
Lieutenant Colonel Harriet West Waddy

Harriet West Waddy was born June 20, 1904 in Kansas. She graduated from Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science and was asked to join the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). When she joined the WAAC in 1942, she worked as an aide to Director Oveta Culp Hobby. Waddy was one of the first African American female soldiers to graduate from Officer Candidate School and she was the first black woman promoted to the rank of Major. West Waddy worked for some time as a recruiter for African American women. She was also given the assignment to visit different installations across the United States to gather information from African American WACs about the treatment they were receiving in the Army. That report was eventually sent to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. When asked about integration of the WAC, Waddy said, "as an African American woman there is not a single door [in Washington D.C.] that I can walk through; but as a Major in the WAC there is not a door I cannot walk through". Waddy retired from the WAC as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1952 but stayed in the Organized Reserve until 1969. She worked closely with Mary McLeod Bethune in multiple Civil Rights campaigns before her death in 1999.

