



# Patriot Minorities at the Battle of Cowpens



## How many minorities were at the Battle of Cowpens?

A diverse group of individuals met on the field of battle on a bitterly cold Wednesday morning, January 17, 1781. Of the more than two thousand men who fought this battle, the National Park Service can document fifteen

black males who fought with the Americans. In addition, there is one famous black male who the NPS cannot document.

## **Who were the known minorities in the Battle of Cowpens?**

The names of minorities that the National Park Service can document at the Battle of Cowpens are as follows: James Anderson (or Asher Crockett), Julius Cesar, Lemerick Farr, Andrew Ferguson, Fortune Freeman, Gideon Griffen, Morgan Griffen, Drury Harris, Edward Harris, Allen Jeffers, Berry Jeffers, Osborne Jeffers, Andrew Peeleg, Dick Pickens, and Record Primes (or Primus Record.)

## **Is any additional information available on these people?**

There is not a lot of additional information available on most of the minorities. However, the information available is interesting.

*James Anderson* or *Asher Crockett* ran away from his master in 1776 and joined General Washington's army, remaining with it for two years as a camp boy and waiter. He then returned to Hampshire County, Virginia, where his old master attempted to reclaim him. In order to avoid that fate, he rejoined the army as a substitute for someone who had been drafted. At Hillsborough, North Carolina, he came down with smallpox. His unit left him behind when they departed. After his recovery, he returned to fight at Hanging Rock, South Carolina. In his pension record, he stated that he was on the field at Camden and was a witness to the mortal wounding of Baron de Kalb. He was in the battles of both Cowpens and Guilford Courthouse. He stayed behind at Guilford with the sick and then joined General Lafayette and was present at Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown, Virginia. After Yorktown, he marched with the baggage to Winchester, Virginia. Under Captain Fitzpatrick, he guarded the magazine and public stores at Powhatan Courthouse. After the war ended, he was under the command of General Clark in Kentucky. Anderson (or Crockett) married Sarah Blankenship from Giles County, Virginia in September 1800. He filed for a pension on November 26, 1832.

*Edward Harris* filed a pension application on November 19, 1852 while he was living in Richland District, South Carolina. He stated that he and his parents were free blacks. He served in the 3<sup>rd</sup> South Carolina Regiment

under Captain Richard Brown and Colonel Thompson and was later in the militia. He served in the battles at Savannah, Stono, Charleston, Hanging Rock, Camden, Cowpens, and Eutaw Springs. Harris stated in his pension that along with his cousin *Drury Harris*, he served with *Gideon Griffen*, *Morgan Griffen*, *Berry Jeffers*, *Allen Jeffers*, and *Osborne Jeffers*. Berry and Osborne Jeffers were brothers.

*Dick Pickens* was Andrew Pickens' servant and stayed in the rear during the Battle of Cowpens. Immediately after the battle, he found a "dead" British officer on the battlefield and began to remove his boots because Colonel Pickens needed a new pair. The officer revived somewhat and inquired about what was going on. He acknowledged that he no longer needed the boots, but would like a drink of water. Dick Pickens was happy to swap a drink of water for boots.

*Primes Record* or *Record Primus* was a free man of color. He applied for a pension December 16, 1846 while residing in Roane County, Tennessee when he was 86 years old. He stated that he enlisted in 1777. Part of the time he served under Captain Garter, Captain Abbott, Captain Locke, and Colonel Williams. At another time, he was Colonel Thomas Carson's waiter. He was taken prisoner at Charleston and paroled. He violated his parole and rejoined the army. He was taken prisoner and released again at Gum Swamp. He was wounded in the head at Camden. He stated that he was also in the Battles of Kings Mountain, Cowpens, Guilford Courthouse, Eutaw Springs, and the siege of Yorktown. However, his claim was denied because he did not furnish the required proof of six months service.

## **Is nothing known about Ball/Collins/Collin, Washington's waiter, depicted in the William Ranney painting, "Battle of Cowpens"?**

The painting shows the famous William Washington - Banastre Tarleton sword fight in which Washington's servant rode up and saved Washington's life by firing a pistol at the British officer. Since most waiters were black, Ranney painted him that way. Apparently the servant did not file a pension, and Washington did not leave behind written papers of his own role or of anyone else's role in the American Revolution. Therefore, the National Park Service cannot document Ball/Collins/Collin.

## **What sources should one use for additional**

## information?

- Bearss, Edwin C. Battle of Cowpens A Documented Narrative and Troop Movement Maps. Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1993.
- Babits, Lawrence E. A Devil of a Whipping, Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
- Fleming, Thomas J. "Downright Fighting" The Story of Cowpens. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1988.
- Green, Robert. Black Courage 1775 - 1783, Washington, D.C.: National Society Daughters of the American Revolution.
- Kaplan, Sidney and Emma Nogrady Kaplan. The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution, Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1989.
- Moss, Bobby G. The Patriots at the Cowpens, Revised Edition, Blacksburg, SC: Scotia Press, 1994.
- Quarles, Benjamin. The Negro in the American Revolution, Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- South Carolina Department of Archives and History. (803) 896-6100; <http://scdah.sc.gov/>
- Thornton, John. Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400 - 1800, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge University Press, 1998.