

FRENCH ACCOUNTS OF BLACK SOLDIERS ALONG THE WASHINGTON-ROCHAMBEAU REVOLUTIONARY ROUTE



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“The whole effect was rather good. Their arms were in good condition; some regiments had white cotton uniforms. Their clothing consisted of a coat, jacket, vest, and trousers of white cloth, buttoned from the bottom to the calves, like gaiters. Several battalions wore little black caps, with white plumes. Only General Washington’s mounted guard and Sheldon’s legion wore large caps with bearskin fastenings as crests. Three-quarters of the Rhode Island regiment consists of negroes, and that regiment is the most neatly dressed, the best under arms, and the most precise in its maneuvers. The American army is always drawn up in two lines, a custom which we have also adopted.” - *Baron Ludwig Von Closen, Aide-de-Camp to Rochambeau, Journal: July 9, 1781*

“I admire the American troops tremendously! It is incredible that soldiers composed of men of every age, even of children of fifteen, of whites and blacks, almost naked, unpaid, and rather poorly fed, can march so well and withstand fire so steadfastly. The calm and calculated measures of General Washington, in whom I discover daily some new and eminent qualities, are already well known, and the entire universe accords him the homage of its highest esteem. He is certainly admirable as a leader of his army, in which everyone regards him as his friend and father.” - *Baron Ludwig Von Closen, Aide-de-Camp to Rochambeau, Journal: July 23, 1781*

The revolutionary journal of Baron Ludwig von Closen, 1780-1783 / Closen, Ludwig, Baron von, ca. 1752-1830; Acomb, Evelyn Martha, 1910. / Institute of Early American History and Culture (Williamsburg, Va.). -- Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va. by the University of North Carolina Press, 1958. Pgs. 91-92, 102.

“On 8 July General Washington reviewed the two armies. I went to the American camp, which contained approximately 4,000 men. In beholding this army I was struck, not by its smart appearance, but by its destitution: the men were without uniforms and covered with rags; most of them were barefoot. They were of all sizes, down to children who could not have been over fourteen. There were many negroes, mulattoes, etc. Only their artillerymen were wearing uniforms. These are the élite of the country and are actually very good troops, well schooled in their profession.” - *Jean François Louis, comte de Clermont-Crèvecoeur, Journal: July 8, 1781*

The American campaigns of Rochambeau's army, 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783 / Clermont-Crèvecoeur, Jean François Louis, comte de, 1752-ca. 1824; Verger, Jean Baptiste Antoine de, 1762-1851; Berthier, Louis-Alexandre, 1753-1815; Brown, Anne S. Kinsolving, 1906-1985, joint comp; Rice, Howard C. (Howard Crosby), 1904- comp. -- Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972. Pg. 33.

“My negro Madras gave me on this occasion a new proof of his attachment. He came in to me in tears and with an air of real despair, ‘Sir,’ he said to me, ‘I did not believe that you had taken any other of your people but me: I am not afraid, Sir, please allow me to follow you. Who will take care of you if you were hurt?’” - *Robert Guillaume Dillon, Journal: June 23, 1781*

23 June 1781, Journal of Robert Guillaume Dillon, 1780-1781 / Library of the Society of the Cincinnati, MSS L2014G54 M [Bound].

“Mixed Marriages are rare. The product of a white man and a slave is subject to slavery until the age of 18; that of a black slave and white woman until the age of 32...It is probable that the purpose of the law in authorizing these mixtures was to provide some resources for those transported who, having finished their time of servitude, would find it difficult to marry. I was told that they were unhappy enough in their homeland that most of them returned to Europe before the term prescribed by law...It’s possible that many of them have taken to the mountains, although everywhere in America it’s difficult to form a settlement without the money to buy land and the activity to cultivate it.” François-Ignace Ervoil d’Oyré: June 1782
Notes relatives aux mouvemens de l’armee française en Amerique / Oyré, François-Ignace Ervoil d’, 1739-1798. -- [France?, 1780-1783.]



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