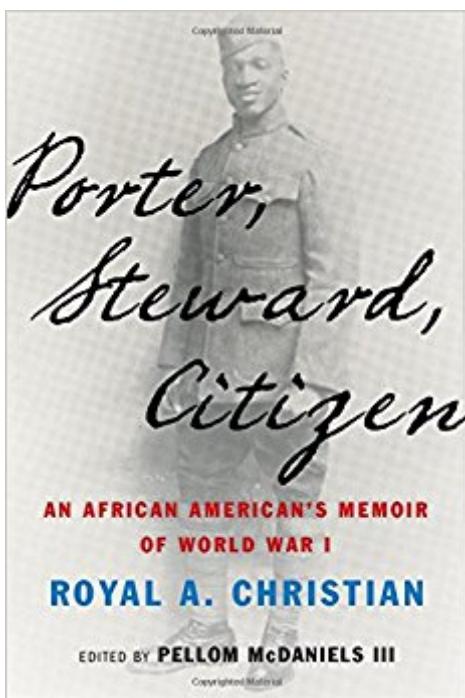


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Porter, Steward, Citizen: An African American's Memoir Of World War I



Synopsis

In 1917, the year the United States entered the Great War, Colonel Moorhead C. Kennedy, one of the most powerful men in the state of Pennsylvania and now the Deputy Director General of Transportation for the American Expeditionary Force, asked his African American valet if he would like to accompany him on an overseas mission. The valet's reaction was "Yes, sir." And he, as he recounted years later, "at once had visions of France." So began Royal Christian's odyssey in Europe. After a tumultuous crossing of the Atlantic as a third class steward on board a British steamship, he survived London's aerial bombing and then celebrated the end of the war in that city's streets. At last, he reached the long anticipated Paris, where he could admire the Eiffel Tower and the astonishing windows of Notre Dame. Royal Christian chronicled his extraordinary experiences in a memoir, *Roy's Trip to the Battlefields of Europe*, that was privately published in 1919. Rich in historical details, cultural observations, and political reflections, this book is a vital testimony to the history of African American men participating in World War I. After almost a century, Pellom McDaniels III has unearthed this gem, providing an elegantly annotated edition of Christian's memoir. *Porter, Steward, Citizen* nods both directly and indirectly to the challenges that African Americans encountered in their efforts to serve the cause of freedom and democracy, even as they were denied access to those rights by Jim Crow laws at home. Christian's unique story vividly illustrates how the war helped African American men claim a sense of manhood tied to their military service, and their efforts to transform themselves and their families into full-fledged American citizens. While race often served as a barrier in the army, this book suggests that some black men managed to take advantage of their outsider-within status and thrive: elevating not only themselves but also their community within a society that maintained a deep and abiding attachment to the myth of white supremacy.

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Customer Reviews

Royal A. Christian (1875-1964) served as valet to Moorhead C. Kennedy, president of the Cumberland Valley Railroad and vice president of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. During World War I he became "confidential messenger" to Col. Kennedy, based in London. Pellom McDaniels III is the curator of African American collections in the Stuart A. Rose Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Library at Emory University. He is the author of *The Prince of Jockeys: The Life of Isaac Burns Murphy* and has contributed essays to anthologies such as *Baseball and Philosophy*, *All Stars and Movie Stars: Sports in Film History*, and *The Olympics and Philosophy*.

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