Maryland's Thomas Carney: Revolutionary War vet

By William L. Calderhead

More than 200 years have passed since the Revolutionary War, and only recently have students of the conflict explored the social background of rank-and-file troops.

Because virtually all units were predominantly White, most such work focuses on the White soldier. yet his Black comrade - in - arms — if in relatively small (5,000 total) numbers — was also an important participant.

Benjamin Quarles, Laura E. Wilkes, Luther P. Jackson, and other historians have pointed out that most Blacks who served were free and that a preponderant majority of them were Northern.

Among southern states, Georgia and South Carolina declared that Black residents could not serve at all. Virginia was the most liberal slave state in its approach to Blacks and the military.

The Old Dominion not only encouraged free men of color to enlist but also freed those slaves who served the state in a military capacity.

Maryland's policy evolved slowly, function of need. Early in the war the state had no mechanism for recruiting slaves whatsoever. As for free Blacks, Maryland in 1777 encouraged them to enlist and in 1781 included them in the state's military draft quotas.

As a result perhaps as many as 250 free Blacks had served by the end of the war. A limited number of slaves were also in uniform in 1780, but the state had no policy for granting them freedom.

The most elite forces in which local Black soldiers served were the Maryland regiments of General Washington's Continental Army, made up of the "regulars" whose exploits determined the fate of the nation.

In mid-1778 that army included 755 Blacks in a total force of 13,000 troops. Maryland's share was 95, or 13 percent of all Black soldiers serving in the army.

Only three states had larger Black contingents: Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Virginia.

Who were Maryland's 95 African-American soldiers? The answer will never be known. Probably few could read or write. None, it would seem, kept diaries or wrote letters home.

White soldiers who kept records, including official army accounts, either made no distinction in terms of color, or, if speaking of Black soldiers, often referred to them without using their names.

While the wartime experiences of most Blacks can never be fully told, there are a few exceptions. One of these was a Marylander, Thomas Carney.

In the absence of memories or written records of his life of Revolutionary War service, we have a lengthy obituary notice — describing in some detail his military exploits — which appeared in a Maryland newspaper at the time of his death in 1828.

Unlike most obituaries of Revolutionary War heroes, this piece named the battles Carney had participated in and noted particular acts of bravery on two occasions.

While this source presents a fair picture of Carney's military service, the same cannot be said for his early life. Although his year of birth (1754) is known, his place of birth is not (probably Queen Anne's County).

Manumission records for Queen Anne's County in the twenty years prior to the Revolution make no mention of freedom being granted to anyone named Carney. He may have been born free. He most likely engaged in farming, the common way of life for residents in general and for African Americans, both slave and free, in particular.

When in 1775 the Revolutionary War began, people of the Eastern Shore had mixed reactions. Although a majority supported the patriots' cause, a very sizeable minority became Loyalists and supported the cause of George III.

Blacks in Maryland, as elsewhere, probably were ambivalent. Since the war did not promise to end slavery, the conflict was not theirs. Young Carney's first response to the break with England likely was to do nothing.

Nevertheless, Blacks felt the impact of the war. Throughout Maryland the number of manumissions, the rare in the prewar years, increased. So did the number of slaves seeking freedom by attempting to run away.

The British encouraged this effort when in 1775 Lord Dunmore, former governor of Virginia, urged slaves to flee their masters and join British military units as freemen. Partly as a response to this policy, Washington's army in early 1776 relaxed its stand on the recruitment of Blacks.

The Revolution ended officially in January, 1783, but Carney remained in the army until November. Upon discharge he received a cash bonus and a bounty entitling him to one hundred acres of land on the frontier in western Maryland. Like most Maryland veterans (92.5 percent), he probably sold his warrants for ready cash.

After leaving the army he returned to Caroline County and quietly spent the rest of his life near the town of Denton. His name appeared regularly in the census statistics beginning in 1790 and ending in 1820, when he headed a household of four people. He lived not far from four other Black families.

After 1830 the only Carney listed in the Caroline County statistics was a White resident named William Carney. Whether he was a relative of Thomas Carney cannot be determined.

The former soldier lived comfortably enough until advancing age made it difficult for him to earn a living. Help then came from the state legislature. General William Porter, delegate from Talbot County, introduced a bill to grant Carney a modest pension.

Although the assembly was generally reluctant to act on such matters, this measure in 1813 passed by a unanimous vote. Several years later Carney's financial status improved when he received an additional pension from the federal government."

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Selma to Montgomery march once again

U.S. Rep. John Lewis, (D-5th-Ga.) announces plans for the 25th anniversary celebration of the historic "Selma to Montgomery" march.

Events commemorating the march will begin February 17, 1990 and will conclude the week of March 4, 1990.

In 1965, Selma, Alabama attracted worldwide attention as the focus of the American civil rights movement. Rep. Lewis, a leader in the civil rights struggles of the 1960s, led the first attempted march to Montgomery on Sunday, March 7, 1965.

The marchers did not make it to Montgomery that day. They were turned back by the Alabama state police who used billy clubs and tear gas to subdue the demonstrators.

That day became known as "Bloody Sunday." The event shocked the conscience of America and led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Days later while under protection of the federal government, the marchers eventually completed a three - day journey from Brown Chapel in Selma to the State Capitol in Montgomery. Thousands of people, Black and White, traveled to Selma to participate in the historic march.

In late February, anniversary events will take place in 13 Alabama counties surrounding Selma.

In Perry, Marengo, Greene, Sumter, Hale, Pickens, Choctaw, Tuscaloosa, Bullock, Macon, Lowndes, Dallas, and Montgomery counties.

Local citizens will hold rallies and marches to commemorate voter registration efforts that were begun in these areas more than 25 years ago.

The anniversary celebration will culminate the weekend of March 2 with reunion gatherings and a reenactment of the march starting in Selma, Alabama and ending in Montgomery, Alabama. That march, scheduled on March 4, will commemorate "Bloody Sunday."

Events also planned in Selma include a freedom parade, seminars, forums, and appearances by prominent politicians and celebrities. A vacant historic building, expected to become the site of a National Voting Rights Museum, will be dedicated in Selma on March 4.

Rep. Lewis and others are expected to deliver speeches at the historic Edmund Pettus Bridge. The bridge is the site where protesters, including Rep. Lewis, were brutally beaten on the day of "Bloody Sunday."

"It is my hope that all Americans will reflect upon the meaning of democracy as we commemorate this historic period. The Selma to Montgomery route was the last leg in the journey to full democracy," Rep. Lewis said.

"The legacy of the Selma to Montgomery march is a legacy that all Americans share. I hope that thousands will come to Selma to take part in this important commemoration."

The anniversary committee is being co - chaired by Rep. Lewis and Rev. Joseph Lowery, President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

—Black Press

(Continued from Page E3)

to integrate the writers and technology into a whole that creates a dynamic, attractive, instructive, product. A product the African-American community can use to improve its situation.

This could mean some experimentation is necessary — with design, color, graphics, copy style, etc.

A visit to the graphics and art departments of many major dailies, for example, reveals a growing army of innovative young men and women who have an intimate knowledge of the new technology and its uses.

And in many cases these young people are allowed to bring their ideas and creativity to the finished product. They are consulted, listened to and allowed to create.

The same is true of the young people who work in the advertising, circulation and news departments of these news organizations.

"There is a hunger for information that is not being covered in the general media. We feel this pressure every day, this need to speak to the diversity, the differentness that exists in society" — William Lee.

The three challenges noted here to do not address the question of whether there is a need for an African-American press.

Nor does it cater to the notion that the African - American press should be an advocacy or crusading press. Content and enterprise will determine mode.

Put simply: The job of the African - American press is to cover the African - American community. *Any* newspaper that provides leadership in addressing and analyzing African - American community issues in a popular easy - to - understand manner will win African - American readers.

—Black power engineers

(Continued from Page E13)

scratched.
And the ladies that I couldn't catch."

— Henry Hall

Career

Henry Hall was a licensed stationary engineer for 50 years and was chief engineer at Provident Hospital from 1927-1952. Stationary Engineers are responsible for the maintenance of boilers and air-conditioning units of building.

He began his career in 1913 as an engineer with the United Railroad and Electric Co. In the early 1930's and 1940's it was difficult for Blacks to obtain licenses or training as engineers.

He founded the Carver Engineers #8 of the National Association of Power Engineers and taught classes at his home for more than 10 years and night classes at Carver Vocational High School.

He was saluted as a kind and gentle man. When visitors view the freshwater collection at the National Aquarium in Baltimore, they should keep in mind the unselfish gift of Henry Hall to the Citizens of Baltimore.

Henry Hall died at Provident Hospital August 11, 1979 and was eulogized for his legacy of good deeds and unselfish community service on August 14, 1979 at New Shiloh Baptist Church.

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Washington Gas President, Patrick Maher, accepts the "1989 Corporate Leadership Award" from the Maryland/District of Columbia Minority Supplier Development Council. The award was presented by Harriet Michel, President of the National Minority Supplier Development Council.
President Maher, in accepting the award, stressed the importance of supporting minority businesses. *"Every community, no matter how it's defined — narrow or wide, neighborhood or nation — cannot reach its true potential without a strong and vibrant minority-owned business infrastructure. This award recognizes Washington Gas' long-standing commitment to furthering minority business growth in our service area,"* said Maher. Washington Gas is the first recipient of the award, the Council's most prestigious honor.