

**Researching Black Patriots and Loyalists During the Revolutionary Era**

Danielle Rose, 10 Million Names Volunteer Manager

February 7, 2026

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Meet today's presenter



Danielle Rose  
10 Million Names Volunteer Manager

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**OVERVIEW**

- **Presentation (50 mins.)**
  - Black Patriots history and resources
  - Black Loyalists history and resources
- **Q&A (10-15 mins.)**

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**Common Names**

- Traditional West African names
- Names derived from classical literature
- Geographic names
- Surnames referencing emancipation

*Whitmore Cuffe*  
4 Massachusetts Regiment.  
(Revolutionary War.)

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Locate other sources to confirm race

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# Black Patriots

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**Black Soldiers in the Continental Army**

- June 1775: Congress forms the Continental Army
- November 1775: General George Washington prohibits enlistment of free and enslaved Black men
- January 1776: Free Black men allowed to reenlist if they previously served
- 1777: Washington issues new orders that any free man is eligible to enlist, regardless of race
- 1778: States began to enlist both free and enslaved Black men

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**Motivations for Enlisting**

- Consistent pay and promise of bounty land
- Better social standing as a member of the military community
- Promises of freedom in exchange for service
- Hopes of racial equality after the war

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### Experiences in the Army

- Served in integrated units
- Roles: Infantrymen, musicians, support personnel, personal servants
- More likely to enlist for longer terms



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### Published Studies

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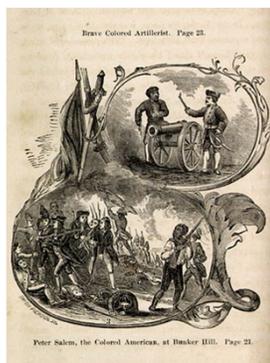
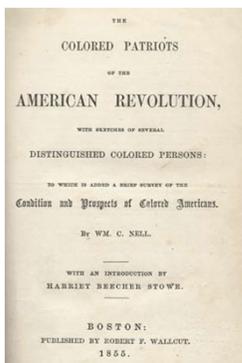
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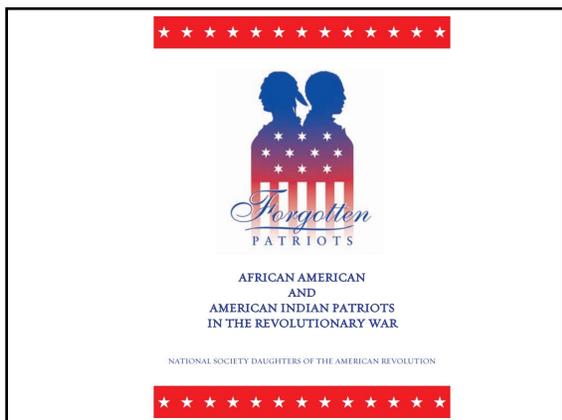
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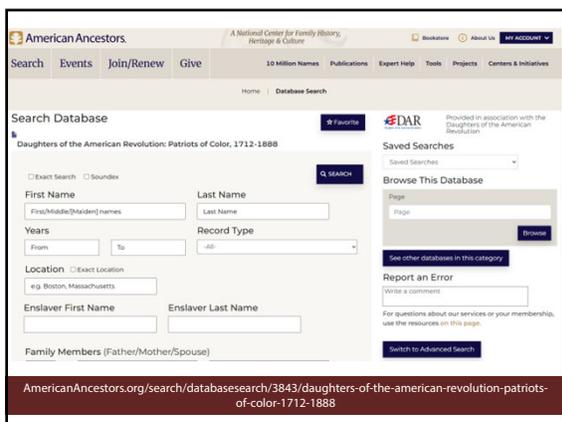
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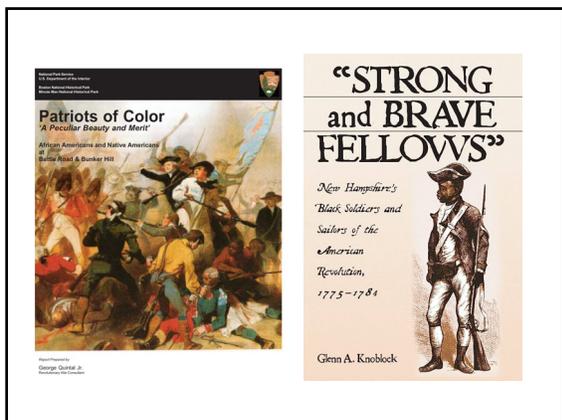
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### Muster Rolls

- Provide information on when and where a soldier served, rank, captain's name, place of enlistment
- Possible variations for a Black soldier
  - Racial descriptions in some cases
  - Some men only identified by first name
  - Black/Blackman as a surname

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### United States Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775-1783

Images of muster rolls, payrolls, strength returns, and other personnel, pay, and supply records of the American Army during the Revolutionary War. The collection is arranged by type of service, military unit, and jacket or folder number. To more easily find your ancestor in this collection, you'll need to know the state and military unit. To identify state and military unit of interest click on the "Learn more" link and see coverage table. The military unit may also be identified by searching the collection "United States, Revolutionary War Compiled Service Records, 1775-1783" Index provided by Fold3.com and FamilySearch. This collection is from Record Group 93, War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records, and is National Archives Microfilm publication M246.

<small>First Name</small> <input type="text"/>	<small>Last Name</small> <input type="text"/>
<small>Place</small> <small>City, County, State, Province, or C</small>	<small>Year</small> <small>Birth or Death Year</small>

[familysearch.org/search/collection/2068326](https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2068326)

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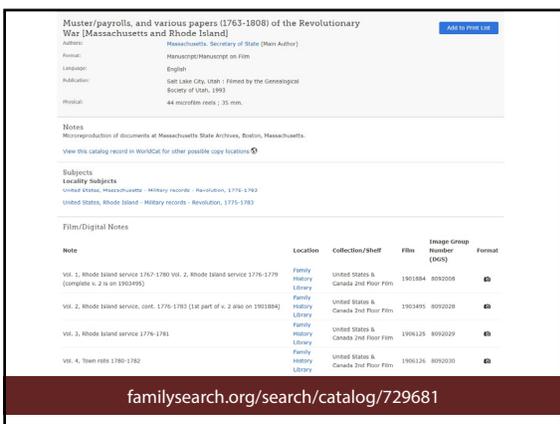
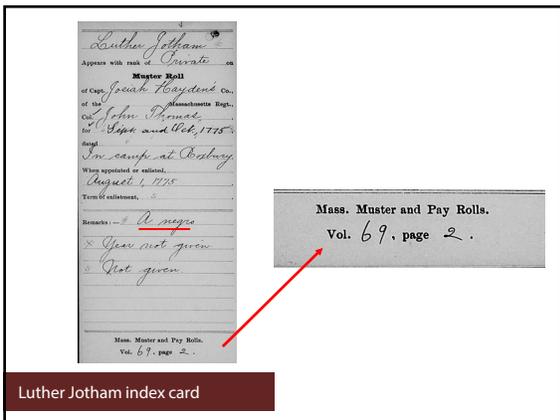
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# Pension Records

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### Key Pension Legislation

- 1776: Officers and men disabled during service received half pay
- 1780: Widows and orphans of officers received half pay for 7 years
- 1818: Pensions for veterans who served at least 9 months and in financial need
- 1832: Pensions granted to those with service less than 6 months and removed financial need requirement
- 1838: Widows authorized to receive pensions for 5 years if they married the veteran before 1794
- 1853: Removed restrictions on the date of marriage for widows

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### What can we learn from pension records?

- Basic vital information
- Place of residence
- Names of family and friends
- Military details (place of enlistment, company and regiment, names of fellow soldiers)
- Discharge papers
- Documents regarding any issues during application process
- Anecdotes of war experiences

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## Bounty Land

- Congress offered land to officers and soldiers who served in the Continental Army
- Land in Northwest Territory issued by federal government and states after the war
- Many early applications and warrants destroyed by fire
- Replacement bounty land cards included in pension files

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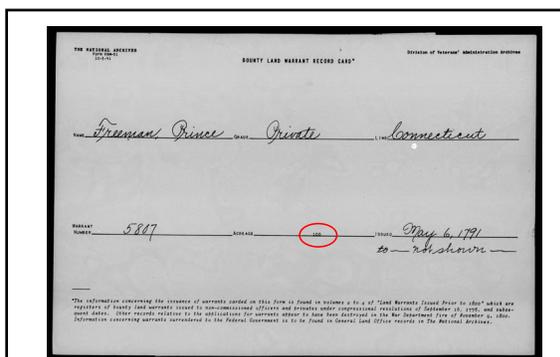
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Prince Freeman, Bounty Land Warrant Record Card

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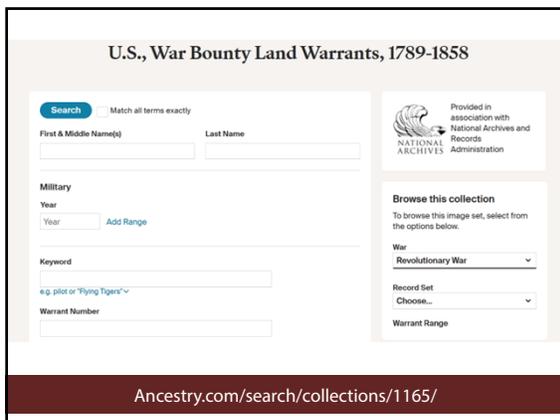
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**Wartime Service**

- Specialized occupations and guides
- Ethiopian Regiment (1775-1776)
- Black Pioneers
  - Formed from the remaining members of the Ethiopian Regiment
  - Support personnel
- Women also participated

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**Military Records**

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The screenshot shows the Library and Archives Canada website. The main heading is "Loyalists in the Maritimes — Ward Chipman Muster Master's Office, 1777-1785". On the left, there is a sidebar with links: "The records", "About the database", "Search screen", "How to interpret the results", "How to obtain copies", and "Other resources". Below the sidebar is a "Search: Database" button. The main content area includes a "On this page" section with links to "The Records", "The Database", "Search Screen", "How to Interpret the Results", "How to Obtain Copies", and "Other Resources". There is also a small image titled "The coming of the Loyalists, 1783-1800" and a "The Records" section with a brief biography of Ward Chipman.

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## Relocation After the War

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**After the War**

- General George Washington demanded that the British return all American property, including all enslaved people who fled to the British
- November 30, 1782: Provisional Peace Agreement signed
- Sir Guy Carleton chose to honor the promise made to Black Loyalists
- Thousands of Black Loyalists relocated to other British territories, including Nova Scotia, England, and Jamaica

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**Black Loyalists to Nova Scotia**

- Brigadier General Samuel Birch appointed to conduct interviews with those preparing for relocation
- Certificates of freedom issued to those who could prove their service to the crown and status as a refugee (Birch certificates)
- Information from the interviews compiled and given to the Americans for compensation (known as the Book of Negroes)

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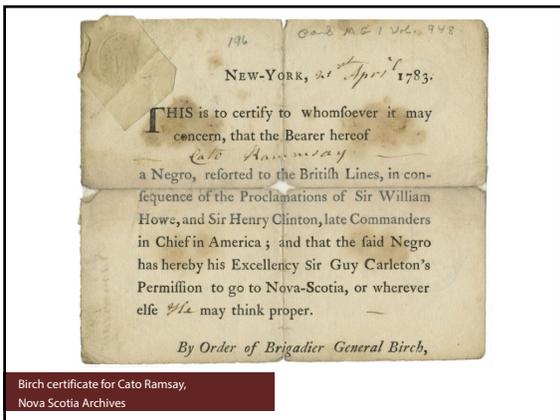
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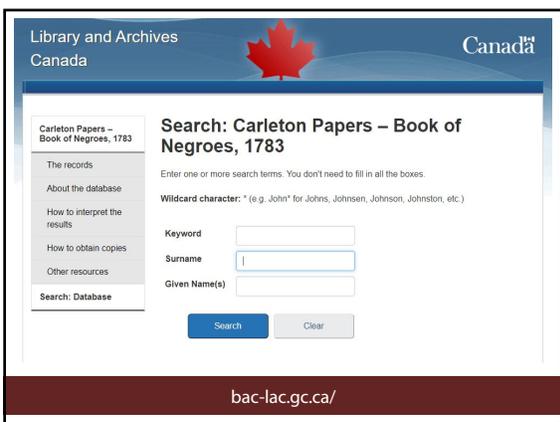
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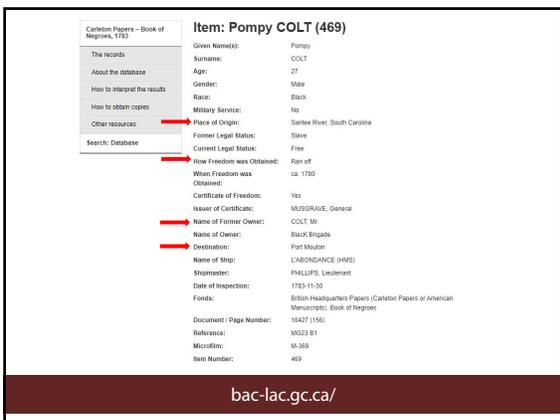
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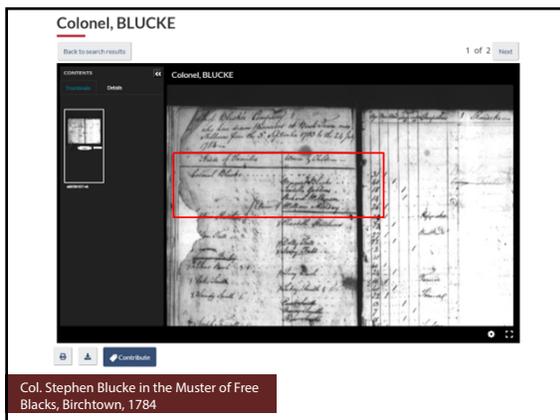
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### Life in Nova Scotia

- Forced to settle in areas outside the main towns
- Difficulty receiving land
  - Received less than white counterparts
  - Poor farming conditions
- Worked in various industries, but received lower wages



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**Additional Resources**

- Church records
- Newspapers
- Town histories
- Personal papers/diaries
- Memoirs
- Local museums and other historical sites
- Published studies



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**Review**

1. Freedom from enslavement was the main motive for serving during the war.
2. Race may not be explicitly stated in records. Locate other sources to confirm!
3. Widen your pool during the research process.

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**QUESTIONS?**

**Schedule a consultation**  
[consultations@americanancestors.org](mailto:consultations@americanancestors.org)

**Hire Research Services**  
[research@americanancestors.org](mailto:research@americanancestors.org)

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## Researching Black Patriots and Loyalists During the Revolutionary Era

The American War of Independence was not only a fight for freedom from a tyrannical world superpower. For the thousands of Black soldiers who fought for the patriot cause, and even more—tens of thousands—for the Loyalists, emancipation was on the line. In this hybrid lecture, 10 Million Names Volunteer Manager Danielle Rose will provide a brief history of Black soldiers during the Revolutionary War and their motivations for joining either side, and discuss several resources, records, and strategies for piecing together the service and stories of individuals.

Registration in this program includes access to a 60-minute live broadcast, recording, and other materials for the foreseeable future.

Lecture Recording

AmericanAncestors.org/researching-black-patriots-and-loyalists-during-revolutionary-era-0

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### Upcoming Events

AMERICAN INSPIRATION ONLINE AUTHOR EVENT  
**Belonging: An Intimate History of Slavery and Family in Early New England** with author Gloria McCahon Whiting  
 Moderated by Kyera Singleton  
 February 24, 2026, 6:00 – 7:00 PM ET

HYBRID LECTURE  
**Researching Women in the American Revolution**  
 Presented by Melanie McComb  
 March 21, 2026, 2:00 – 3:00 PM ET

AMERICAN STORIES, AMERICAN LIVES GALA  
**Commemorating Revolutionary Roots**  
 Honoring Glenn Close and Dr. Jane Kamensky  
 Boston Harbor Hotel, Boston, MA  
 April 23, 2026, 6:00 – 9:00 PM ET

AmericanAncestors.org/Events

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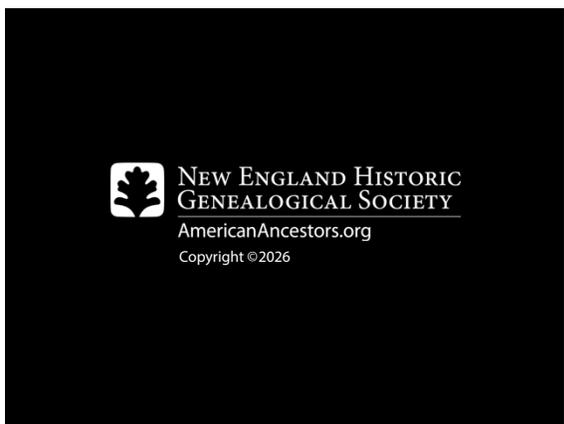
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