

New Jersey State Archives Mini Exhibits

Race and the American Revolution

February 2026

During the Revolutionary War, Black New Jerseyans faced difficult choices as conflict engulfed the state. Any allegiance—whether to the British or the Colonials—carried the risk of severe retaliation. Enslaved men were often conscripted into service by their owners, while free Black men enlisted on both sides of the struggle. Oliver Cromwell, for example, served in the 2nd New Jersey Regiment and later received a pension for his service. Others, like Scipio and Joseph, were enslaved men who sought freedom by joining the British and taking up arms against their enslavers. Socrates Mintus, meanwhile, suffered losses when British troops plundered his property; yet, on his damage claim it states, “Note, the above applicant being a Negro, his oath (to the Truth of his Inventory) was not admitted.” While damage claims were never paid to any claimant, race was not a factor in the dismissal of other claims.

This Secretary William Livingston Esq Governor of the State
of New Jersey, and the Honourable the Members of the
Council of said State—

The Memorial of John Dennis

Humbly sheweth,

That your Mem^t is a Captain of a Company of
Militia in the County of Monmouth, and some time in the Month of
February last apprehended two Negro-Men, called Scipio and Joseph,
and belonging the first to Peter Parker, and the second to John
Hocum, on Suspicion of their having been in Arms, and ^{aiding} the
Enemy during their stay in the County of—

That your Mem^t sent the said Negroes to
Prison, where they now are in Prison—

That the Master of the said Negroes are
desirous of having the Matter heard & decided upon by your
Hon^{ble} Board; and for that Purpose have presented upon your
Memorialist to lay a State of the Charge before your Board,
which he is ready to do whenever the Board shall be pleased
to hear him—

And your Memorialist, as in Duty bound,

Shall ever pray, &c

John Dennis Capt

Haddonfield, May 12th
1777. }

Memorial of Captain John Dennis of Shrewsbury to the Governor and Council at Haddonfield, respecting two Negro men: Scipio, enslaved by Peter Parker, and Joseph, enslaved by John Hocum, May 12, 1777

SZSAF001. New Jersey Council of Safety Records, 1776-1778.

Inventory of the goods of Socrates Mintus, "a Free Negro," Burlington County
Damages by the British, June 1778

SLE00003. Legislature. Inventories of Damages by the British and Americans in New Jersey, 1776-1782.

Men's Names	Company	Men's Names	Company
Andrew W. Bramm	Warrens Co.	John X. Devins	Phillips
John X. Grey	Do	Geo. X. Mount	Shenars
95 James X. Clark	Do	David X. Brown	Phillips
Arthur X. Clark	Do	John X. Chubb	Holms
John X. Edwards	Do	George X. Leaman	Rowman
Adrian X. Mitchell	Do	Constant X. McLowen	Readings
Isaac X. Nixon	Do	Joshua X. Flanders	Warrens
Elia X. Wood	Do	John X. Jerney	Readings
John X. Carter	Rowman	Joshua X. Baskett	Majors
Isaac X. Gatty	Do	John X. Laine	Phillips
Jonathan X. Foster	Do		
105 John X. M'arty	Do		
Blair X. Summell	Do		
Rick X. Mills	Do		
Levy X. Saxton	Holms		125
Charles X. Stevenson	Majors		675
110 David X. Farney	Holms		131
Ashbrook X. Dickson	Rowman		
Wm. Barr	Do		
Elia X. Hore	Shenars		
B. Mooney	Do		
115 Anthony X. Parson	Do		
117 Samuel X. Decker	Do		
Joseph X. M'Pherson	Do		
John X. McDonald	Do		
John X. Donaldson	Do		
James X. Holliday	Do		
121 Josiah X. Bell	Rowman		

List of non-commissioned officers and privates who received \$5.00 on account of depreciation of their pay as members of the 2nd New Jersey Regiment, including Oliver Cromwell (No. 106), a free black man, 1781

SDEA1001. Department of Defense. Adjutant General's Office: Revolutionary War. Numbered Manuscripts, ca. 1776-1890s.