

★ ★ African-American Soldiers in the American War of Independence

★ Thursday, February 24, 2011 • 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

★ Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center

★ ★ In Honor of Black History Month



VERGER'S DRAWINGS OF AMERICAN FOOT SOLDIERS, YORKTOWN CAMPAIGN, 1781. LEFT TO RIGHT: BLACK LIGHT INFANTRYMAN OF THE FIRST RHODE ISLAND REGIMENT, MUSKETEER OF THE SECOND CANADIAN REGIMENT, RIFLEMAN, AND GUNNER OF THE CONTINENTAL ARTILLERY

Anne S. K. Brown Military Collection



photo by Ursula Reed

African-American soldiers constituted an integral component of the Continental Army on the march to Yorktown. The W3R National Historic Trail, signed into law by President Obama in March 2009, commemorates this march through interpretive signs such as this along Schuylkill Banks at Market Street.

**Fairmount Water Works
Interpretive Center
640 Water Works Drive
Phila PA 19130**

Please visit our website,
www.fairmountwaterworks.org.

Donations welcome!

Some 5,000 free and enslaved African-Americans are said to have fought in the Continental Army between 1775 and 1783. Many more enslaved people were anxious to join their rebellious masters' fight in the hope that military service would bring them freedom; that for them, too, Thomas Jefferson's demand of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" for "all men" would become reality once independence from England was won.

But it was not to be: white America knew about the equalizing quality of the uniform where rank counted for more than color, and feared the powerful symbolism of a weapon in Black hands. John Laurens' "triple-headed monster" of "prejudice, avarice and pusillanimity" worked relentlessly to keep the Continental Army a white army and only in times of dire need did Congress dare to tap this readily available military potential.

This lecture is the story of those free African-American patriots who voluntarily took up arms to fight in the ranks of the Continental Army as well as of those who, with or without the consent of their masters, joined them, fighting for both their own freedom as well as that of the country which was treating them so badly.

Robert A. Selig, Ph.D., is Historical Consultant to the National Park Service (Philadelphia Support Office) for the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail (W3R-NHT). He has provided historical consulting to many state and local governments, as well as to a number of organizations including the Black Patriots Foundation. Dr. Selig has contributed to numerous publications on Revolutionary War topics.

Many thanks to Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route (W3R) - PA for their generous support for this program. Additional thanks to Schuylkill Banks for their support of the signage.

We thank the following for their support:

- American Women's Heritage Society/Belmont Mansion
- Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area
- Fairmount Park Council for Historic Sites
- Schuylkill River Development Corporation
- National Park Service, W3R National Historic Trail

To RSVP for this event, please call 215-685-0723 by February 22.