



Revolutionary Times



Containing the Latest News from the Sons of the American Revolution

Salem Poor, “a brave and gallant soldier”

Four days after the Battle of Lexington and Concord (April 19, 1775), “an army of 30,000 men [was] immediately raised”.

The racial make-up of the colonial army assembling near Boston mirrored largely the militias of the four New England states, where some 17,000 (in 1790) mostly free African-Americans made up about 1.7% of the population.

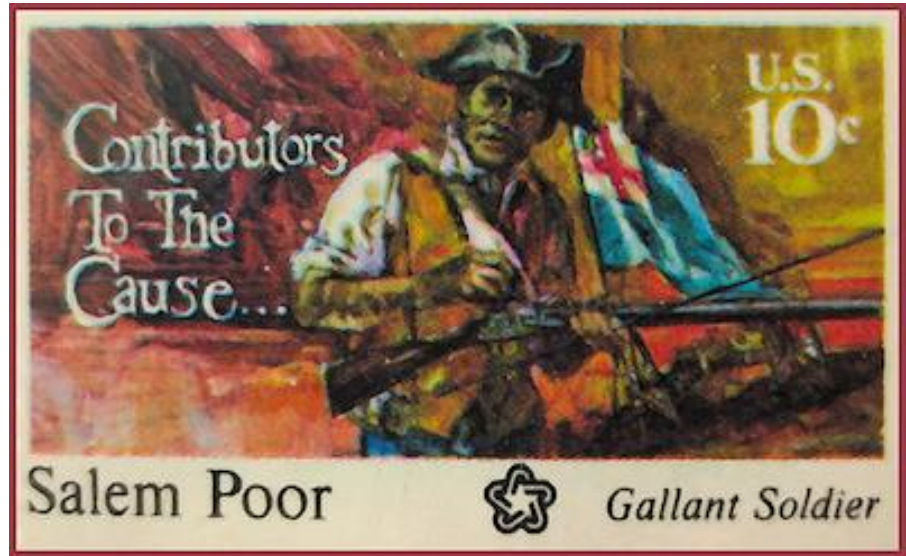
To prevent British soldiers from conducting further attacks on the countryside, 20,000 provincial militiamen encircled Boston in the spring of 1775. This has been referred to as the Siege of Boston.

The British planned to seize Breed’s and Bunker Hills before the colonists. But news of this got to the colonists and they raced the British to take the high ground.

The colonists got there first; with pickaxes and shovels constructed a fort atop Breed’s Hill. British ships bombarded the militia as they worked.

In the afternoon, over 2,000 British soldiers landed, then, headed uphill. After three assaults in the Battle of Bunker Hill, the colonists ran low on ammunition and were soon over-run by the British.

One colonial soldier at the battle was Salem Poor, a former slave who bought his own freedom and enlisted in the Massachusetts Army. Poor’s unit was to “assist in the building of fortifications.”



Instead, due to dire circumstances, they covered the retreating units. Poor’s unit received heavy fire; the British Regular Army killed five men near him and left another six seriously wounded.

As he helped the wounded, Poor slowly retreated and fired one last shot that killed British Army Lt. Col. James Abercrombie.

The British successfully drove the New England forces off the Charlestown Peninsula, but not without paying a heavy price in losses themselves.

For his valiant service, Continental Army officers wrote to the Massachusetts General Court, December 5, 1775, stating,

“The Subscribers begg leave to Report to your Honble. House, (which wee do in Justice to the Character of So Brave a Man) that under Our Own observation, Wee declare ...”

“... that A Negro Man Called Salem Poor of Col. Fryes Regiment Capt. Ames. Company in the late Battle at Charlestown behaved like an Experienced officer, as Well as an Excellent Soldier ...”

“... to Set forth Particulars of his Conduct Would be Tedious Wee Would Only begg leave to Say in the Person of this Sd. Negro Centers a Brave & gallant Soldier.”

“The Reward due to so great and Distinguisht a Caracter, Wee Submit to the Congress”.

This broadsheet is dedicated to the 250th Anniversary Celebration of the Declaration of Independence for more information visit the National Society Sons of the American Revolution website at: www.sar.org

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