



Image by: Murphy Browne- Headley Tulloch (1975); Canadian Encyclopedia

### 5-All Black companies during the 1837 Rebellion in Upper Canada (Ontario)

Likewise, during the 1837 Rebellion, 120 Black soldiers were among the 1000-strong contingent that dispersed the rebels at Montgomery's Inn on Yonge Street in Toronto in December 1837. Numerous Black militia units from Hamilton, Niagara, Amherstburg, Sandwich (Windsor) and Chatham helped defend against William Lyon Mackenzie's Reformers. Black people knew that if Canada were to become part of the United States, their freedom was not guaranteed. These men fought valiantly to ensure that Canada remained British.

# Black Militia in the Defense of Canada

Read more about Black Canadian history on our website at: [blackpeopleshistory.ca](http://blackpeopleshistory.ca)



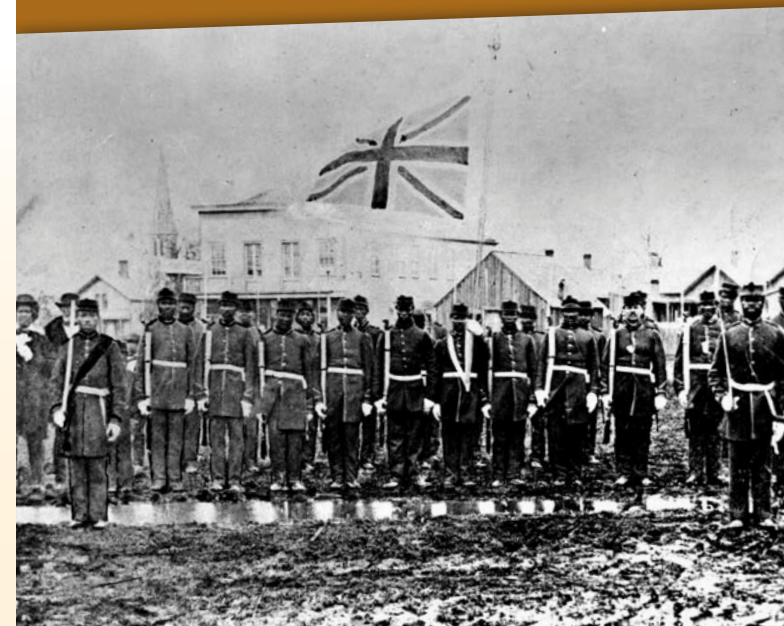
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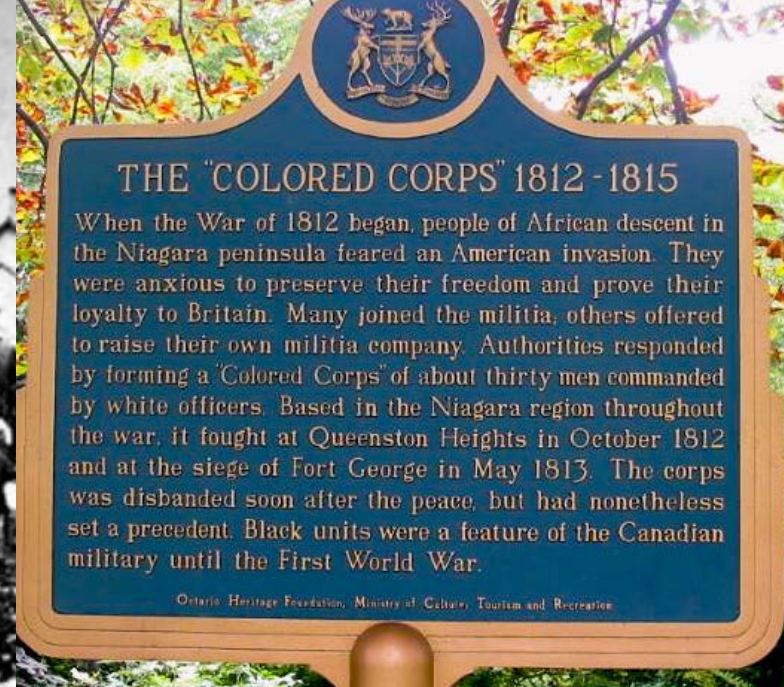
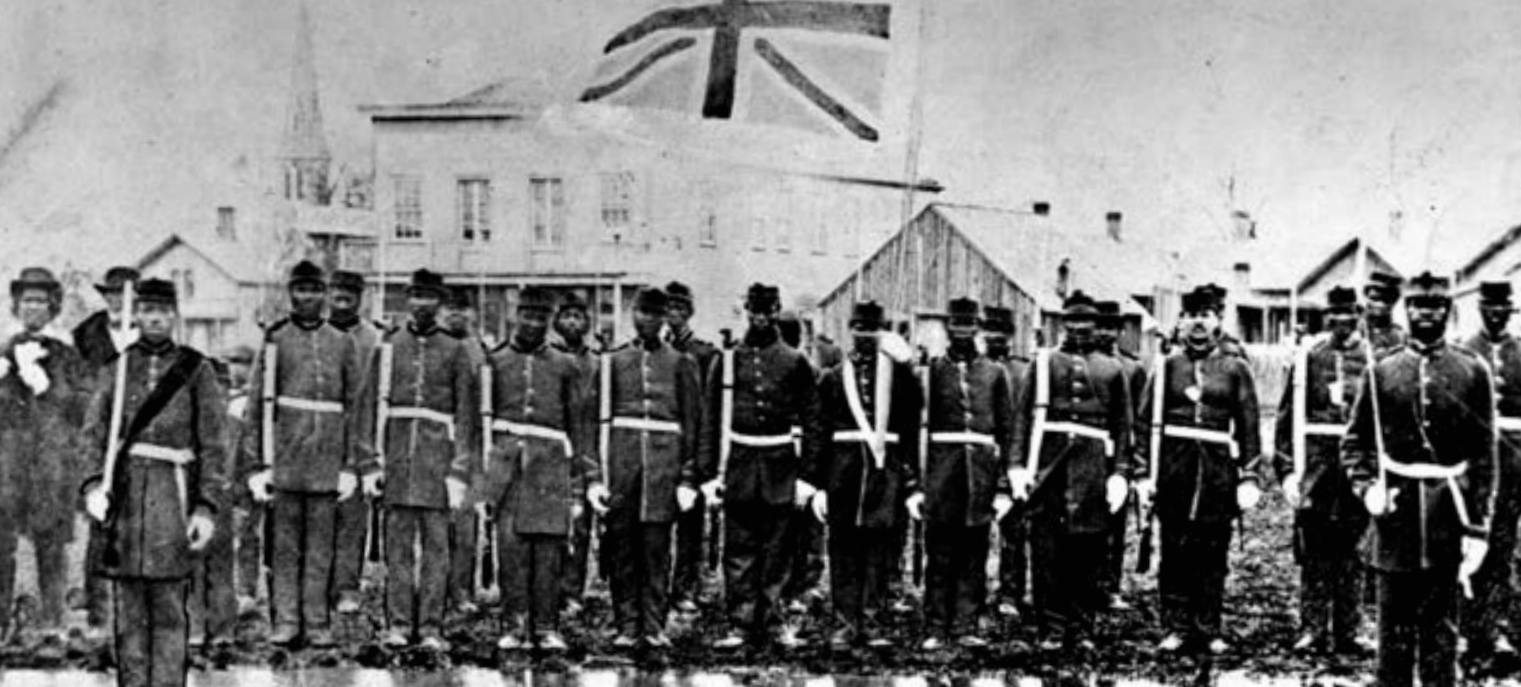
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During World War I, the all-Black No. 2 Construction Battalion was formed after protest that Black men were being denied the right to enlist. It was not the first all-Black military formation, however. It was part of a long, heroic history of Blacks who defended Canada against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

The Victoria Pioneer Rifle Corps in 1860, the Coloured Corps in the War of 1812, and the 1837 Rebellion soldiers in Upper Canada were all-black militia established in part to defend against American aggression.

The valour and bravery of these men in defending the rights and freedoms that we hold dear has an important place in Canadian history. Lest we forget!

### **Victoria Pioneer Rifle Corps (BC) in 1860**

Across the continent in British Columbia, forty to fifty Black men signed up for the Victoria Pioneer Rifle Corps in 1860 after being refused entrance into the all-white volunteer fire department. It was established in part to protect against American threats of invasion and was officially sworn in July 1861. Money was raised within the Black community to fund the African Rifles and volunteers built a drill hall on upper Yates Street in Victoria. But late in 1861 the Company appealed to Governor Douglas for more funding. The request was not granted. Upon Douglas' retirement as Governor in 1864 the African Rifles were not allowed to officially attend his farewell banquet. At the new Governor's ceremonies they were again met with discrimination and refused entry. The African Rifles managed to survive for several years, even forming an auxiliary unit, Victoria City Brass Band.

### **Coloured Corps in the War of 1812**

When a formerly enslaved African named Richard Pierpoint petitioned Upper Canada to establish a company of Black men during the War of 1812, the Coloured Corps was established. It drew volunteers from across the province to the Niagara frontier, including the 68 year-old Pierpoint. The Coloured Corps was part of the Battle of Queenston Heights, which surrounded the Americans on the escarpment alongside British regulars, the Lincoln militia and John Norton's Native Warriors, and repelled them. The Corps helped to defend Fort George during a surprise siege by the Americans in May 1813, and the men served throughout the campaigns of 1813 and 1814.

(top) Ontario's Historical Plaques-ontarioplaques.com; painting by John David, courtesy Library and Archives Canada/C-000273