Inside the Vault:
Highlights from the Gilder Lehrman Collection

October 29, 2020

The session will start shortly. Please note:

- Your video and audio will automatically turn off.
- You can participate through the Q&A function.
- If you have technical difficulties, please email firstfriday@gilderlehrman.org so we can assist you.
Gilder Lehrman Staff

Presenters

• Sandy Trenholm - Collection Director
• Meecah Meecah - Principal Standby in the Philip Touring Company of Hamilton
• Mandel Holland - History Teacher at Woodlands Middle High School in Hartsdale, NY
• Allison Kraft - Assistant Curator
During the Session

- If you would like to ask a question, you can use the Q&A feature, which is at the bottom of your screen.
- Viewing in full screen is recommended to see the presenters and the presentation at the same time.

For Security and Privacy

- Your microphone is automatically muted.
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Today’s Documents

In honor of Veterans Day, we are discussing Black men who served in Continental Army during the American Revolution.

- Romeo Smith
- Cuffee Saunders
- Peter Kiteredge
- Quaco
Enslaved population at the time of the American Revolution

- When the American Revolution began, approximately 450,000 people were enslaved in the thirteen colonies.
- It is estimated that 80,000 to 100,000 enslaved people escaped to the British lines.

![Chart showing US Population in 1790](chart.png)
Black Soldiers in the Continental Army

- July 10, 1775 - Instructions for recruitment prohibited the enlistment of Black men.
  - Exception was made for those who had already enlisted.
- 1778 - Shortages in enlistments prompted states to recruit both free and enslaved Black men.
- February 14 - Rhode Island’s Assembly authorizes the recruitment of Black soldiers.
Enslaved men were promised their freedom for their service.

More than 5,000 Black men served in the Continental Army, mainly in integrated regiments.

1781 - Black soldiers comprised one-fourth of the Continental Army at Yorktown.

Historians believe that 10-15% of the Army was made up of Black soldiers at any given time.
Romeo Smith, Windham, Maine

- From New Marblehead (Windham), Maine
- Enslaved by Parson Peter Thatcher Smith
- Enlisted with three other Black men:
  - Lonnon Rhode
  - Peter Smith
  - Flanders Smith
- Served in the 7th Massachusetts

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“This is to certify that the bearer hereof Romeo Smith is a free man, and has served three years in the Army of the United States of America. Any person attempting to circumvent or trepan him as a slave will deserve the severest penalty of the Law and the indignation of Heaven.”

- Written by Major General Henry Knox
- What can we learn from the word choice?
  - “will deserve the severest punishment”
  - “will incur the severest penalty”
- Why was it created?
- What does it tell us about life after the war for Black veterans?
Researching Romeo Smith

Several references to Romeo Smith in the records

- National Archives records his name as both “Romeo” and “Rominah Smith”
- *Windham, Maine in the War of the Revolution, 1775-1783* doesn’t believe he really served.
- A DAR report speculated that Peter and Romeo were the same person.

Unable to locate postwar information about him
Cuffee Saunders, Connecticut

- He was born in Guiana and brought to Connecticut.
- He had at least two enslavers:
  - A Hartford-area doctor and apothecary
  - Deacon Israel Wells of Colchester
- After the war, he dropped the name Wells and took the name Saunders.
Served as an assistant to Dr. Philip Turner, surgeon general of the hospital of the Northern Division of the Army

Assisted with medical procedures at the hospital in Danbury

Prepared pharmaceuticals at the apothecary store

Became known as “Doctor Cuffee.”
June through September of 1778 - listed on the muster rolls at Valley Forge as “tending the sick.”

Returned to the hospital in Danbury and served the remainder of the war.
“Cuffee Wells, a Free Negro to Enlist Into the Continental Service During the War, and Gave him Besides the Publick Bounty Thirty Pounds for Inlisting and ... that Part of the Whole of Said £30.0.0 as we then understood was Paid to Cuffee’s old Master for his Time”
“Capt Jedediah Hyde of Said Norwich adds ... that he was the Captain of the Same Company which the said Cuffee was Inlisted into, and that he always understood that the Money that was Given to Cuffee at his Inlistment Purchased his Freedom.”
Cuffee Saunders after the War

- Purchased three acres of land in Lebanon, Connecticut
- Continued to practice medicine
- Died of influenza in December 1788
- 1837 - Widow, Phyllis, applied for his Revolutionary War pension
- Not granted until 1843
- Son, Prince Saunders, attended Dartmouth College, became an educator, served as Haiti’s attorney general, and became an exponent of colonization
Peter Kiteridge, Andover, MA

- Peter enlisted in 1775 or 1776 at the age of 25.
- His enslaver, Thomas Kitteridge, served as the regimental surgeon for Colonel Frye’s Regiment in June-August of 1775.
- Peter served in Captain William Hudson Ballard’s Company, Colonel James Frye’s Regiment from 1775 to 1780.
“Borne of African parents & as I apprehend in Boston, from whence while an infant I was removed to Rowley and from thence again to Andover into the family of Doct. Thom Kiteridge, with whom, as was then the lot of my unfortunate race, I passed the best part of my life as a slave.”
“In the year of our Lord 1775 or 6 & in the twenty fifth of my age I entered into the service of the U.S. as a private soldier where I continued five years and where I contracted a complaint from which I have suffered in a greater or less degree ever since & with which I am now afflicted.”
“[I] have untill this time, by my labour, ... been enabled to support myself and family. At present having arrived at the fifty eight year of my life and afflicted with severe and as I apprehend with incurable diseases whereby the labour of my hands is wholly cut off, and with it the only means of my support.”
Peter Kiteridge, Andover, MA

- Lived in Andover, Newtown, Natick, Dover, and Medfield after the war
- Married Susanna Fuda in Medfield, Massachusetts, on September 15, 1791
Peter Kiteridge, Andover, MA

Variations on the spelling of Kiteredge:

- Kitridge
- Kitteredge
- Kitteridge
- Kiterige
- Kitteraige
- Kittredge
- Kiteredge

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Quaco Honeyman, Rhode Island

• One of the first Black spies for the Americans
• Enslaved by John Honeyman of Newport, Rhode Island
• Summer 1777
  • Hired out to Mr. Overing on Aquidneck Island
  • Escaped to the mainland
  • Provided the Americans with intelligence that led to the capture of British General Richard Prescott in his bed
Quaco Honeyman, 1782

- After the war, John Honeyman’s heirs tried to re-enslave him.
- Quaco petitioned the Rhode Island government for his freedom and it was granted.
- This act, printed by Rhode Island’s General Assembly, granted Quaco manumission after his service as a spy for the Americans.
“did, by the Information he then gave, render great and essential Service to this State, and the Public in general; and the Council of War having given unto the said Quaco a Permit to pass and repass freely, without Molestation, and thereby the said Quaco did consider himself as a Freeman; but since the Death of the said Honyman, and the Evacuation of Rhode-Island, some of the Representatives of the said Honyman have laid Claim unto the said Quaco as a Slave: Whereupon the said Quaco begs this Assembly to take the Matter into Consideration, and make such Order thereon as they may see fit: Wherefore It is Voted and Resolved, That the said Quaco be and he is hereby declared to
“It is voted and resolved that the said Quaco be and he is hereby declared to be manumitted and absolved from all Ties of Bondage and Slavery which he heretofore owed, and was held to by the said James Honyman, Esq. deceased, or any of his Representatives, and he is hereby declared to be a Freeman accordingly.”
Honoring Black Soldiers on Veterans Day

African Americans in the US Military: From the Revolution to the World Wars

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE US MILITARY: FROM THE REVOLUTION TO THE WORLD WARS

Despite unfair compensation, segregation, and even legal bans on military service, African Americans have served in every conflict in United States history.

Why Black Men Fought in World War I, 1919

A Spotlight on a Primary Source by J.A. Jackson

During World War I, approximately 700,000 black men in the US military served in segregated regiments and were often relegated to support duties such as digging trenches, transporting supplies, cleaning latrines, and burying the dead. One notable exception is the “Harlem Hellfighters,” organized in 1916 as the 369th Infantry Regiment of the New York National Guard. Their nickname came from the 300 Harlem students who comprised the core of the regiment, and the German view of them as “Hellfighters.”

On April 6, 1917, the same day that the United States declared war on Germany, the 369th New York Regiment was mobilized and became part of the US Army. In May 1918, it was redesignated the 369th Infantry Regiment. They joined the 36th Division and were “bowed” to the French army, becoming the only American division to serve exclusively under the French. The men spent 184 days in combat, more than any other American infantry.
Q&A
Upcoming Programs

● **Book Breaks**, November 1 at 12 pm ET (9 am PT)
  ○ Lonnie G. Bunch III, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and Founding Director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, discusses his book *A Fool’s Errand*.

● **Inside the Vault**, Thursday, November 12 at 7 pm ET (4 pm PT)
  ○ We will explore speeches and letters by Abraham Lincoln including a courtship letter, the Gettysburg Address, and his speech on slavery and the American Dream.

● Visit [gilderlehrman.org](http://gilderlehrman.org) for free resources for students, teachers, families, and history enthusiasts of all ages.