

An African American soldier's pay warrant, 1780

Introduction

During the American Revolution, Sharp Liberty, an African American soldier, served in the Connecticut Line of the Continental Army. Before the war, he had been enslaved in Wallingford, Connecticut. In 1777, he enlisted in the army, served in the 6th Connecticut and 4th Connecticut, and was manumitted at the end of the war for his service.

The cash-strapped government issued vouchers promising full payment by a certain date and paid interest until the full amount was collected. This voucher for eight pounds, five shillings, covers one-quarter of the full amount that Connecticut owed to Liberty in 1780. On the back, the state treasurer recorded the interest paid between 1781 and 1789. Sharp Liberty acknowledged payment with his mark. The principal was probably paid soon after 1789, as indicated by the large circular punch cancellation, evidence that the debt was cleared and the voucher was no longer valid for payment.

Questions for Discussion

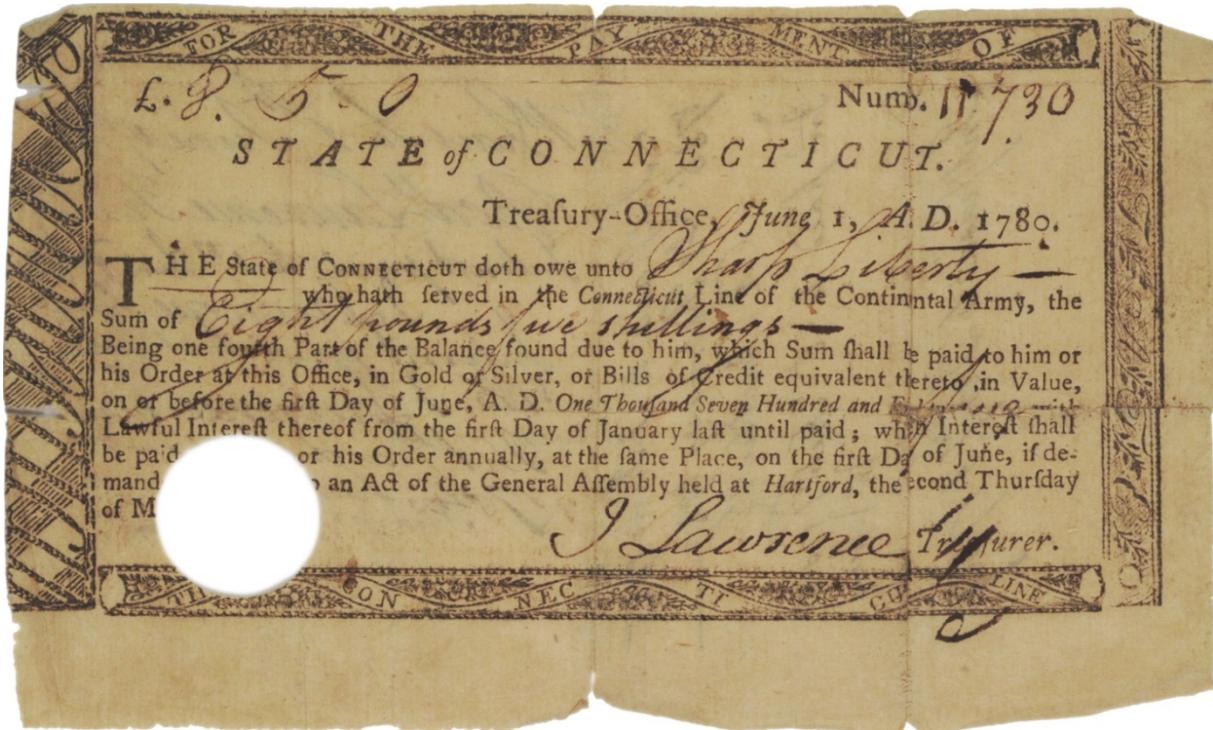
Read the document introduction and study the document and transcript. Then answer the following questions based on the document and your knowledge of American history.

1. What is implied by the fact that Sharp Liberty was to receive $1/4^{\text{th}}$ of what was due to him? What can you surmise is the purpose of a pay warrant?
2. What can you infer from the line in the introduction "Sharp Liberty acknowledged payment with his mark"?
3. How long does it take for Connecticut to pay off the warrant?
4. Use the link below and calculate the approximate value of the money given to Sharp Liberty in today's currency.

<http://apps.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/default0.asp>

An African American soldier's pay warrant, 1780

Images



Pay warrant to Sharp Liberty, 1 June 1780–1789 (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09132.01)



Pay warrant to Sharp Liberty, 1 June 1780–1789 (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09132.01)

An African American soldier's pay warrant, 1780

Transcript

£. 8. 5. 0

Num 11 7.30

STATE of CONNECTICUT.

Treasury-Office, June 1, A.D. 1780.

THE State of CONNECTICUT doth owe unto *Sharp Liberty*—who hath served in the Connecticut Line of the Continental Army, the Sum of *Eight pounds five shillings*—

Being one fourth Part of the Balance found due to him, which Sum shall be paid to him or his Order at this Office, in Gold or Silver, or Bills of Credit equivalent thereto, in Value, on or before the first Day of June, A.D. One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty *five* with Lawful Interest thereof from the first Day of January last until paid; which Interest shall be paid [*text loss*] or his Order annually, at the same Place, on the first Day of June, if demand [*text loss*] an Act of the General Assembly held at Hartford, the second Thursday of M[*text loss*]

J Lawrence Treasurer

[2] Intst paid to 1st June 1781

Rod Lawrence [*illegible*]

Interest paid to 1st June 1782

J. Lawrence Treas^r

Interest paid to 1st June

1783 J Lawrence Treas^r

Intst paid [*text loss*] June

1784 La[*text loss*]rence

Int paid to 1 June 1785

1786 & 1 February 1787—

R Butler [*illegible*]

Int paid to 1st Feb^{ry} 1788

Jn^o. Jeffery

Int paid to Feb^{ry} 1 1789

[*overwritten on page 2*]

Rec^d of the Bearer the within contents for me.

Sharp X [*text loss*]