

Services of Negroes in the U. S. Navy

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During the Revolutionary War the number of seamen employed was from 5,000 to 10,000, probably an average of 6,000, making a total enlistment of about 15,000 of which 1,500 were colored.

During the War of 1812, an average of 7,500 seamen; total of 15,000, of which over 1,500 were negroes.

During the Mexican War, a total of 12,000, of which 1,000 were negroes.

During the Civil War, a total of 118,044, of which 30,000 were negroes.

During the Spanish-American War, a total of 24,123, of which 2,000 were negroes.

During the European War, total enlistments in the Navy, 435,398, of which 5,328 were negroes. The latter were divided as follows:

U.S. Navy	- - - - -	3,203
U.S. Naval Reserve	- - - - -	2,099
National Naval Volunteers	- -	26
		<u>5,328</u>

Captain John Paul Jones, writing during the Revolutionary War, several times mentions his black boys, Cato and Scipio, who served on the ALFRED, PROVIDENCE, RANGER. He said: "I am now more than glad that I brought with me my two black boys, Cato and Scipio. They are well trained in river and bay sailing on the sloop; and now, in the two cruises we have made in the ALFRED and the PROVIDENCE, they are become prime seamen." He further writes: "Cato and Scipio, prime seamen, and in the battle with the DRAKE they behaved well."

Negroes in the Navy have been principally either servants or coal passers.

In "A School History of the Negro Race in America", by Dr. Edward A. Johnson, we find the following concerning colored men in the War of 1812:

(Pages 76-79) "There seemed to be no discrimination against any

class of citizens joining our Navy, nor is there now (1892). About one-fifth of the marines were negroes. That they did valuable service is testified to by numerous commanders. Read what Commander Nathaniel Shaler, of the private armed schooner GOVERNOR TOMPKINS says in a letter dated --
At Sea, January 1, 1813.

My officers conducted themselves in a way that would have done honor to a more permanent service. x x x x. The name of one of my poor fellows who was killed ought to be registered in the book of fame, and remembered with reverence as long as bravery is a virtue. He was a black man by the name of John Johnson. A twenty-four pound shot struck him in the hip and took away all the lower part of his body. In this state the poor, brave fellow lay on the deck, and several times exclaimed to his shipmates, 'Fire away, my boys: no haul a color down!' The other was a black man by the name of John Davis, and was struck in much the same way. He fell near me, and several times requested to be thrown overboard, saying he was only in the way of others. While America has such tars, she has little to fear from tyrants of the ocean".

Dr. Johnson also quotes Commodore Isaac Chauncey, in command on Lake Ontario, as saying: "I have yet to learn that the color of the skin, or the cut and trimmings of the coat, can affect a man's qualifications or usefulness. I have fifty blacks on board this ship (flagship) and many of them are among my best men".

In a footnote to page 538 of Lossing's "Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812", we find:

"Jesse Wall, a colored man, aged about seventy-four (1863) who was a fifer on board the NIAGARA" (1813).

Mr. Lossing says Wall was a native of Erie, Pennsylvania.

The following are among the negroes who have received medals of honor for bravery:

Aaron Anderson, landsman, on board the U.S.S. WYANDANK, during a boat expedition up Mattox Creek, March 17, 1865, was reported by his commanding officer as having rendered gallant assistance, loading the howitzer while lying on his back, and then firing with such care and precision as to kill and wound many of the enemy. (G.O. 59, June 22, 1865).

Robert Blake, on board U.S.S. MARBLEHEAD in the engagement with Confederate batteries on Stone River, December 25, 1863, serving as powder boy, displayed extraordinary courage, alacrity and intelligence in the discharge of his duties under trying circumstances and merited the admiration of all. (G.O. 32, Apr. 16, 1864)

Joseph B. Noll, seaman on U.S.S. POWHATAN, saved boatswain J. C. Walton from drowning at Norfolk, December 26, 1873. (Report of Captain F. Crosby, U.S.N.)

Joachim Pease, seaman on board U.S.S. KEARSARGE when she destroyed the ALABAMA off Cherbourg, France, June 19, 1864, exhibited marked coolness and good conduct, and is highly commended by his divisional officer. (G.O. 45, December 31, 1864)