Plainville's African American Civil War Veterans

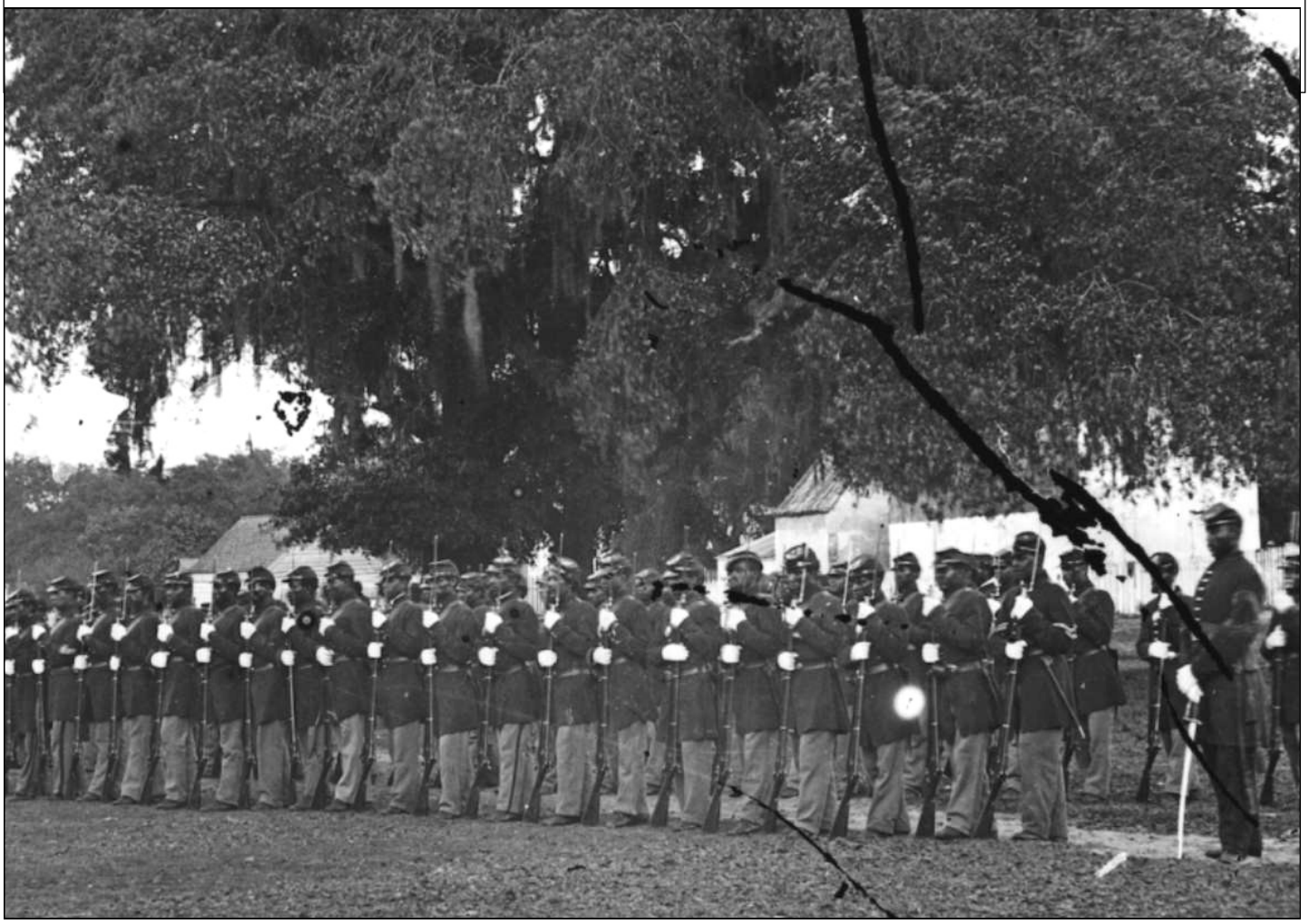


Photo of Connecticut's 29th Regiment

James Halstead

James Halstead was born in Farmington in 1845. At just 17 years of age, he enlisted in the Union Army (in Springfield, Massachussetts where he was working at the time) and became a member of the Massachussetts 54th Infantry Regiment. The 54th was a black regiment and it is the one made famous in the movie “Glory” with Denzel Washington, Morgan Freeman, and Matthew Broderick. It was the Civil War’s first all black volunteer regiment.

James Halstead entered as a Private in 1863 and mustered out as a Corporal in 1865 after the war ended. The 54th’s most famous battle was the charge on Fort Wagner in South Carolina. James Halstead was wounded in the fighting there.

James Halstead

After the war, James Halstead returned to Connecticut. He worked at Miss Porter's School as a custodian and was then the Caretaker for Plainville's West Cemetery for 22 years. He was a bible scholar and taught the adult bible class at Plainville Methodist Church. He also tutored children in math. He and his family lived on Pearl Street.

James Halstead

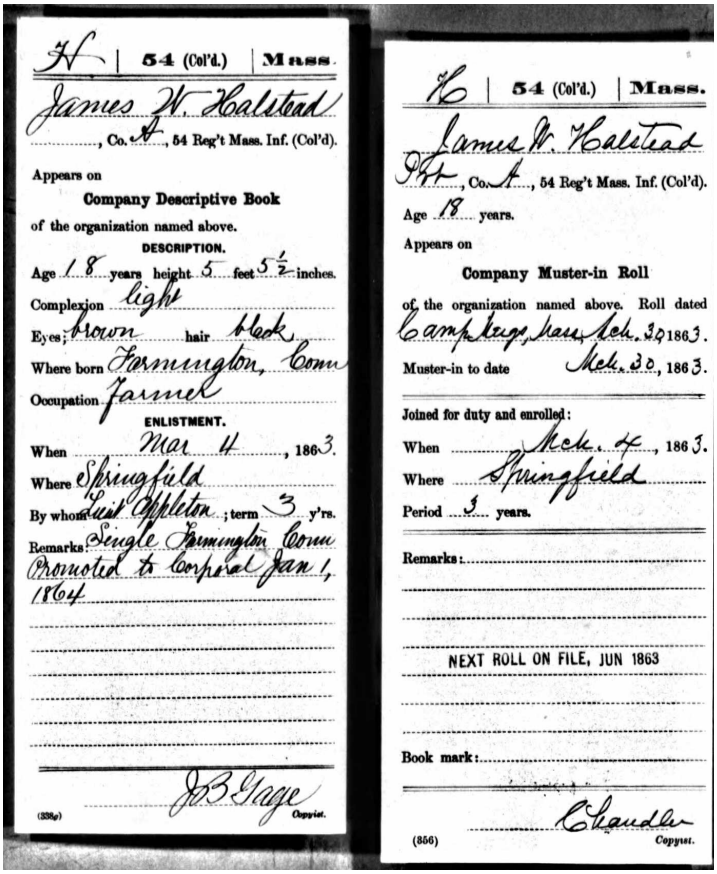
James W Halstead

in the U.S., Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861-1865

Detail | Source

Name	James W Halstead [Horace R Allen]
Enlistment Age	18
Birth Date	abt 1845
Enlistment Date	4 Mar 1863
Enlistment Rank	Private
Muster Date	30 Mar 1863
Muster Place	Connecticut
Muster Company	A
Muster Regiment	54th Infantry
Muster Regiment Type	Infantry
Muster Information	Enlisted
Rank Change Rank	Corpl
Muster Out Date	20 Aug 1865
Muster Out Place	Mount Pleasant, South Carolina
Muster Out Information	Mustered Out
Side of War	Union
Survived War?	Yes
Residence Place	Farmington, Connecticut
Occupation	Farmer
Title	Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors and Marines in the Civil War; Roll of Honor: Names of Soldiers Who Died in Defense of the Union

James Halstead



H | 54 (Col'd.) | Mass.

James W. Halstead

....., Co. A, 54 Reg't Mass. Inf. (Col'd).

Appears on

Company Descriptive Book

of the organization named above.

DESCRIPTION.

Age 18 years height 5 feet 5½ inches.

Complexion light

Eyes brown hair black

Where born Farmington, Conn

Occupation farmer

ENLISTMENT.

When Mar 4, 1863.

Where Springfield

By whom Capt Appleton; term 3 y'rs.

Remarks: Single Farmington Conn Promoted to Corporal Jan 1, 1864

J B Gage

(338p) Copyist.

H | 54 (Col'd.) | Mass.

James W. Halstead

Pvt, Co. A, 54 Reg't Mass. Inf. (Col'd).

Age 19 years.

Appears on

Company Muster-in Roll

of the organization named above. Roll dated Camp Meigs, Mass. Mch. 30 1863.

Muster-in to date Mch. 30, 1863.

Joined for duty and enrolled:

When Mch. 4, 1863.

Where Springfield

Period 3 years.

Remarks:

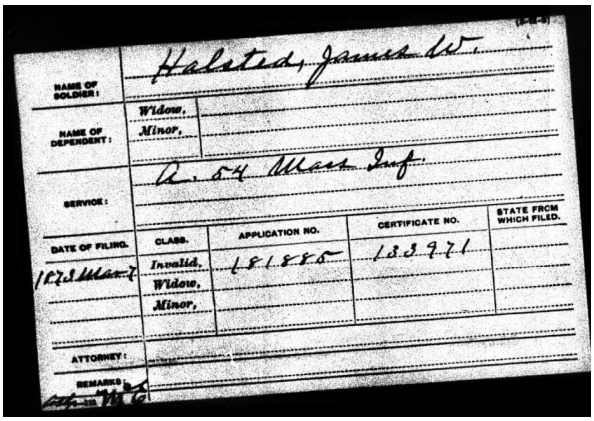
NEXT ROLL ON FILE, JUN 1863

Book mark:

C Chandler

(856) Copyist.

Military documents



NAME OF SOLDIER: Halsted, James W.

NAME OF DEPENDENT: Widow, Minor,

SERVICE: A. 54 Mass Inf.

DATE OF FILING	CLASS	APPLICATION NO.	CERTIFICATE NO.	STATE FROM WHICH FILED
1875 Mar 7	Invalid, Widow, Minor,	181885	133771	

ATTORNEY:

REMARKS:

Pension Document

West Cemetery, Plainville

James Halstead

NEGRO EX-WARRIOR RECALLS DAYS OF '61

J. W. Halsted May Be Lone Survivor of Mass. Regiment

(Special to the Herald)

Plainville, May 24 — "They said colored troops wouldn't fight, but before the war was over we showed them that we were as good troops as any," chuckles James V. Halsted of 35 Pearl street as he recalls the days of '61-'65 when he fought side by side with other free negroes for the liberation of the less fortunate members of his race held in slavery in the southern states. And good fighters the negro troops had to be, for the watchword of the Confederate armies was, "Take no colored prisoners." Halsted, serving in the Civil War with a negro regiment, believes that he is the only survivor of his outfit, and he has unique memories of experiences in the days when the men whose deaths will be commemorated next Wednesday, were giving their lives for the Union.

Born a free man November 28, 1845, in the town of Farmington, young Halsted enlisted in Co. A, 54th Massachusetts infantry, on February 23, 1863, while working in Springfield. He was 17 years old at the time. His regiment sailed from Boston and, after an eight-day voyage, arrived off Hilton Head, S. C.

The troubles of the regiment began immediately, for the authorities would not allow any colored troops to land and threatened to drive them into the sea if they attempted it. The regiment was accordingly transported several miles up an inlet and disembarked at Beaufort.

The Charge on Ft. Wagner

After occupying several islands as a part of the Federal plan of bottling up the South by taking its ports, the 54th was finally sent to Morris island, just off Charleston and just about half a mile from Fort Sumter. Here the regiment saw its first major action in the gallant but disastrous charge upon Ft. Wagner on July 17, when 850 of Halsted's companions hurled themselves at the fort and only 150 were left alive at the end of a bloody day. Halsted himself was wounded in the fighting while the regiment lost its colonel, Robert Shaw, who was killed after mounting the rampart of the fort.

A 1928 New Britain Herald interview. James was one of only two Civil War veterans in Plainville by this time. He died in 1930.

Married 50 Years.

Mr. and Mrs. James Halstead of Pearl street, are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. Mr. Halstead is a veteran of the Civil war, having fought with the Union army all through the war. He is a member of the Methodist church, and an employe of the West Cemetery association, which has employed him for 21 years. Mr. Halstead is 72 years of age and his wife is 83. They have one child, Mrs. William O'Neil, who resides with them, and also one grandchild and two great grandchildren. They are one of the oldest colored families in the town, and both are active and enjoying good health.

An Anniversary Announcement

Charles H. White

Born in 1845 in Long Island, New York, Charles White married Harriet C. Carrier of Hartford. They had two children. Previous researchers have noted that documents may also indicate that Charles was enslaved in his early life.

In October 1864, Charles enlisted as a Private in the 29th Regiment U.S. Colored Infantry, Company K in Hartford. Documents note that he is listed as a farmer. He is also listed as a substitute (or representative) of a William Hunter of Hartford and was paid to take someone else's place. This was a relatively common practice.

Charles was mustered out in Brownsville, Texas on October 6, 1865. Census records show that Charles and Harriet lived on Pearl Street in Plainville.

Charles died in a Soldiers' Home in Noroton, Connecticut in March 1927. He is buried in Plainville's West Cemetery (See next page).

Charles H. White

Charles White
in the U.S., Civil War Soldiers, 1861-1865

Name	Charles White
Side	Union
Regiment State/Origin	Connecticut
Regiment	29th Regiment, Connecticut Infantry (Colored)
Company	K
Rank In	Private
Rank Out	Private

West Cemetery Plainville

Leven Harris

Leven Harris was born into slavery in the South (Maryland) in 1830. When the Civil War broke out, he enlisted in Washington D.C. and was subsequently transferred to what became part of the 31st United States Colored Infantry Regiment which was raised in Connecticut.

Leven's unit was active in the front at the Battle of Petersburg and he was wounded—which resulted in the loss of an eye. The 31st lost 136 soldiers in the charge. As stated by one officer, these troops went into action determined to command respect and as stated by another officer, were "equal to the standard of any service I ever saw." The regiment was mustered out in Hartford in December 1865.

A Plainville resident by 1870, Leven had a farm where he lived on New Britain Avenue. He sold produce from the farm. In 1888, he married Louise Nixon who was also a former slave. He was a member of the Newton Manross Post G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic), a fraternal organization of Civil War veterans which participated in Leven's funeral services.

Leven Harris

Leven Harris
in the U.S., Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861-1865

Name	Leven Harris
Enlistment Date	2 Apr 1864
Enlistment Rank	Private
Muster Date	2 Apr 1864
Muster Place	Connecticut
Muster Company	F
Muster Regiment	31st Infantry
Muster Regiment Type	Infantry
Muster Information	Enlisted
Muster Out Date	7 Nov 1865
Muster Out Information	Mustered Out
Side of War	Union
Survived War?	Yes
Residence Place	Bridgeport, Connecticut

Levin Harris Dead.

some time ago, was born in 1830. He was a native of the South and was a slave for years. When the Civil War broke out he enlisted in Washington, but was subsequently transferred to Company F, Thirtieth Connecticut Volunteers, with which he served during the struggle.

For years the old man has been drawing a pension. He had a small farm and made his living through the sale of garden truck.

Harris was a member of Newton Manross post G. A. R. Selectman Johnson gave instructions to W. A. Bailey & Co. this morning to prepare the body for burial. The funeral arrangements have not as yet been completed.

The funeral will be held Monday afternoon at 3 o'clock and will be in charge of the G. A. R. Services will be held at the A. M. E. Zion church and burial will be in West cemetery.

Excerpts from Leven's obituary in the New Britain Herald September 18, 1915

West

Cemetery,

Plainville

William H. Homer

William H. Homer was born about 1837 in Connecticut, most likely in Farmington and perhaps in the area that became Plainville in 1869 when our town separated from Farmington.

He was descended from Lyman Homer who one of a series of Black governors who were elected in Connecticut beginning in the 1700's and through the mid-1800's. They were elected as leaders by other members of the African-American community.

William enlisted in December 1863 into Company B, the Connecticut Colored Infantry. He gave his occupation as fireman when he signed up in New Haven. He was mustered out of the 29th in October 1865. The 29th was the first infantry regiment to enter Richmond, Virginia when the city surrendered.

Census show that William, also known as Billy Homer, and his wife Eunice lived on West Main Street in 1900. As a widower, he was still in town on Cross Road in 1910. He died in 1911.

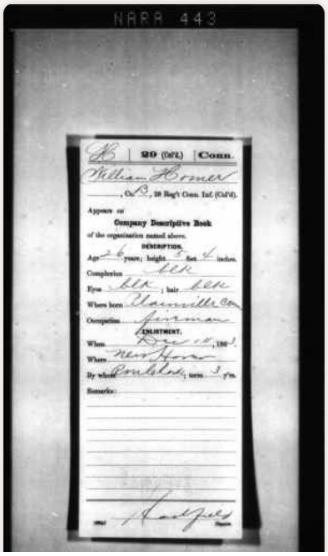
William H. Homer

During the earlier part of his career, Plainville artist Alfred Hepworth painted a portrait of William Homer. The Plainville Historical Society.

now owns this painting. It is currently being restored. A grant from the Norton Trust is being used for this purpose.

William H. Homer

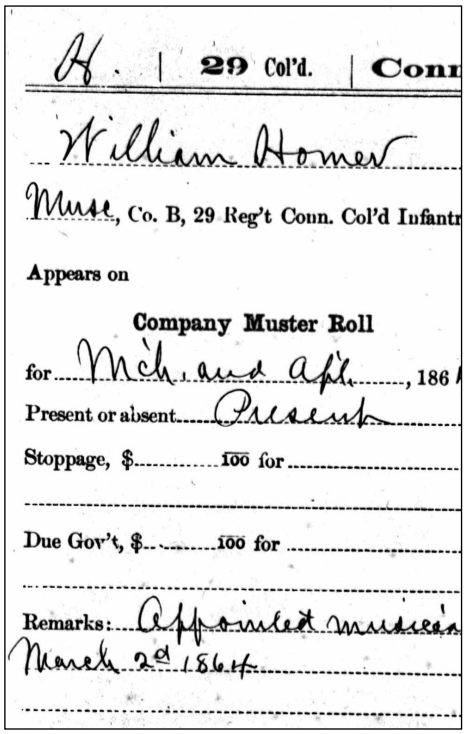
William Homer
in the U.S., Colored Troops Military Service Records, 1863-1865



Detail | Source

Name	William Homer
Birth Location	Plainville, Connecticut
Enlistment Date	10 Dec 1863
Military Date	1863
Unit	29th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry (Colored)
Branch of Service	Infantry

Save



H. | 29 Col'd. | Conn

William Homer

Muse, Co. B, 29 Reg't Conn. Col'd Infantr

Appears on

Company Muster Roll

for Mch. and Apl., 186

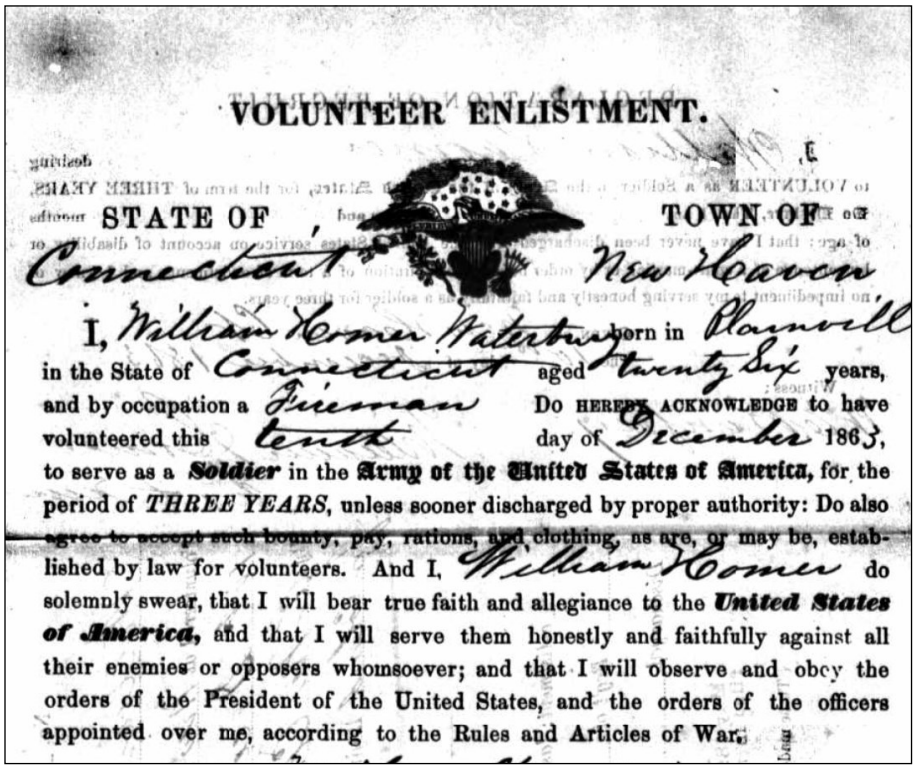
Present or absent Present

Stoppage, $ 100 for

Due Gov't, $ 100 for

Remarks: Appointed musician March 2d 1864

From military records showing William was appointed musician



VOLUNTEER ENLISTMENT.

STATE OF Connecticut TOWN OF New Haven

I, William Homer Waterbury born in Plainville in the State of Connecticut aged twenty Six years, and by occupation a Fireman Do HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE to have volunteered this tenth day of December 1863, to serve as a *Soldier* in the *Army of the United States of America*, for the period of *THREE YEARS*, unless sooner discharged by proper authority: Do also agree to accept such bounty, pay, rations, and clothing, as are, or may be, established by law for volunteers. And I, William Homer do solemnly swear, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the *United States of America*, and that I will serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies or opposers whomsoever; and that I will observe and obey the orders of the President of the United States, and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the Rules and Articles of War.

Enlistment document

West Cemetery, Plainville

Chauncey Naaman

Chauncey Naaman was born in Southington in about 1847. He later lived in Plainville. He married Margaret Jackson in Southington in 1868. They had one child. Chauncey's mother was a Homer.

Chauncey was in the 29th Regiment, Connecticut Colored Infantry, Company H. He enlisted in December 1864 in Hartford. He was 18 years old at the time. The 29th was the first infantry to enter Richmond, Virginia after it surrendered. Chauncey was mustered out in October 1865.

At some point after the war, Chauncey relocated to Plainville. The 1900 census shows Chauncey and his wife living on Whiting Street. He died in Plainville in September 1916.

These photos show Naaman descendants at a 2001 memorial program honoring Plainville's African-American Civil War veterans. It was held at West Cemetery.

Chauncey Naaman

Chauncey Namon
in the U.S., Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861-1865

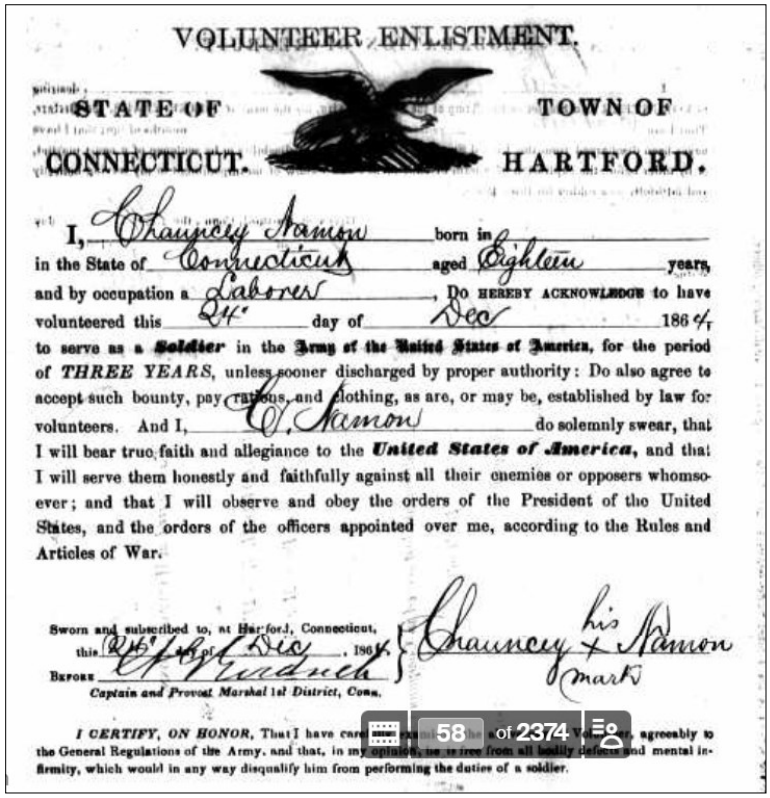
Name	Chauncey Namon
Enlistment Date	24 Dec 1864
Enlistment Rank	Private
Muster Date	24 Dec 1864
Muster Place	Connecticut
Muster Company	H
Muster Regiment	29th Infantry
Muster Regiment Type	Infantry
Muster Information	Enlisted
Muster Out Date	24 Oct 1865
Muster Out Information	Mustered Out
Side of War	Union
Survived War?	Yes
Residence Place	Southington, Connecticut

Chauncey Naaman.

Chauncey Naaman, a well known colored resident of Plainville, died suddenly this morning at the home of his brother, Julius Naaman of that place. The funeral arrangements have not as yet been completed.

From the
New Britain Herald
September 19, 1916

West Cemetery,
Plainville



VOLUNTEER ENLISTMENT.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT. TOWN OF HARTFORD.

I, Chauncey Namon born in
in the State of Connecticut aged Eighteen years,
and by occupation a Laborer, Do HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE to have
volunteered this 24th day of Dec 186 4,
to serve as a **Soldier** in the **Army of the United States of America**, for the period of *THREE YEARS*, unless sooner discharged by proper authority: Do also agree to accept such bounty, pay, rations, and clothing, as are, or may be, established by law for volunteers. And I, C. Namon do solemnly swear, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the ***United States of America***, and that I will serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies or opposers whomsoever; and that I will observe and obey the orders of the President of the United States, and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the Rules and Articles of War.

Sworn and subscribed to, at Hartford, Connecticut, this 24th day of Dec, 1864. Before Captain and Provost Marshal 1st District, Conn.

Chauncey his + Namon mark

I CERTIFY, ON HONOR, That I have carefully examined the above Volunteer, agreeably to the General Regulations of the Army, and that, in my opinion, he is free from all bodily defects and mental infirmity, which would in any way disqualify him from performing the duties of a soldier.

Enlistment document