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SA Newsletter

OUR HISTORY





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Slavery is not African history. Slavery interrupted African history. [Mutabaruka]

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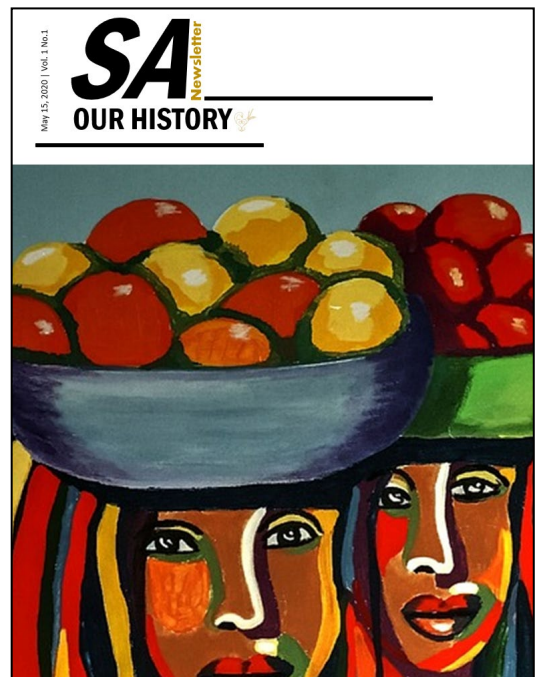
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Cover Image by Juanita Mulder from Pixabay

About

SA (Sankofa Archives) Newsletter | Our History was inspired by “Tidbits,” a popular section of Sankofa Archives. An important goal of this newsletter is to inspire readers not only to view their ancestors in a positive light, but also to motivate them to do their own research into their history. As always, each topic is accompanied by references so that the reader may follow up on the subject presented. *Enjoy!*

The Black Dutchmen of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army

by Marjorie Charlot

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Dutch conscripted 3,000 Ghanaian enslaved men from West Africa to aid the Dutch colonial army in crushing the uprising in the East Indies (Indonesia today). Once in the army, they were manumitted.¹ These men sailed from Elmina to Batavia (now Jakarta) from 1831 until 1872. Dr. Ineke van Kessel, a researcher at the African Studies Centre in Leiden, claims that once in the army “the African counted as part of the European contingent of the army and were to be treated as Europeans.”² They were also given Dutch names.³ The main reason for using Ghanaian soldiers was the Dutch needed men in their Colonial army to help control uprising in the most profitable part of the Dutch colonial empire. The Java War took the lives of 8,000 European and 7,000 Indonesian soldiers, and the situation was made worse with the withdrawal of Belgium in 1830.⁴ Various sources of new manpower were explored. The recruitment of African-American and runaway slaves from the United States was considered. This idea was rejected by the Department of Colonies because they thought that American blacks were likely to cause problems because they were infused with the ideal of equality.⁵ Another reason was The Hague government was worried that if America acquired colonial ambitions that the African-American troops would be more loyal to their country of origin.⁶ It was decided they should recruit “children of nature,” which according to The Hague were to be found in Africa. It was believed that Africans were “unspoilt blacks who would submit to European guidance,”⁷ and that Africans were better equipped to withstand the hot climate and tropical diseases in the East Indies. It was also believed (the racist belief of that



Wounded Soldier Kees Pop

Another Black Dutchman, this man was known by the Dutch name “Kees Pop” because the Dutch could not pronounce his African name. He joined the Dutch Army in 1869 and served for 12 years. Like Kooi, he fought in the Aceh War and received several awards for his bravery. This portrait of him was done by Isaac Israëls. He is depicted with his medals and the wounds suffered in the war.

era) that the Negro race was very strong and used to living under harsh conditions: “where whole populations become extinct, the Negroes will remain.”⁸

Jan Kooi, was a heroic Black Dutchman and the most famous and decorated of the 3,000 Ghanaian soldiers recruited from Elmina. Born in 1849, Kooi was just 20 years old when he entered the Dutch East Indies army in 1869.⁹ He took part in numerous military expeditions at Atjeh (now Aceh). The Atjeh War was the longest, deadliest, and most inconclusive war in Dutch colonial history.¹⁰ Corporal Kooi proved his military bravery at Atjeh. He received several military distinctions, such as the Atjeh medal for 1873-1874; the distinction for extraordinary efforts in Atjeh, 1873-1874; and in 1881, he was awarded the bronze medal.¹¹ He was the first African soldier to be awarded the “Militaire Willemsorde,” the highest military honors in the Dutch army.¹² He was portrayed twice by famous Dutch painters Isaac Israëls and J. C. Leich.¹³ After his service, he returned home to Elmina in 1882.¹⁴



Jan Kooi painted by J.C. Leich, 1882.

For their service, the men were paid salaries and offered passage back to Elmina when they retired from the army. However, many of the Africans stayed and married into the Indonesia population, while others returned to the Gold Coast.¹⁵ Those who returned settled in Elmina, where the Dutch government gave them allocated plots on a hill behind St. George’s Castle (known today as Java Hill). They received their retirement pensions paid out in the castle.¹⁶ The 500 Africans who stayed in the East Indies founded Indo-African

communities in the Javanese towns of Purworedjo, Semarang, Salatiga, and Solo. On Java, the Africans and their descendants became known as Belanda Hitam, the Indonesian term for “Black Dutchmen.”¹⁷ Later on, the children and grandchildren of these soldiers also served in the Dutch army. After World War II, many Indo-African families were forced to leave and return to the Netherlands. However, not all would stay there; many emigrated to Brazil, the U.S., Canada, and Australia.¹⁸





Left: Corporal, J. de Leeuw in 1893, was one of three soldiers decorated with the Militaire Willems-Orde [Military Order of William] 4th class the other two were T. Tak and Jan Kooi **Below:** A native (Indonesian) soldier (left) and African soldier (right) in the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army, 1885.



Meet Mildred Ware

A Canadian pioneer woman who help ran a successful 1,000-head ranch South of Calgary

by Marjorie Charlot

Mildred Lewis Ware (March 21, 1871–March 30, 1905) was a Canadian farm-woman who helped her husband, John Ware, run his Bar U Ranch.¹⁹ The Wares were among the early black pioneers of Alberta.

Born Mildred Jane Lewis in 1871 in Toronto, she was the daughter of Daniel Vant, and Charlotte Lewis, who were originally from Whitby, Ontario.²⁰ Her father was a homesteader and a carpenter. In her late teens, Mildred relocated to Alberta.²¹ It was there that she would meet cowboy and rancher John Ware, a former slave from Texas. They were married on March 2, 1892, at the First Baptist Church in Calgary.²² The following was an announcement of their wedding in the *Calgary Tribune*:

Very many of our readers will join with us in wishing Mr. John Ware and bride who were married Tuesday morning all happiness and prosperity in their new sphere of life. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Mr. Cross, pastor of the Baptist Church, at the residence of the bride's parents in Calgary. The bride is of a happy disposition, well cultured and accomplished, and probably no man in the district has a greater number of warm personal friends than the groom. The Tribune extends heartiest congratulations.²³



Figure 1 Mildred Ware and Her Son

They settled on John's ranch on the North Fork of Sheep Creek. Although deathly afraid of cattle and horses, Mildred nonetheless settled into the life of a rancher's wife.²⁴ While she did learn how to milk a cow, she would not ride a horse.²⁵ Since John was illiterate, Mildred contributed to the ranch in another way—by taking on the responsibility of managing to all correspondence and keeping the financial records for the ranch.²⁶

In 1902, the couple sold their Sheep Creek property for \$1,000 because of the encroachment of new settlers on grazing land in their area. They resettled east of Calgary to the isolated short-grass range country along the Red Deer River in the Rosebud area.²⁷ In their first year at the new ranch, their home was destroyed by the river's spring flood. The Wares rebuilt, this time on higher ground. The new ranch was successful, which allowed John to increase his herd of cattle.²⁸ This success allowed John to support not only his wife but also, by this time, their five children. They had two girls and four boys: Amanda Janet, known as "Nettie" (1893–1989), Robert Lewis (1894–1980), William Henry (1898–1934), Mildred Jane (1898–1988), Arthur Nelson (1900–1989), and Daniel Lewis (1901–1904).²⁹ Including in her considerable efforts on the ranch, Mildred's role of teaching her children how to read and write.³⁰



Figure 2 The Ware Ranch near Brooks, Alberta, ca. 1896 (Public Domain via Blackpast.org)

Unfortunately, although the Wares found success in their ranch, their personal lives would soon be filled with tragedy. Their son Daniel died soon after they arrived.³¹ Two years later, Mildred Lewis Ware died of typhoid and pneumonia in April 1905, at the age of thirty-six.³² It is said that, during her illness, John walked forty kilometers (24.8 miles) through a blizzard to bring his wife her medication.³³

After Mildred's death, some of the Ware children were sent to live with her parents in



Blairmore, Alberta.³⁴ John Ware would die five months after Mildred, on September 13, 1905, when he was crushed to death by a horse that had stumbled in a badger hole and fallen on him.³⁵ Of the Wares' five remaining children, only Robert Lewis would marry. This marriage, however, produced no children, leaving Mildred and John Ware with no descendants.³⁶

Figure 3 Mildred Ware and Her Family (Public Domain via Blackpast.org)



The Patterson-Greenfield Automobile

The only African American owned and operated automobile company in history from 1915 to 1918

by Marjorie Charlot

Not many people have heard of Frederick Douglas Patterson, one of the first black automobile manufacturers in the U.S. He manufactured his first car in 1915. He was the son of an ex-slave, Charles “Rich” Patterson. His father was the owner of C. R. Patterson and Sons Carriage Company of Greenfield. Charles was also one of the wealthiest men in his



The C.R. Patterson & Sons Company, the first Patterson-Greenfield car (pictured here) debuted in 1915, sold for \$850 ((CC BY-SA 4.0), via Wikipedia Commons)

hometown of Greenfield, Ohio.³⁷

The company was founded in 1873 and manufactured horse-drawn carriages until the early 1900s. Frederick joined the family business after graduating from Ohio State University. A

decade later, Frederick would take charge of the company when

his father died.³⁸ At the time, the C. R. Patterson and Sons Carriage Company was turning out 28 different types of horse-drawn vehicles with a yearly production of 500 vehicles and 50 employees.³⁹ Like John Alston, he decided to build a horseless carriage. He had come up with this concept to generate more business. His goal was to produce a vehicle that could compete against any other vehicle on the market.⁴⁰ Five years after his father’s death, on September 23,

1915, Frederick introduced his car, the Patterson-Greenfield, to the world. Word of his vehicle quickly spread across the states.⁴¹ It lived up to Patterson's expectation, of building a vehicle that would surpassed other vehicles on the market and it was considered to have better bodywork than the vehicles manufactured by Henry Ford in Detroit.⁴² The Patterson-Greenfield came in two styles and was sold for \$850. Unfortunately, due to lack of capital and slow sales production, manufacturing stopped, and no more than 150 vehicles were built.⁴³ However, this did not stop him from producing school bus bodies, which were in high demand in rural America.⁴⁴ Frederick Patterson's company functioned up until 1939. A victim of the Great Depression, it was the first and only automobile manufacturing company owned by an African American.⁴⁵



Note

The Black Dutchmen

¹ Kessel, I. Van. 2002. *Merchants, Missionaries and Migrants: 300 Years of Dutch-Ghanaian Relations*, KIT Publishers, p. 133.

² Kessel, p. 133.

³ “Welcome to Black Heritage Amsterdam Tour’s Album,” from Arthur Japin on Facebook. Accessed July 12, 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/arthur.japin/posts/458927090831784>.

⁴ Kessel, p. 133.

⁵ Kessel, p. 133.

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¹⁵ Jayasuriya, Shihan de S., and Jean-Pierre Angenot. 2008. *Uncovering the History of Africans in Asia*. Leiden: Brill, p. 26.; – Kessel, p. 133.

¹⁶ Kessel, p. 133.

¹⁷ Indo Akrikaans Kontakt “Introduction,” from *iak foundation*. Accessed July 12, 2016. <http://www.iakfoundation.nl/en/>; – Kessel, p. 133.

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Meet Mildred Ware

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²³ Millar, Nancy, *Once Upon a Wedding: Stories of Weddings in Western Canada, 1860-1945, for Better or Worse* (Calgary, Alberta, Canada: Bayeux Arts, 2000), 62.

²⁴ Mather, Ken, *Frontier Cowboys and the Great Divide: Early Ranching in BC and Alberta* (Victoria, BC: Heritage House, 2013), 166.

²⁵ Mather, *Frontier Cowboys*, p.166.

²⁶ Mather, *Frontier Cowboys*, p.166.

²⁷ Mather, p. 166; Breen, “Ware, John,” p.1075; and “Mildred Ware,” *Today’s Canadian Birthdays*, retrieved May 3, 2018

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³⁵ Breen, p.1075.

³⁶ Millar, *Once Upon a Wedding*, p.62.

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³⁸ Wilson and Wilson, p. 142.

³⁹ Henry, Mike. 2013. *Black History: More than Just a Month*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Education, A division of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., p. 47.

⁴⁰ Wilson and Wilson, p. 142.

⁴¹ Wilson and Wilson, p. 142.

⁴² Wilson and Wilson, p. 142.; – Henry, p. 47.

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Illustrations

The Black Dutchmen

Portrait of the wounded KNIL soldier Kees Pop, by artist Isaac Israëls Public Domain via Wikipedia Commons, accessed July 23, 2020,
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Jan Kooi painted by J.C. Leich, 1882, Public Domain via Wikipedia Commons, accessed July 23, 2020,
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Corporal, J. de Leeuw in 1893, was one of three soldiers decorated with the Militaire Willems-Orde [Military Order of William] 4th class the other two were T. Tak and Jan Kooi, [Cropped image], maker Van Schendel's layoffs, Public Domain via Wikipedia Commons, accessed July 23, 2020,
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Meet Mildred Ware

The Ware Ranch near Brooks, Alberta, ca. 1896 image Public Domain via Blackpast.org, accessed April 10, 2020.

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The Patterson-Greenfield

The C.R. Patterson & Sons Company, the first Patterson-Greenfield car (pictured here) debuted in 1915, sold for \$850 ((CC BY-SA 4.0), via Wikipedia Commons), accessed July 23, 2020,

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