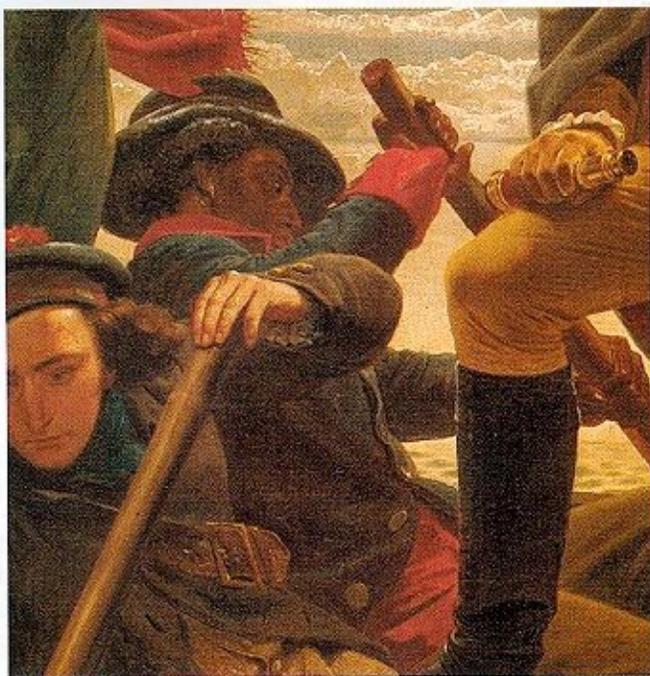




AMERICA'S FORGOTTEN PATRIOTS

During the American Revolution some of the most ardent Patriots could be found among the colonies' African-American residents.

by Jon Swan



ABOVE AND DETAIL LEFT: METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART; GIFT OF JOHN STEWART KENNEDY, 1897. (P. 30) PHOTOGRAPH BY 1992 METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Probably no historical painting is as familiar to the American public as Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze's dramatic *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. Painted in 1851, seventy-five years after the event, it may not be true to the facts, but it catches the spirit of dauntless courage exhibited by General George Washington and his soldiers on

Christmas Eve 1776. Among the men to whom Leutze grants a place in the rowboat is the fifth American president, James Monroe, who did not actually make the crossing. Another is a man who, in most reproductions, is hard to make out. He is shown pulling the stroke oar just behind General Washington's forward-thrusting kneecap. He is a

black man, and he did make the crossing. His name was Prince Whipple.

According to the earliest account of Whipple's remarkable life, he was born in Africa "of comparatively wealthy parents" and, when about ten, was sent by his parents "in company with a cousin, to America to be educated." Instead, both young men were sold into slavery

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Left: A slave who was with George Washington as he crossed the Delaware River on Christmas Eve 1776, Prince Whipple (below left) is barely discernible behind the general's knee in Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze's 1851 painting Washington Crossing the Delaware.

in Baltimore and purchased by William Whipple of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. During the Revolution, William Whipple served as an aide to Washington and rose to the rank of general. Prince Whipple served at his master's side throughout the Revolution and, according to historian William C. Nell, "was emancipated during the war."

When I was growing up, I had never heard a teacher mention the role blacks played in the Revolution. In fact, I suspect my ignorance on this score would have remained intact if I had not looked into the story of a black woman who sued for her freedom in 1780—and won. The liberated woman, Elizabeth Freeman, subsequently took service in the household of the lawyer who had taken her case, Theodore Sedgwick of Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Another servant in that household, I discovered, was a freeborn black veteran named Agrippa Hull.

Hull enlisted on May 1, 1777, and served for the duration of the war, first under Brig. Gen. John Paterson and later under the celebrated Polish volunteer and master military engineer General Thaddeus Kosciuszko. In his biography of General Paterson, Thomas Egleston, his great-grandson, recalled that Hull "always claimed that he was the son of an African prince," adding, "His aptness and wit and his readiness in repartee, as well as the intelligent manner in which he performed all his duties, made him a great favorite with all the officers of the army stationed at 'the Point'"—a reference to the fact that Hull was at West Point at the time Kosciuszko was engaged in fortifying that strategic high point on the west bank of the Hudson River.

Historian Richard S. Walling lists Hull among those whose service at the June 28, 1778, Battle of Monmouth is "probable, but not yet researched for verification." Considering that Hull served under Paterson for the first two years of his enlistment and Paterson's Third Massachusetts Brigade took part in the battle, it seems very probable

that the volunteer from Stockbridge was one of the more than eight hundred African Americans present at the war's last major engagement in the North.

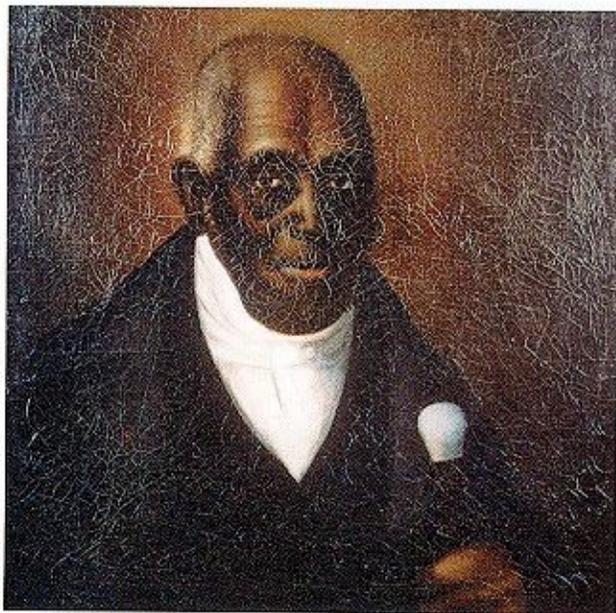
At war's end, Kosciuszko, who had taken a great liking to Hull, invited him to return to Poland with him, but Hull declined. Mustered out at West Point in 1783, he returned to Stockbridge, served as a butler, saved enough money to buy a farm, raised a family, and died in 1848 just short of his eighty-ninth birthday. "As long as he lived," Egleston wrote in his memoir, "the children and the grandchildren of the officers he had known went frequently to Stockbridge to see him. He was never tired of telling stories of the Revolution."

Black Americans—in and out of uniform, on land and at sea, and on both sides of the conflict—played a significant part during the struggles that would separate the colonies from England. Crispus Attucks, part black, part Natick Indian, and a towering six feet two inches tall, was among the five Americans killed by British soldiers in the Boston Massacre, which took place five years before the Battle of Lexington. In the words of a nineteenth-century memoirist, Attucks was "the first to defy, and the first to die." Similarly, on April 19, 1775, among the first to take a bullet at Concord Bridge was Prince Easterbrooks, a Lexington slave who had been enrolled in Captain John Parker's company, which was the first to engage the British. But Easterbrooks survived to fight in nearly every major campaign of the war.

Among the other black Minutemen who fought at Concord was Peter Salem, from Framingham, Massachusetts, a slave whose owners had freed him so he could enlist. Two months after the Battle of Concord, Salem was among the two dozen or so blacks to see action, and plenty of it, at the Battle of

Bunker Hill. Several early accounts of the battle credited Salem with having fired the shot that killed Royal Marine Major John Pitcairn, who had led British Regulars into battle against the Patriots at Lexington and Concord. As historian Benjamin Quarles pointed out, however, "The story that Salem fired the shot that felled...Pitcairn is not easy to substantiate." In any event, the freed slave from Framingham appears to have won renown for his marksmanship because his musket, which saw further use at Saratoga and Stony Point, may be seen in a display case, bearing his name, at the Bunker Hill Monument.

Then there was the other black Salem—Salem Poor. Free, married, and twenty-eight, Salem Poor enlisted in a Massachusetts militia company commanded by Benjamin Ames. Poor was also engaged at the Battle of Bunker Hill, and he, too, seems to have had a keen eye and a steady hand. It is thought that a shot from his musket brought down another British officer, Lt. Col. James Abercrombie. That he distinguished himself is certain; six months



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Agrippa Hull joined the Continental Army in 1777 and served with some of its most illustrious commanders, including the famous Polish Patriot and military engineer Thaddeus Kosciuszko. At the end of the war, Hull declined offers to travel to Poland.

after the battle, fourteen Massachusetts officers, all of whom had taken part in the battle, petitioned the Massachusetts General Court to reward Salem Poor. They wrote that he "behaved like an Ex-



Unhappy Boston! for thy Sons deplore,
 thy hollow Walls before us d with gullies Gore;
 thy faithless People and his savage Bands,
 with murderous Rancour stretch their bloody Hands;
 like fierce Barbarians grinning o'er their Prey,
 approve the Carnage and enjoy the Day.

If falling drops from Rage from Anguish Writing,
 If speechless Sorrows lab'ring for a Tongue,
 O'er a weeping World can ought appease,
 The plaintive Ghosts of Victims such as these,
 The Patriot's agonising Sighs for each are shed,
 A glorious Tribute which embalms the Dead.

But know your firmness to that awful Goal,
 where Justice steps the Murderer of his Soul,
 Should vend C— as the Founder of the Lane,
 Snatch the reluctant Victim from her Hand,
 keen Executions on this Plate infer'd,
 Shall reach a Judge who never can be brib'd.

The unhappy Sufferers were Messrs SAMUEL GRAY, SAMUEL MAVERICK, JAMES CALDWELL, CRISPUS ATTUCKS & PATRICK CARROLL. Killed Six wounded two of them (CHRISTOPHER MONK & JOHN CLARK). Mortally



Crispus Attucks, a black man, was among the first to be slain at the Boston Massacre, but the earliest renditions of the event (above) ignored his involvement. Only later, when Abolitionists were working to free the slaves, did Attucks begin to appear in illustrations, as in the example at left.

perienced officer, as well as an excellent soldier... to set forth particulars of his conduct would be tedious. Wee would only begg leave to say in the person of this said Negro centers a brave & gallant soldier." Whether the general court rewarded Salem Poor, who went on to fight at Monmouth and White Plains, is not known.

In these early battles—at Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill—blacks, both free and slave, fought side by side with white patriots. A man's race and social standing were matters of scant concern in such trying times; his readiness to fight was paramount. But, as Quarles noted, "within ten months after Lexington and Concord a pattern of exclusion

had developed." It was during these months that the Continental Army, representing all thirteen colonies, was formed, and Southern sensibilities had to be taken into account. As early as May 20, the Committee of Safety had resolved that only free men would be accepted into the army, and "no Slaves... upon any consideration whatever." In Southern states particularly there was fear of insurrection—a fear fueled by a rumor that spread like wildfire through North Carolina. The British had decreed that blacks who killed their masters would be granted possession of their master's plantation. In September, a delegate to the Continental Congress from South Carolina introduced a resolution calling for the discharge of all blacks from the army. The resolution was not accepted. Just two weeks later, however, a council of general officers meeting at headquarters in Cambridge took matters into its own hands and decided, unanimously, not to accept slaves into the army and, by a large majority, not to allow free blacks to serve as soldiers either.

Then in November something happened that made the generals reconsider their policy of exclusion. Anti-British sentiment was almost as strong in Virginia—the home of Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Patrick Henry—as it was in Massachusetts. But while the British presence was concentrated in Massachusetts, the Crown's representative in Virginia, John Murray, Earl of Dunmore, had a force of only three hundred soldiers, seamen, and Loyalist recruits. Moreover, the commander of British forces, General Thomas Gage, had informed Dunmore that he could not assist him "with men, arms or ammunition," nor did he have the cash to pay any bills the earl might accrue. Feeling isolated and vulnerable, on November 7, 1775, Dunmore resorted to issuing what was, in effect, an emancipation proclamation, albeit one issued for strictly military purposes. It stated that all able-bodied

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Patriot resistance at the June 17, 1775, Battle of Bunker Hill shocked professional English soldiers and demonstrated American resolve. Among the Patriots who defended the height against repeated British attacks was Salem Poor (left) who was later commended for his bravery during the battle.

indentured servants and slaves owned by Virginians who refused “to resort to his Majesty’s standard” would be granted their freedom if they joined his Majesty’s troops “as soon as may be.” Hundreds of slaves, as eager for personal freedom as their masters were for political freedom, began slipping away to join the British at Norfolk. In mid-November, black soldiers took part in a skirmish with the colonial militia at Kemp’s Landing, on the Elizabeth River. The engagement, which ended with the capture of the militia’s two commanding colonels and the flight of their men, marked the beginning of open conflict in Virginia.

By December 1, nearly three hundred slaves had enlisted in what became known as Lord Dunmore’s Ethiopian Regiment. On the 9th, Dunmore, whose forces now numbered six hundred, felt confident of victory when he again faced a rebel force. The engagement took place at Great Bridge, which spanned the Elizabeth River some ten miles below Norfolk. On one side of the river the British had constructed a fortification and emplaced artillery,

while the Virginians had dug in on the other. Duped by a black spy into believing that the Patriots’ position was weak, Dunmore ordered an attack supported by artillery fire. As confident Redcoats advanced across the bridge, the Patriots held their fire. Then, when the British were within fifty yards of the decoy force of a hundred men, they let loose a hail of musketry. The volley put the British to flight. Shortly thereafter, deciding that prudence was the greater part of valor, Dunmore took as many Tory families as he could aboard his fleet of ships and, abandoning Norfolk, left the Virginia mainland to the rebels.

From this point on, Dunmore employed his black soldiers as pilots on small craft that raided river settlements and plantations and as foragers when provisions ran low. Early in the new year, however, Dunmore was alarmed to discover that a smallpox epidemic was carrying off “an incredible number of our people, especially blacks.” By early June, his Ethiopian Regiment had been reduced in strength to 150, despite the daily arrival of six to eight new volunteers. The next month, the British withdrew to

Saint George’s Island in the Potomac River, scuttled more than half of their 103 vessels, and then sailed down the river and out of harm’s way.

According to Quarles: “The Negro who fled to [Dunmore] was actuated by the same love of liberty for which the colonists avowedly broke with the mother country. To the slave, the lordship’s proclamation was an invitation to the fellowship of the free....” Meanwhile, as the crucial part played by a black informant in the battle of Great Bridge indicates, many Virginia slaves—for one reason or another, including loyalty to their masters and, no doubt, fear of what might happen to those they left behind or to themselves if they were caught—resisted the temptation to go over to the British.

While the spy who helped dupe the British at Great Bridge remains anonymous, another black spy who played an even more important part in the war received a certificate attesting to his services and sat for a portrait. His name was James Armistead, and the story of how he became “James Lafayette” is fascinating.

James enlisted, with his owner’s permission, in mid-March 1781, shortly

after the marquis de Lafayette arrived in Williamsburg at the head of three light-infantry regiments made up of New England and New Jersey Continentals. The troops were tired and dispirited.

Lafayette's mission was to put a stop to the havoc that was being wreaked throughout Virginia by the forces under the command of the hated turncoat Benedict Arnold. Soon, however, the audacious Frenchman who had set out in pursuit of Arnold found himself being chased by Lord Charles Cornwallis, who was leading a force of some five thousand soldiers. Moreover, Cornwallis had a cavalry force of eight hundred men, mounted on stolen Virginia thoroughbreds, whereas Lafayette had only fifty poorly mounted men. Under these circumstances, the best Lafayette could do was to elude the larger force, while—to keep up the spirit of the Virginians—making it look as if Cornwallis were running from him.

To survive in this cat-and-mouse situation, Lafayette needed reliable information about enemy plans. James Armistead

provided it. First, he got inside Arnold's camp working as an orderly and guide. Then he reported everything he learned to runners who took the information back to Lafayette. When Arnold returned to the North, Armistead became a waiter at Lord Cornwallis' headquarters and again, almost daily, provided enough inside information to allow Lafayette to camp close to Cornwallis without being detected. Had the American force been discovered, there is little doubt that it would have been put to flight, if not utterly destroyed. And without that army, it is unlikely that the joint Franco-American operation that led to Cornwallis' entrapment at Yorktown could have been successfully accomplished.

After the war, Lafayette wrote a certificate on James Armistead's behalf, which states, in part: "This is to Certify that the Bearer...Has done Essential Services to me While I Had the

Honour to Command in this State. His Intelligences from the Enemy's Camp were Industriouslly Collected and More faithfully deliver'd. He properly Acquitted Himself with Some important Commissions I Gave Him and Appears to me Entitled to Every Reward his Situation Can Admit of."

Lafayette sent the certificate to Virginia's General Assembly, together with a request that James be granted his freedom, pointing out that the black man had repeatedly risked his life in the service of the Patriot cause. The Assembly agreed, and henceforth James Armistead called himself James Lafayette.

Forty years later, on his last visit to the United States, the ever-popular French general paid a visit to Richmond, where, before an applauding public, he greeted his sixty-four-year-old namesake and comrade. It was shortly after this reunion that James Lafayette sat for his portrait.

By coincidence, during the Revolution the marquis de Lafayette had also made the acquaintance of Agrippa Hull. Thomas Egleston later

As the Revolutionary War dragged on, both sides were forced to confront a shortage of available manpower. This shortage of recruits provided blacks with an opportunity to serve on both sides. While some enlisted in America's First Rhode Island Regiment (below), others found themselves serving as musicians in the Hessian Guard Regiment (right).



ILLUSTRATIONS: ANNE S.K. BROWN MILITARY COLLECTION

recalled that "General Lafayette knew Grippy in the army, and on his second visit to this country [in 1784] the Sedgwicks of Stockbridge took Grippy to New York to meet him."

It is worth noting, too, that both Lafayette and Kosciuszko took more than a passing interest in the plight of the Negroes of America. Kosciuszko donated funds derived from the sale of Ohio land granted him for his war service to the establishment of one of the first schools for blacks in America. For his part, Lafayette, back in Paris, became a charter member of a society called The Friends of the Blacks. A British abolitionist said of the egalitarian marquis that he was "as uncompromising an enemy of the slave trade and slavery as any man I ever knew."

In 1777, as the war was moving into its third year, blacks began to be accepted into the military in large numbers. Congress had started to fix troop quotas for the various states. And, as Quarles noted, while Northern state legislatures might pass laws prohibiting the enrollment of Negroes, "muster masters ignored the law...." In Massachusetts, for example, the General Court passed an act in January 1776 excluding Negroes, Indians, and mulattos from the militia, and later that year passed an act excluding non-whites from the ranks of the Continental Army. Many in the North believed that training blacks in the use of arms was a potential danger. Members of the Massachusetts legislature also noted that "there was an inconsistency in assigning slaves to defend the liberty of America—an inconsistency which would expose patriots to the kind of British ridicule that 'we so liberally bestowed upon them because of Dunmore's regiment of blacks.'" But in May of 1777, Trueman Wheeler, muster master for Berkshire County, had no qualms about enlisting Agrippa Hull. The muster master got his fee, perhaps as much as ten dollars per recruit, and the recruit got his bounty—in Hull's case twenty dollars. The towns that appointed the committees that oversaw the hiring of recruits wanted to keep expenses down and in



Although he was a slave at the time, James Armistead enlisted in the Continental Army, where he provided valuable intelligence to his commander, the marquis de Lafayette. After the war, Lafayette assisted Armistead in gaining his freedom, and in gratitude Armistead changed his surname to Lafayette.

many cases instructed the muster masters to economize. And, in the North anyway, Negroes would generally accept a lower bounty than whites. (The one hundred-dollar bounty paid to Prince Hall of Medford, Massachusetts, would appear to be an exception to the rule.)

The year 1777 was also when Connecticut, whose towns were having a hard time meeting their quotas, passed an act that exempted any two men who could provide an able-bodied substitute—of any color. They followed this up with a second act that let slaves serve as substitutes for their owners, on condition that the owner granted the slave his freedom.

Rhode Island, always a bit of a maverick, passed a slave enlistment act in January 1778, and in February authorized the formation of a battalion of slaves who, if they volunteered and passed muster, would be declared "absolutely free." The slave battalion became the First Rhode Island Regiment. It was formed during the terrible winter at Valley Forge, from which Washington sent Colonel Christopher Greene north to start drilling his 125 black soldiers, thirty-three of whom had been free prior to signing up.

One of the last to enlist in the new regiment was Jack Sisson, who had made a name for himself the previous summer when he played a crucial part in the capture of British Maj. Gen. Richard Prescott in Newport. The operation, essentially a commando raid, was carried out under the leadership of Lt. Col. William Barton. After selecting a group of about forty men, Barton told them his plan, warned them that it was risky, and added that they were free to back out if they wished. According to a contemporary account, however, "they unanimously resolved to go with him." Using three small boats, Barton's party slipped through Prescott's warships, landed near the general's headquarters, overpowered the guard, and surrounded the house. Only a door now separated them from the sleeping general. Sisson charged the door, using his head as a bat-

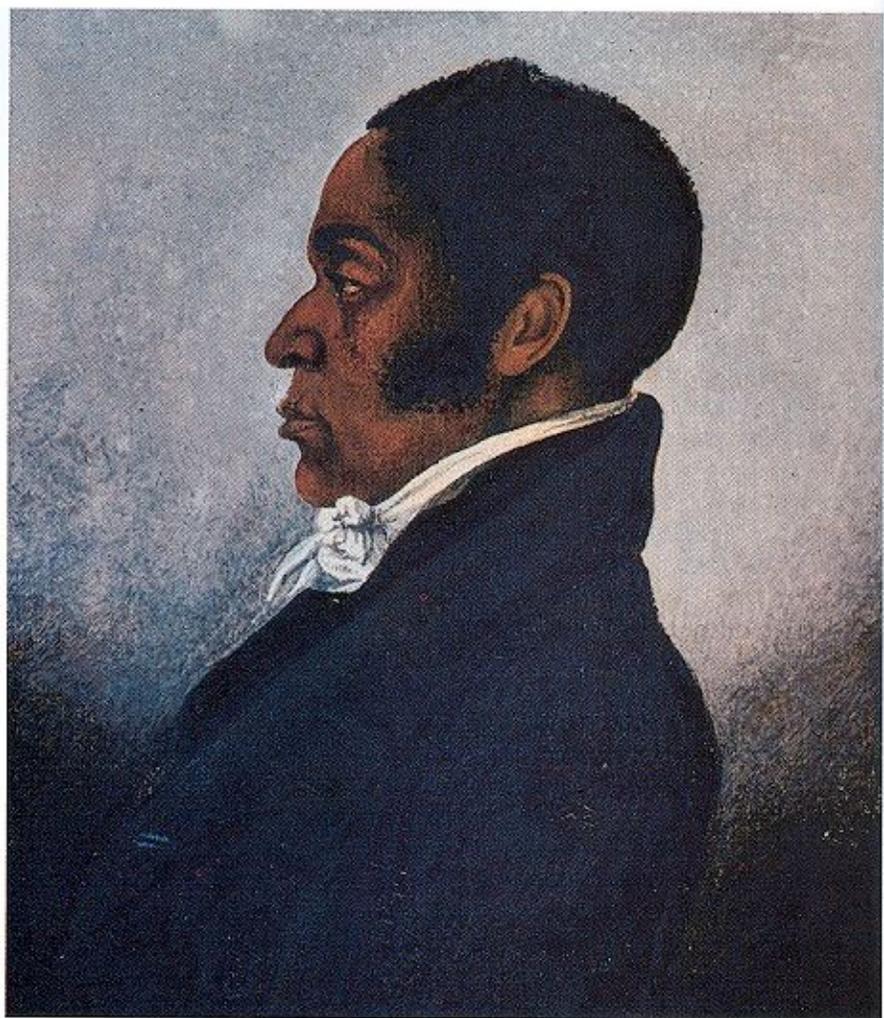
tering ram, and on the second try, he "forced a passage into [the house], and then into the general's chamber." The general was allowed to pull on his breeches before being taken away. He was subsequently exchanged for imprisoned American General Charles Lee.

Few regiments, of any color, earned such a reputation for bravery and loyalty as the First Rhode Island. Its baptism by fire took place in August 1778 in what has been variously called the Battle of Rhode Island and the Battle of Newport. In command of six brigades, American General John Sullivan hoped to defeat a much larger British force, which included Hessian soldiers, with the assistance of a French naval squadron. When a violent storm forced the French ships to withdraw, Sullivan had no choice but to carry out a strategic retreat from the northern end of Rhode Island. As the battle lines were drawn, the Rhode Island blacks found themselves facing the feared Hessians, who charged three times and were repulsed three times, with heavy casualties. The black regiment had proved equal to any other. In his report on the battle General Sullivan said the regiment was entitled to "a proper share of the Honours of the day."

For his part, the German colonel who had led the Hessians asked to be transferred because he was afraid his men, who had seen so many of their comrades die, might shoot him.

Two and a half years later, on May 13, 1781, a number of Colonel Greene's black Rhode Islanders fought at his side in what turned out to be his, and their, last battle, near Points Bridge, New York. William C. Nell, the black abolitionist author of the seminal *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution*, published in 1855, described the event: "Colonel Greene, the commander of the regiment, was cut down and mortally wounded: but the sabres of the enemy only reached him through the bodies of his faithful guard of blacks, who hovered over him, and every one of whom was killed." The remnants of the First Rhode Island Regiment served for the rest of the war and were among the troops with Washington when he accepted Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown.

Later that year, black and white soldiers again fought side by side, and again, every one of them was killed—but after they had surrendered. The battle took place on September 6 near Groton, Connecticut. The Patriots mustered a force of eighty-four men to defend the town and to try to prevent a much larger British force commanded by Brig. Gen. Benedict Arnold from seizing the nearby port of New London. After a fierce resistance that caused heavy casualties to their attackers, Lt. Col. William Ledyard's outnumbered Americans withdrew to Fort Griswold, a small fortification with a few cannons. When the British tried to scale Griswold's walls, two Americans—one white, one black—drove their pikes into the major who led the assault. The black man was Jordan Freeman. When, finally, the British broke in and an officer asked who commanded the fort, Ledyard replied, "I did once. You do now," and handed his sword to the officer, who thereupon thrust his sword through Ledyard's body. Close by stood a black American, a slave who had run across the fields with his master to join the others. His name was Lambert Latham. To quote Nell's graphic account: "Lambert...retaliated upon the officer by thrusting his bayonet through his body. Lambert, in return, received from the



Despite being captured and offered a life of luxury in Europe, James Forten, who served as a powder boy on board the privateer Royal Louis during the Revolution, refused to forsake his country and return to England with his captors.

enemy thirty-three bayonet wounds, and thus fell, nobly avenging the death of his commander." Maddened by the loss of so many of their men, the British killed all the Americans in the fort. A tablet at Old Fort Griswold, in Groton, erected in 1830, commemorates the memory of those men, carefully segregating the whites from the blacks.

In *Black Heroes of the American Revolution*, historian Burke Davis observed, "Other thousands of blacks might have fought for the Americans, but Georgia's white Patriots feared to put muskets into the hands of their slaves (many of whom had run off to join the British, who organized black units themselves and urged all slaves to flee their masters) and refused to send them to join General [Benjamin] Lincoln's army." Indeed, during the October 9, 1777, Battle of Savannah, hundreds of blacks ran off to

join the British. They built redoubts and served as infantrymen and as guides—in one memorable case helping a British colonel surprise the Americans by showing him a path through a swamp.

Among the several hundred black Americans who served at sea during the Revolution, perhaps the most renowned was James Forten, who in 1781 at the age of fifteen enlisted as a powder boy on a privateer. This was *Royal Louis*, commissioned in Pennsylvania and commanded by Stephen Decatur, Sr. The ship's first engagement was with a British brig. *Royal Louis* took a pounding but came out the victor, forcing the brig to surrender. The next time out, the ship ran up against three British warships, and Decatur was compelled to surrender. Forten's young life then took several astonishing turns. The son of an English captain, amazed by the boy's skill at

marbles, struck up a friendship with Forten and persuaded his father to offer the prisoner the life of an aristocrat in England. Forten refused to renounce his allegiance to his country and paid the penalty: He was sent to the prison ship *Jersey*, anchored off Long Island. *Jersey's* hold was packed with a thousand men. As Sidney Kaplan and Emma Nogrady Kaplan note in *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution*, "Ten thousand died miserably during the war in the rotten old hulk."

Forten survived and was released in a general exchange of prisoners near the end of the war. Back in Philadelphia, he set up business as a sailmaker and inventor, eventually amassing what was then a fortune. In a speech he made in 1833, Forten stated that his great-grandfather had been brought to this country as a slave from Africa, his grandfather had obtained his own freedom, and his father "never wore the yoke...and rendered valuable service to his country in the war of our Revolution." Thus, both father and son were veterans, and Forten and his sons and grandsons all became leaders in the anti-slavery movement.

Not all blacks who volunteered for service on behalf of the Patriots were granted their freedom on being mustered out. Saul Matthews, a Virginia slave who served as a soldier and a spy, was praised by high-ranking officers such as General Nathaniel Greene and Baron Friedrich von Steuben but returned to bondage after the war. In 1792, he petitioned the Virginia legislature for his freedom and was granted "full liberty and freedom."

Born into slavery in Maryland, James Roberts served under his master, Continental Army Colonel Francis De Shields, throughout the entire war. After De Shields' death in Philadelphia, Roberts, in a remarkable display of loyalty, delivered his master's possessions to the family in Maryland. There, he was sold to a Louisiana planter, stripped of his uniform, separated from his wife and children, and put out to fieldwork.

It has been estimated that during the course of the Revolution, seventy-five to one hundred thousand blacks sided with the British. This touchy subject was generally skirted in studies of black participation in the Revolution. Herbert

Black Americans—in and out of uniform—played a significant part during the struggles that would separate the colonies from England.

Aptheker brought the topic into the open in *The Negro in the American Revolution*. Twenty-one years later, Quarles examined the subject in greater depth, and with considerably more documentation, in a book bearing the same title as Aptheker's. More than a quarter of a century later, the Kaplans provided a useful supplement to Quarles, and like him, they reminded white readers of the dilemma faced by blacks, in particular those who were enslaved: "In a war between white Patriot and white Tory, both upholders of the abominable institution, the question for Africans, enslaved in America for a century and a half, was clear enough: In which camp was there a better chance for black freedom?"

What happened to the blacks who sought freedom with the British? Hundreds, perhaps thousands, died of smallpox. Others died in combat, in field hospitals, and in prison ships. But other thousands survived the war. Some, shortly after the peace treaty between Great Britain and the United States was signed in 1783, took part in the British recapture of the Bahamas from Spain. At war's end, some fifteen thousand blacks sailed with the British from Charleston, Savannah, and New York toward various destinations: England, Nassau, Jamaica, and Nova Scotia. From Halifax and London roughly a thousand blacks would subsequently move on to Sierra Leone, on Africa's west coast. Among the roughly thirty-five hundred blacks who sailed to Halifax was one Stephen Blucke, a colonel in the Black Brigade, a British unit that waged guerrilla war against New Jersey Patriots.

And then there was the odd case of the corps of black drummers attached to the Hessian Third Guard Regiment. At the

end of the war, the soldiers took the snappily uniformed drummers back to Hesse with them.

In 1859, four years after the appearance of Nell's pioneering *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution*, New Hampshire journalist Charles W. Brewster produced a book, *Rambles About Portsmouth: Sketches of Persons, Localities, and Incidents of Two Centuries*. One of the subjects is Prince Whipple, the black man in Leutze's painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware*.

In his book, Brewster included a conversation between William Whipple, a forty-three-year-old retired sea captain, and his young African slave, Prince. The conversation takes place in the summer of 1777, shortly after Whipple was appointed brigadier general with the command of the First New Hampshire Brigade. Whipple had been given orders to march with his brigade to Vermont to take part in a campaign to stop the advance of the British force led by General John Burgoyne. General Whipple notices that Prince has suddenly grown sullen and sulky, and asks him what has gotten into him. "Master," Prince replies, "you are going to fight for your liberty, but I have none to fight for." According to Brewster, Whipple thereupon replies that if Prince behaves like a man and does his duty in the fighting he will be granted his freedom at the end of the campaign. The campaign ends with Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga in October, and Prince Whipple is promptly given his freedom.

It is a good story—too good, in fact, to be true. As Mark Sammon and Valerie Cunningham observe in the *Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail Research Book*, "In the 1850s, Brewster told the story as an increasingly abolitionist local white society preferred to remember it." The fact is that Prince Whipple remained enslaved for another seven years and was manumitted only after the war, in February 1784. He died in Portsmouth in 1796. "His grave," Sammon and Cunningham write, "is marked with a headstone and emblems of veteran's service in the Revolutionary War."

JON SWAN, a freelance writer based in Southfield, Massachusetts, is a frequent contributor to *MHQ*.