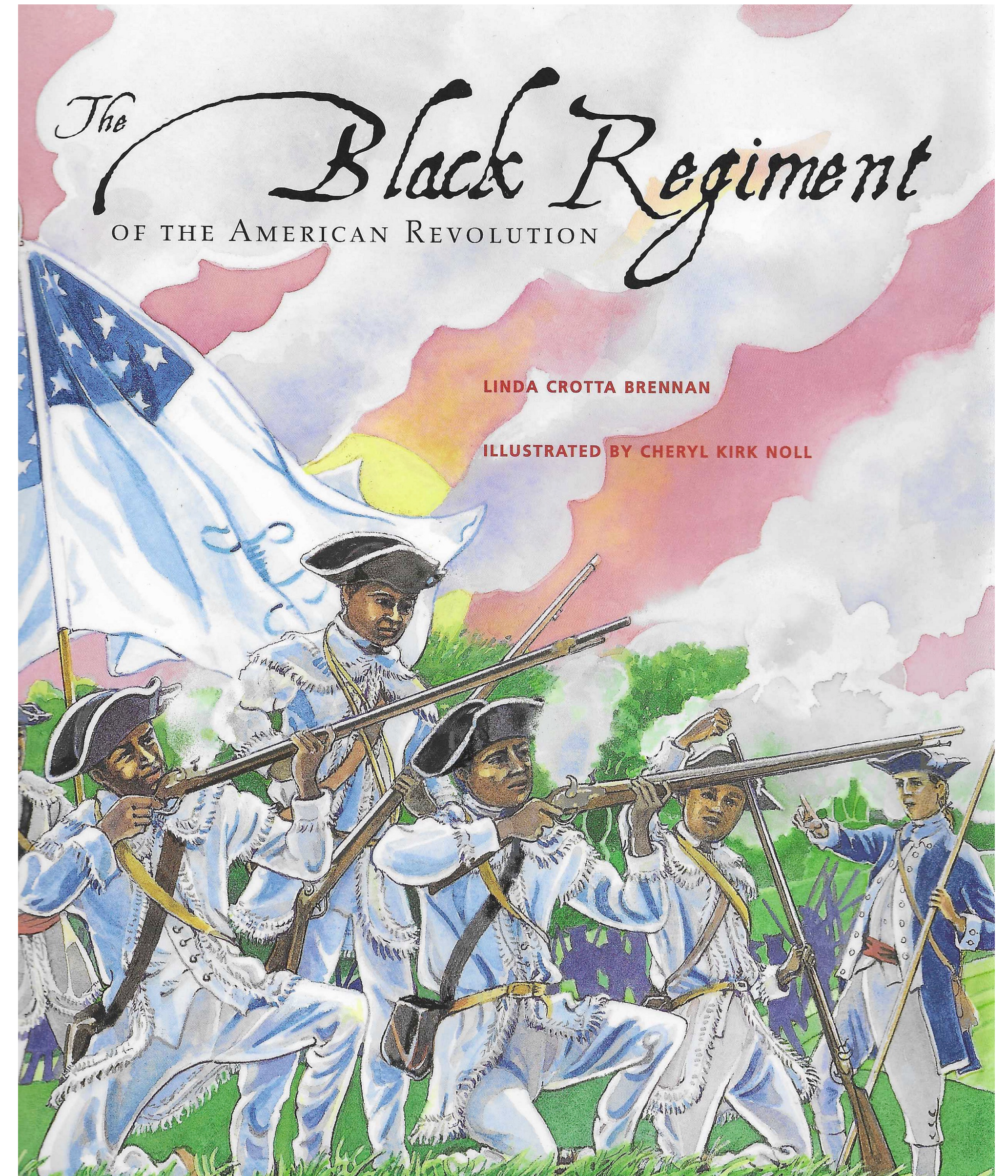


Thinking Like An Historian

Using Primary and Secondary Sources to Learn About Events in History



Developed for teachers and students
by the Battle of Rhode Island Association
2022



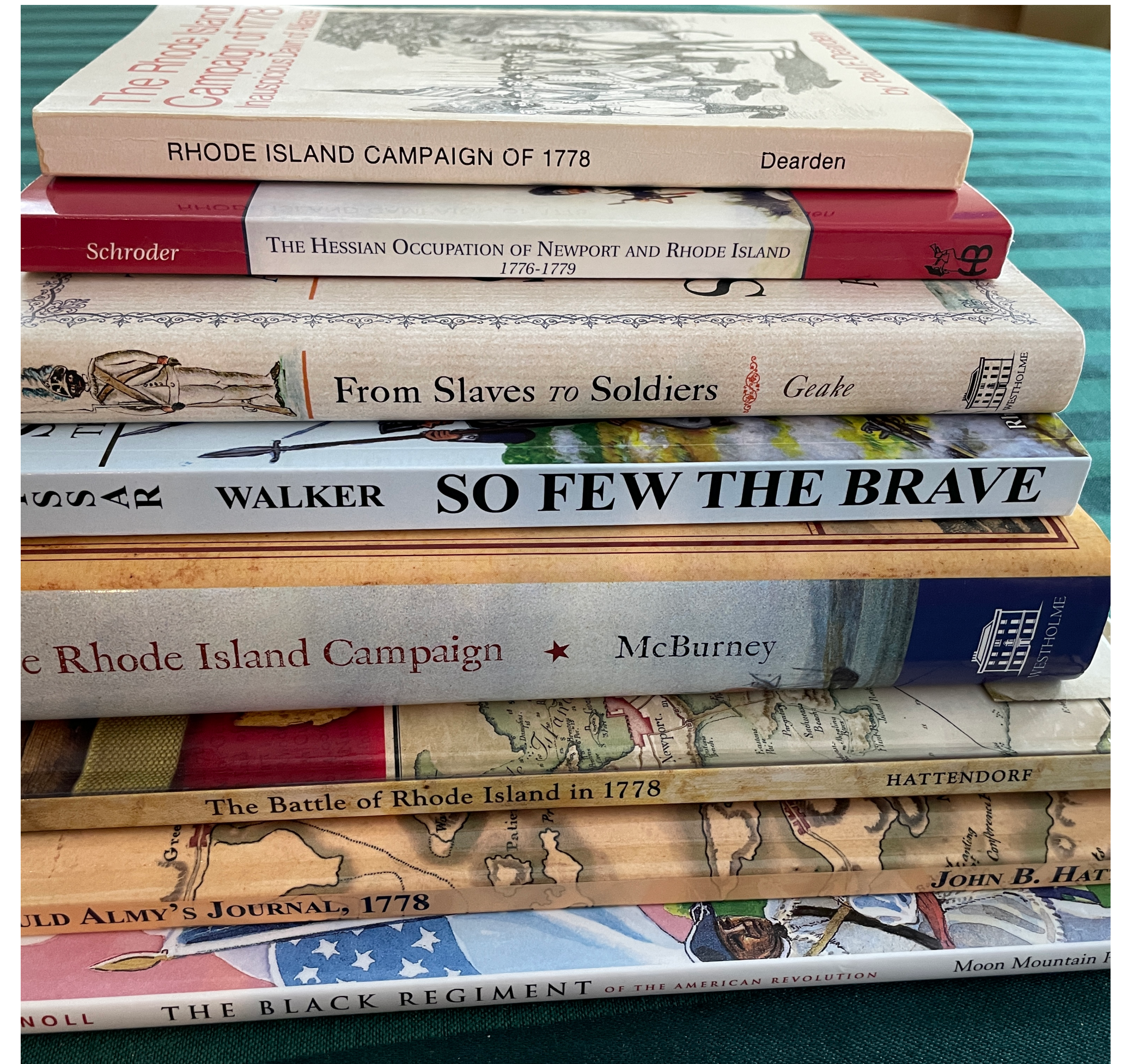
Historians work with two types of information sources to learn about events in the past

- **Primary Sources** are created by eyewitnesses who record the event.
- **Secondary Sources** are created secondhand by people who were not present at the event.



Historians start with Secondary Sources

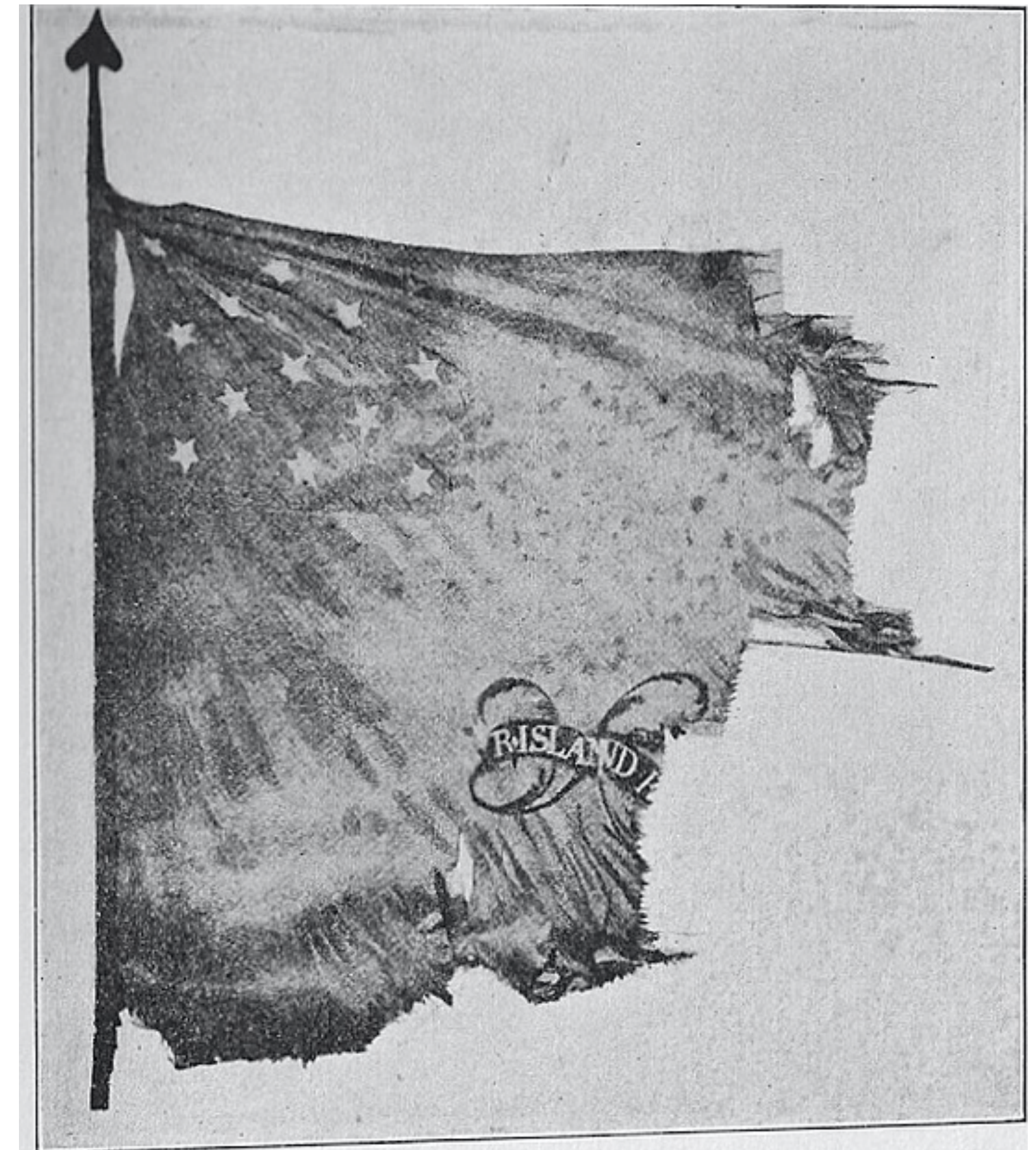
- When author Linda Crotta Brennan began to learn about the Black Regiment, she started with reading books others had written. These were **secondary sources**.
- She noted the sources those authors had used to write their books. Bibliographies and footnotes can give you clues to where you can find good eyewitness information.



Primary Sources

The author went to the Rhode Island Historical Society looking for the primary sources others had used. She wanted to see them for herself.

Primary sources include such things as letters, diaries, photographs, drawings, interviews, newspaper articles, maps and many other types of documents. They are the raw material historians use to find evidence to answer their questions about events in history.



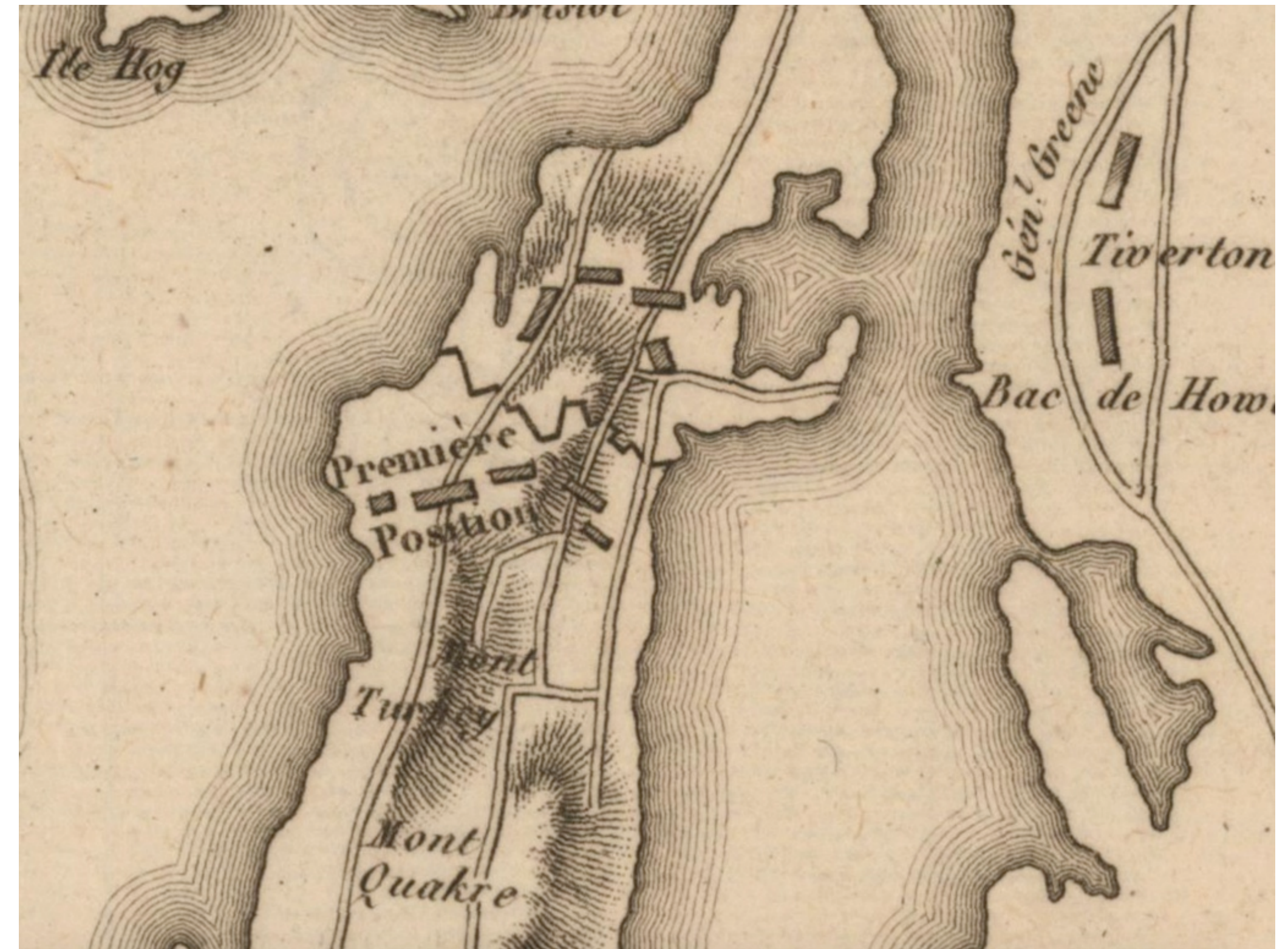
FLAG CARRIED BY RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS DURING THE REVOLUTION.
At the State House.

Why Use Primary Sources?

A **primary source** is as close as you can get to what you are researching.

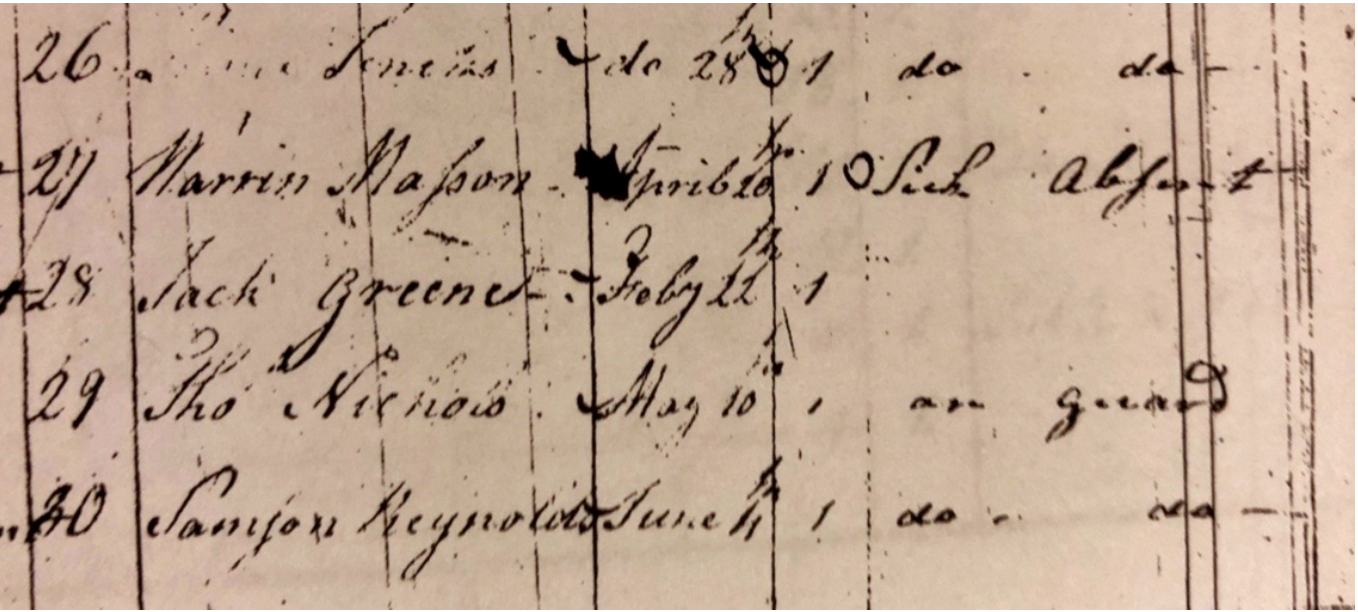
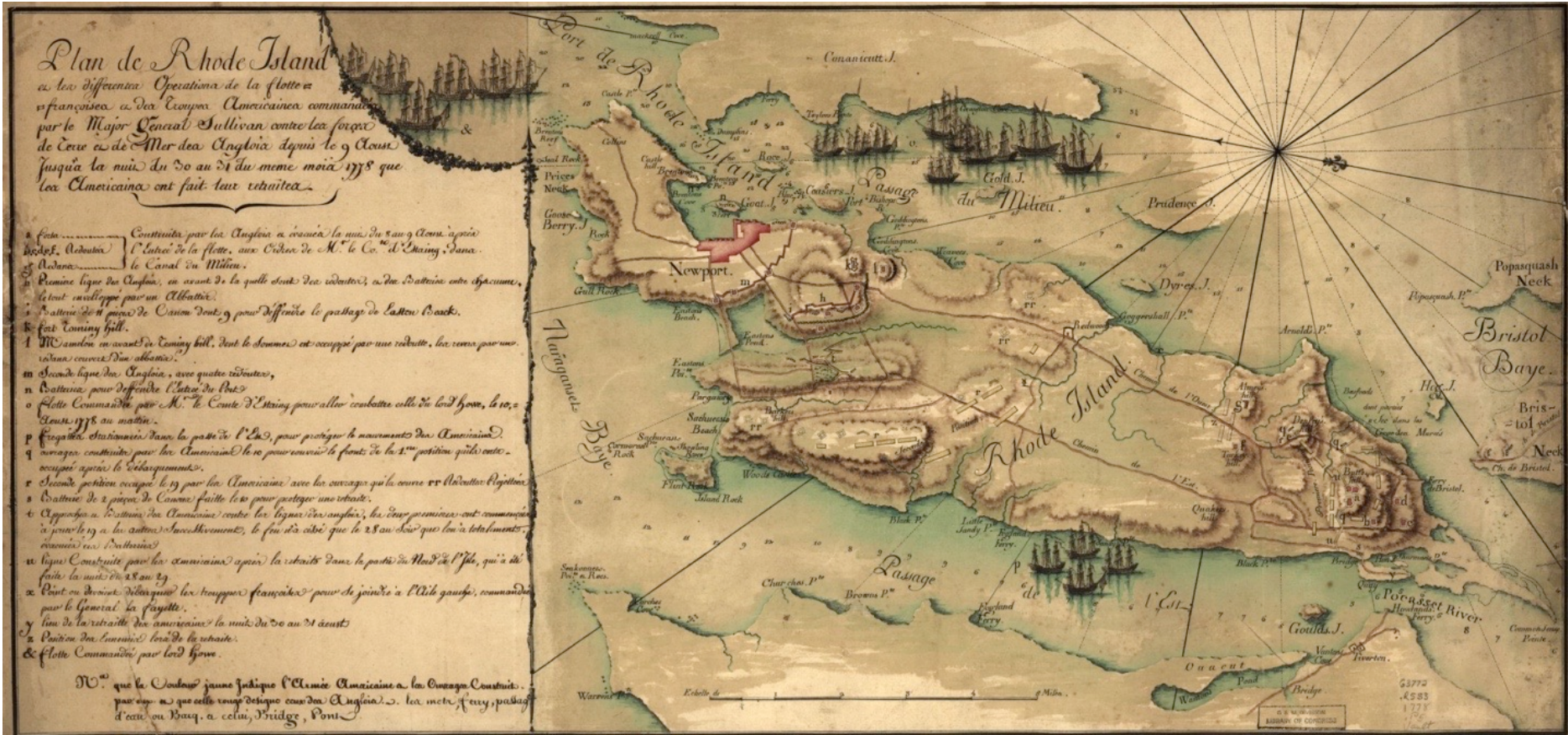
When you use **primary sources** you are finding your own clues to the information. You are not using someone else's ideas. You are discovering your own answers as you look at a picture, examine a map, read a newspaper article or handle an object from the past..

Good researchers use both **primary sources** and **secondary sources** to help them understand what they are researching..

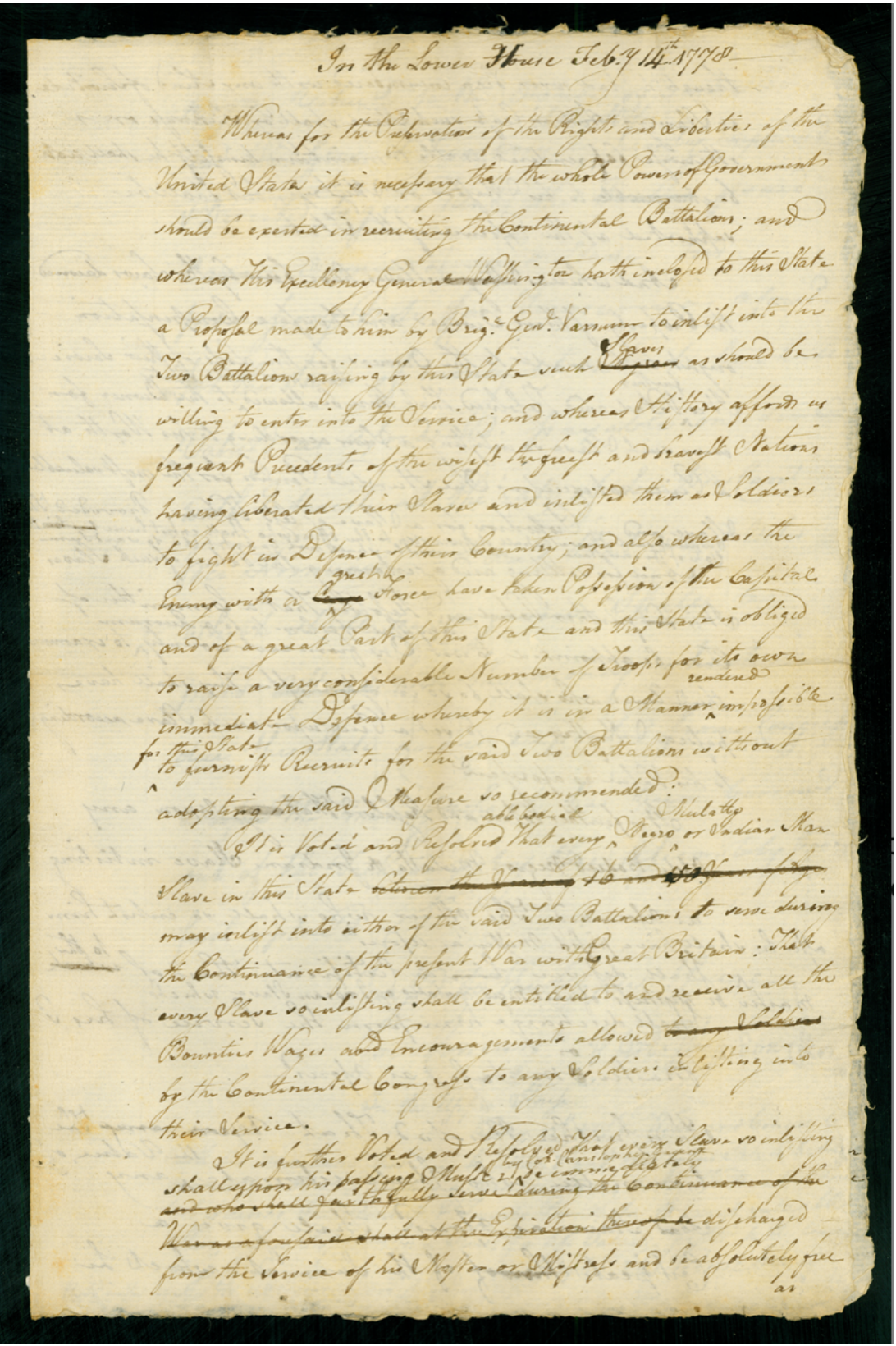


The Author Searched for Primary Sources at the Rhode Island Historical Society and Other Places

Maps made
at the time



Documents
Likes lists of soldiers



Letters about the soldiers

The Illustrator (Cheryl Nolls), visited museums and photographed a reenactment of the Battle of Rhode Island to help her draw the illustrations.



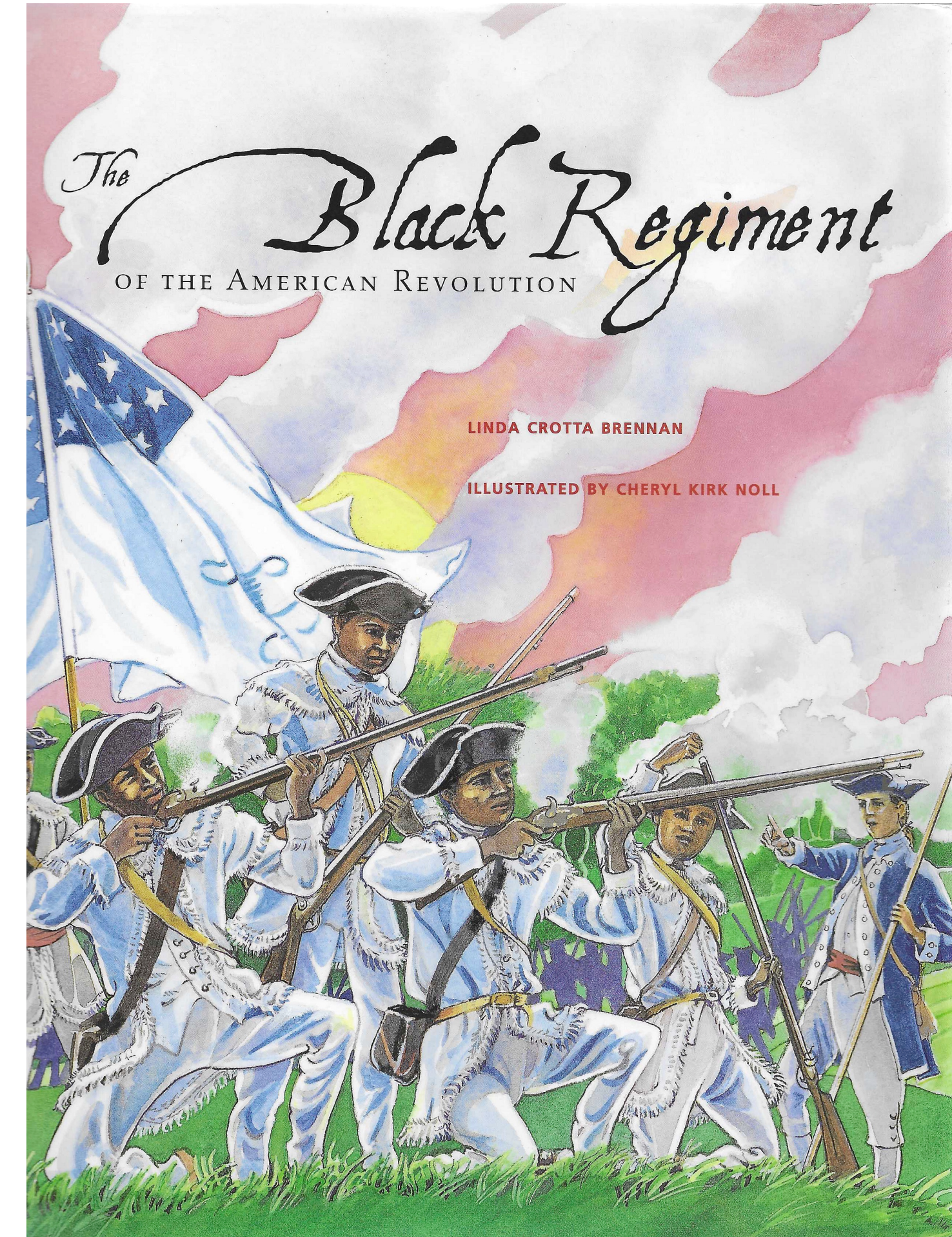
Drawings like this one helps us to Understand what their uniform was like.



This was the battle flag of the Black Regiment.



Battle of Rhode Island reenactment in Portsmouth, RI in 2003.



Questions to think about when you are using Primary Sources

Who created this? Is it signed or is there a name on it?

When was it created? Is there a date on it or clues about when it was made?

What is the purpose of it? To record an event? To persuade people?

What information does it give me? How will it help me answer my questions?

What questions does it raise? What do I want to know now that I have seen this?





Field Trips to Historic Places are Primary Sources, Too!

- Portsmouth, Rhode Island was the location of the Battle of Rhode Island. There are places you can visit that were important in the battle.
- Heritage Park off Hedly St. is part of the battlefield.
- Outside of the Portsmouth Historical Society is a marker for the first activity in the battle.
- Patriots Park off Rt. 24 and Rt. 114 is dedicated to the Black Regiment.
- The 1st Rhode Island Regiment was stationed at Butts Hill Fort in 1780–1781. The Battle of Rhode Island Association is working to preserve this earthwork fort.



**Author Linda Crotta Brennan
Illustrator Cheryl Kirk Nolls
Visit Butts Hill Fort, 2022**