

Robert Smalls was a free black from Charleston, South Carolina. He was an assistant pilot on a side-wheeled steamer called the Planter. In May 1862 the Planter was provisioned with arms and gun powder--military stores that were formerly Union provisions seized by the State of So. Carolina when they took over the arsenals in the Palmetto state upon seceding from the Union. These provisions were detailed to Fort Sumter.

On the evening of May 12, Smalls was left in charge of the Planter, then docked at the Charleston warf. At 4 O'clock in the moring Smalls and his familiy and other blacks that made up the skeleton crew of the steamer "cast off." Their destination was Beaufort--where Smalls learned that General Hunterof the Union Army was recruting blacks to serve in the war.

The Planter sailed out of Charleston Harbor under the guns of Ft. Sumter and Ft. Moultrie. He delivered the Planter to the Hunter Headquarters at Beufort. The US Congress rewarded Smalls and his crew with half of the prize money for the Planter.

The Negroes Contribution:

By the last year of the War some 180,000 blacks were in the Union Army. They sev4d in all branches of the Army--infantry, heavy and light artillery, and cavalry. They partciicpated in all the major battles of the war, except for Sherman's March through Georgia. They made up about 12% of the total number of Union soldiers.

Of these 180,000--some 68,000 were lost in the war. Some as battle casualties, others died of diswases and their wounds.

They served under less than ideal circumstances. Some were impressed into the service. Some served under racisits white officers who never learned how to get the most out of them. They were dicriminated in the most blatant manner. Especially true in the scandal of unequal pay. Black soldiers received \$3 less per month than white troopers. This inequity was not corrected by Congress until midway through 1864.

They faced the most extrem form of prejudice from the Confederate enemy.