolls for February 16,



Drawing of the Massachusetts Line at the New Windsor Cantonment after the sketch done by Private William Tarbell of the 7th Massachusetts Regiment. Caldwell and Garrison Civil Engineers, Newburgh, New York. Collection of Washington Headquarters State Historic Site. This engineer version captured the details of the original drawing that had faded over the years

1783. Prosecution for such a crime could carry a sentence of death. However by this stage of the war, when prospects of a spring offensive were uncertain and with many war-weary soldiers wishing to return home, Fisk's crime went unpunished. Prior to his regiment's arrival at New Windsor, Drummer Jolly had been arrested and tried in June 1782 at a regimental court-martial near West Point for "abusing another soldier." Sentenced to receive thirty lashes, he was soon pardoned. Private Robert Green of Captain Day's Company wasn't so lucky. After being tried at a regimental court-martial on January 4, 1783, for leaving his post while on sentry duty, Green was sentenced to receive sixty lashes.¹⁹

White and Black soldiers not only shared the same crimes and punishments but also the responsibilities of maintaining order and discipline. These duties ranged from standing guard and retrieving supplies to building winter quarters and digging latrines. Shortly after enlisting for three years in February, 1781, Private Cato Everet of Captain Green's Company, Colonel Vose's (1st Massachusetts Regiment) was listed "Joined Lines on Guard." The "Lines" were a string of fortifications and guard posts that stretched from the area around West Point as far south as Westchester County, along the Croton River. Their main purpose was to defend the Hudson Highlands from British attack from New York City and protect the citizenry from the criminal elements of the region



(known as “Cowboys”). One job that appears prominently in service records is that of “Servant.” This role was filled by privates who were adjoined to high-ranking officers, such as colonels and generals, and required to tend to the officers’ personal needs. Polishing boots, cooking, running messages, and even emptying chamber pots were some of the many chores these soldiers/servants would have to perform while on detached service. Perry Cesar of Rufus Lincoln’s Company, 7th Massachusetts Regiment, was a servant to “Col. Gimat” from June to November 1781. Jean-Joseph Sourbader Gimat arrived in America as a member of the Marquis de Lafayette’s staff in 1777 and was given a commission as a major in the Continental Army. By 1781 he was promoted to colonel and placed in charge of a light infantry battalion that served under Lafayette’s command throughout the Yorktown Campaign. As his service record notes, Perry would have been with Gimat during the time of Yorktown, while the rest of his regiment remained protecting the Hudson Highlands (Lesser, 210). As Perry Cesar marched south to Yorktown, Boston Black, from the 7th Massachusetts Regiment was sent “on extra duty” as a servant to General John Glover at West Point. Glover had made a name for himself early in the war as the commander of the 14th Massachusetts Regiment, which helped Washington’s Army evade capture by ferrying them to Manhattan after the disastrous Battle of Long Island in August 1776, as well as transporting Washington’s army across the Delaware to surprise the Hessian garrison at Trenton, New Jersey, on December 25, 1776. Although they contributed to the structural hierarchy of the Continental Army as servants, the Black soldiers of the Massachusetts and New Hampshire lines also would prove their worth on the battlefield, leading to Great Britain’s eventual defeat.

Over the last several decades, historians have uncovered the important role that African Americans performed in the Revolutionary War. Black soldiers took part in every major action of the conflict, as Continental and redcoat, servant and soldier. Thus, it is not surprising that the service records of those Black soldiers in the Massachusetts and New Hampshire Lines at New Windsor Cantonment were extensive and showed experience equal, and in many cases surpassing, that of their white comrades. Jude Hall's first taste of battle occurred at Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775, when he reported being "thrown headlong by a cannonball striking near him."²⁰ As a member of the 2nd New Hampshire Regiment from December 1776, to the end of 1783, he was present at many of the actions in which his regiment participated. After the Battle of Monmouth in June 1778, Hall earned the name "Old Rock" as a testament to his endurance and courage during one of the hardest fought battles of the war.²¹ The following year, Hall and his regiment took part in the Sullivan-Clinton expedition against the Iroquois, and at the end of his second term of service in December 1779, he re-enlisted for a third time, for the duration of the war, and was with his regiment at New Windsor in 1782-83.²² Another New Hampshire soldier, John Reed, served from 1776-1784. Reed served in the New Hampshire militia regiments that took part in the battles of Trenton, Princeton, and Bennington. Reed re-enlisted just before taking part in the October 1777 Battle of Bemis Heights, which led to the defeat of General Burgoyne's army at Saratoga. Reed spent the remainder of his service guarding the Hudson Highlands and eventually was discharged after the disbandment of his regiment in January 1784.²³

One of the most famous actions involving Black troops took place in nearby Pines Bridge, New York (now Yorktown), on May 14, 1781, when a detachment of 200 men of the 1st Rhode Island Regiment (also known as "The Black Regiment") was surprised by a force of 260 mounted and dismounted Loyalists under the command of Oliver Delancey. Colonel Christopher Greene, Major Flagg, and ten men were killed, with twenty-three taken captive. Captured soldiers of African descent were sent to the West Indies and sold into slavery. The First Rhode Island would later encamp briefly at New Windsor in the fall of 1782 prior to being sent north for the abortive attack on Fort Ontario.

Toward the end of the American War of Independence, General Washington proposed the awarding of "Badges of Honorary Distinction," to recognize those soldiers who served faithfully and continuously from their enlistment to the cessation of hostilities. These badges came in the form of an inverted chevron worn on the left arm of the regimental that represented three years of faithful service. Private Cuff Leonard, of Captain Hastings' company of the 7th Massachusetts Regiment, who served from March 24, 1777, to June 10, 1783, was "entitled to 1 and 2 stripes."²⁴ Cato Fiske, along with fellow New Hampshire soldiers London Dailey and Caesar Wallace, received Badges of Honorary Distinction for serving six, four, and five years, respectively. An August 1782 register of Captain Lincoln's Company, 7th Massachusetts Regiment, to determine which privates and noncommissioned officers were eligible to receive these badges lists Cesar Perry, an African American, as one of the most qualified. One of

the most remarkable African-American recipients was Nantucket resident Michael Pease. Pease enlisted in May 1777 for the duration of the war, and by the end of his enlistment, on June 10, 1783, he (like Cuff Leonard) was “entitled to 1 and 2 stripes.” What makes Pease’s story particularly interesting is that he was born in Portugal; the circumstances of his arrival in North America remain unknown.

On April 19, 1783, news of a general cessation of hostilities reached the troops of Washington’s army at New Windsor. In June, the remnants of the Continental Army were marched to West Point, where the troops were given their discharge papers and sent home to resume lives they had postponed when they enlisted. With the end of the war, the now fourteen United States had no role for Black troops, and white Americans in general picked up the banner of prejudice just as quickly as they cast aside the idealism of their Revolution after it had been won. Despite their personal sacrifices and the courage they displayed while fighting one of the most powerful armies in the world, the Black soldiers of Washington’s army returned home to find the same hostility and racism they had left before the war began. On February 7, 1787, Cato Fisk, along with eighteen other Blacks, was warned to leave Exeter, New Hampshire, for reasons unknown. Fisk would spend the rest of his life as a pauper and itinerant laborer, trying to support his wife and three children. Three of Jude Hall’s sons were kidnapped and sold into slavery, while his son-in-law, Ben Jake, was viewed as a “troublemaker” and, along with his family, run out of town and their house demolished. Jude’s other son, George, lived long enough to celebrate the abolition of slavery in New Hampshire in 1820. With his father, he took center stage in the festivities.²⁵ London Daily ran into severe financial trouble when several court actions were brought against him for unpaid debts, leading to his imprisonment in October 1820 for a judgment of \$50.75 in addition to \$5.62 damages. Despite these financial and judicial setbacks, on July, 22 1818, London, along with the son of fellow Black veteran Tobias Cutler, attempted to form a “Society beneficial for [Blacks living in Exeter].” London and his wife were positive fixtures in the Black community of Exeter for the remainder of their lives.²⁶ Other soldiers, like Cicero Swett, remained slaves after returning home, but used their compensation to buy back their freedom. Although the war for American Independence was over, it would take another war to end the enslavement of Black Americans.

Eighty-six years after Jude Hall escaped to freedom to answer the call to arms against the “enslavement” of the thirteen colonies by Great Britain, his grandsons Aaron and Moses Hall enlisted in the 3rd U.S. Colored Infantry and 54th Massachusetts Regiments to fight in another war, against the institution of slavery itself. Unlike their illustrious grandfather, Aaron and Moses would, ironically, serve in a segregated army. However, one cannot help but feel they were instilled with the same sense of duty and obligation as their grandfather to prove themselves worthy defenders of American freedoms and for the release of their fellow African Americans from the bonds of slavery. The American War of Independence was unique in that it would be the only conflict until the Korean War, almost 200 years later, in which white and Black soldiers fought alongside each

other in the American Army. It also laid the foundations for African Americans to fight on the battlefield and in the meeting halls for principles of liberty and equality they rightfully deserved. The deeds of these men would resonate in the hearts and minds of Black soldiers in every American conflict from the War of Independence to the present day. The deeds of these brave men must never be forgotten, and the words of American poet and abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier in his essay “Black Men in the Revolution and War of 1812: A Review” is appropriate:

The return of the festival of our national independence has called our attention to a matter which has been very carefully kept out of sight by orators and toast-drinkers. We allude to the participation of colored men in the great struggle for American freedom. It is not in accordance with our taste or our principles to eulogize the shedders of blood even in a cause of acknowledged justice; but when we see a whole nation doing honor to the memories of one class of its defenders to the total neglect of another class, who had the misfortune to be of darker complexion, we cannot forego the satisfaction of inviting notice to certain facts which for the last half century have been quietly elbowed aside, as no more deserving of place in patriotic recollection than the descendants of the men to whom the facts in question relate have to a place in a Fourth of July procession.²⁷

Matt Thorenz is the Reference Librarian at Moffat Library of Washingtonville, NY.

Endnotes

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7. Knoblock, 8-10.
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12. Charles H. Lesser, *The Sinews of Independence: monthly strength reports of the Continental Army*, (Chicago Press, 1974), 3, 59.
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15. *ibid*
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18. *Massachusetts soldiers and sailors of the revolutionary war: A compilation from the archives* Vol. 8, ed. Massachusetts office of the Secretary Of State (Boston, MA: Wright and Potter Printing Co. State Printers, 1896), 893.
19. *Massachusetts soldiers and sailors of the revolutionary war: A compilation from the archives* Vol. 7, ed. Massachusetts office of the Secretary Of State (Boston, MA: Wright and Potter Printing Co. State Printers, 1896), 830.
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21. Knoblock, 120.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Knoblock, 161-162.
24. *Massachusetts soldiers and sailors of the revolutionary war: A compilation from the archives* Vol. 7, ed. Massachusetts office of the Secretary Of State (Boston, MA: Wright and Potter Printing Co. State Printers, 1896), 685.
25. Knoblock, 121-122.
26. Knoblock, 102-103.
27. John Greenleaf Whittier , *The Works of John Greenleaf Whittier*, (Boston, Houghton Mifflin , 1892)

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