

A Diverse Lot of Unassuming Heroes:
Colonel John Glover's 14th Continental Regiment

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The month of December is most often categorized as a time of multi-cultural holiday celebrations enriched by extend time with family and friends. However, December is also the placeholder for an important piece of American history which took place from the end of December 1776 into the first week of January 1777.

One of the most interesting and inspiring aspects of General George Washington's combined victories at the battles of Trenton, Assunpink Creek, and Princeton can be found within the muster rolls and abbreviated military record of Colonel John Glover's 14th Regiment of Massachusetts Continental, also known as the "Massachusetts Marbleheaders".

This Continental Army unit was comprised of Massachusetts men whose primary means of employment was that of seafarers and boatmen or as Washington referred to them, "Men bred for the sea". The overall composition of this 500 strong regiment consisted of White, African-American, Native American, Spanish, and Jewish men who served in one of the first fully integrated military units organized during the American Revolution. It can then be said that when John Glover called for men to support the cause of freedom, these men, without hesitation, answered that appeal.

Glover's men would play a crucial role during the New York and Trenton campaigns since their dedication to duty, military bearing and discipline would play a pivotal role in saving the Continental Army from destruction during Washington's disastrous retreat from Long island and transport the Continental Army during the successful and daring attack upon the Hessian forces at Trenton during the winter of 1776-1777. Historians have referred to these men as, "a short-lived band of brothers that history remembered for their grizzled, hard-nosed ruggedness, and willingness to assist in some of the war's earliest, most dire moments."

These unsung heroes are representative of the diverse nature of the colonial population, with their service echoed in the quote made by Admiral William F. Halsey many decades later, in which he stated that, “There are no great men. There are only great challenges which ordinary men are forced by circumstances to meet.”

The men of the 14th Massachusetts Regiment under the command of Colonel John Glover met these challenges and have earned the respect and admiration of a grateful nation, while occupying a special place in annuals of American cultural and military history.