

The 29th Connecticut Regiment Volunteer Infantry (Colored)



Pvt. Leverett Holden, Avon, CT

By

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Avon Historical Society

Overview of presentation



- ❧ Very brief history of the enslaved in CT before the Civil War (CW)
- ❧ Very brief history of the U.S. Civil War to give focus on research needed to understand the issues
- ❧ Very brief history of Connecticut in the CW
- ❧ Avon – 1830 to 1865
- ❧ The 29th Connecticut Regiment Volunteer Infantry (Colored)
- ❧ Leverett Holden from Avon
 - ❧ What do we know about him and his service?
 - ❧ What we can assume to know and some conclusions
 - ❧ Places to visit to learn more about the 29th CRVI
- ❧ References used in research

Very brief history of slavery in Connecticut BEFORE the Civil War



- ❧ In 1639 there were enslaved people in CT. By 1717 New London had the largest enslaved population of the CT Colony. By the mid 18th century, there were 7,500 enslaved people in Connecticut.
- ❧ After 3 failed tries, Connecticut's General Assembly voted to create "gradual emancipation" in 1784 – "any slave born after this act will be FREE upon his/her 25th birthday."
- ❧ They later amended it in 1797 – "any slave born after this act will be FREE upon his/her 21st birthday."
- ❧ Due to this gradual emancipation, and the selling of the enslaved to the south for money, 5,300 enslaved were freed in CT leaving only 931 in bondage by early 19th century.
- ❧ Note: England abolished slavery in 1833.

Very brief history of the U.S. Civil War – 1861-1865



- ❧ Ft. Sumter, SC fell April 1861
- ❧ Lincoln called up troops – skirmish expected to last only 3 months
- ❧ Issues of secession and slavery dominated – being an economic issue
- ❧ Later the “skirmish” became full out war between the North and the South – brother against brother, etc.
- ❧ Ohio was first state to attempt to raise a Black regiment in early 1862.
- ❧ Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation (87 years after the American Revolution) officially started Jan. 1, 1863 with subsequent Congressional approval in early 1864.
- ❧ Emancipation Proclamation allowed Lincoln to recruit “colored troops” for the first time in early 1863. MA 54th formed July 1863.
- ❧ “Colored Troops” from many northern states formed immediately, including Connecticut’s 29th in Aug. 1863. Some early regiments formed in New Orleans, LA but that history is not told in the North.

Very brief history of Connecticut in the Civil War



- ❧ At first the CT General Assembly voted NOT to enter the War as many legislators did not think it was a worthy effort or that it was ours to join. Gov. Buckingham prevailed raising \$810,000 from banks and wealthy individuals, using his assets as collateral, to pay for the 1st and 2nd regiments to be formed and outfitted in May 1861.
- ❧ The General Assembly later voted to form regiments (~900 in each) as needed – total of 28 regiments of white men.
- ❧ Major battles that CT men fought bravely in – Antietam (Sept. 1862), Gettysburg (July 1863)

1861

CITIZENS OF CONNECTICUT, SONS OF THE FATHERS! TO ARMS! TO ARMS!

Your country is in danger! Lay aside all party lines! Know no man as Democrat or Republican! Recognize no distinction save that between Patriots and Traitors! Cross palms with no Traitors! He that is not for us is against us! Fling the glorious Old Flag to the breeze in every city, village, hamlet! Assemble at *once* at your several centres---revive the old militia---and *drill, drill* with such muskets as are at hand without waiting for the call of the Legislature.

LONG LIVE THE CONSTITUTION!
God Save the United States of America!
NAIL THIS UP!

May 11/1861

May 1861

May 1861

Very brief history of Connecticut in the Civil War



- ✧ Although no battle was fought in CT, our state was a leader in men who volunteered (per capita), munitions supplied (Colt, Collinsville Ax, Spencer Rifle – a total of 7 arms companies in CT!) and ships built. In Mystic, 80 steamships built in 3 years were used in naval battles thanks to Gideon Welles of Glastonbury, close friend to Lincoln, who became his Secretary of the Navy.
- ✧ By the time of the Emancipation Proclamation in Jan. 1863, CT had approx. 40,000 white men serving in 28 Regiments. Death due to disease and fighting took many, but the cause to defend the Union remained strong.

James W. C. Pennington, Pastor Talcott St. Congregational Church, Hartford



- ❧ James Pennington was a Freedom seeker. He was ordained a minister in 1838 at Yale and served as Pastor of the Talcott Street Congregational Church in Hartford from 1840 to 1847. He was known as a great orator and leader of people.
- ❧ He moved to NYC but returned to Hartford many times to preach and support abolitionist efforts here. (England abolished slavery in 1833 and was the impetus to much of the early abolitionist movements here.)
- ❧ Aug. 1, 1856 (5 years before the CW) African Americans in Hartford held a 'celebration of abolition of slavery' at "Gillette's Grove" which is known to be an area near where Aetna and the Mark Twain House are today. Pastor Pennington was the lead speaker. Many Black people attended this and began to understand the need for abolition of their brothers and sisters in the south. Was Leverett Holden at this celebration? If he did, what influence did it have on him?

Talcott St. Congregational Church now Faith
Congregational Church, 2030 Main Street, Hartford –
built 1826 by early abolitionists and concerned citizens



Avon, CT – 1830 -1865



- ❧ Avon was named in 1830, having been known as “Northington,” a parish of Farmington, since the mid 17th century.
- ❧ We can assume that Avon was on the Underground Railroad in the 1850’s because of Farmington’s tremendous coalition of families who assisted the Enslaved to freedom. Note: The Amistad revolt was in 1839 with trials years after that. www.ctfreedomtrail.org
- ❧ Avon was a rural community of about 1,000 residents when Lincoln’s Call to Arms was announced in 1861; 94 men from Avon responded – nearly 10% of the population!
- ❧ Many of Avon’s men saw service at some of the CW’s largest battles such as Antietam (1862) and Gettysburg (1863).
- ❧ And some were imprisoned (Chancellorsville) and survived, barely!
- ❧ Personal accounts are in letters in the History Room of the Avon Library.

29th Connecticut Regiment Volunteer Infantry (Colored)



- ❧ After the Emancipation Proclamation was announced in 1863, many northern states formed Black regiments. Governor Buckingham created the CT 29th in August 1863.
- ❧ According to an 1867 book by J.J. Hill, who served in the CT 29th Regiment, those who volunteered were promised a bounty of \$310 from the State, \$75 from the county they came from and \$300 from the U.S. government. He states they only received the \$310 from the State. But this is not consistent with a 1923 book by Rev. A.H. Newton who also served in the CT 29th. He stated they were promised only \$15 upon enlistment but never received it.

29th Connecticut Regiment Volunteer Infantry (Colored)



- ❧ After filling the ranks of the CT 29th with ~900 Black men, a CT 30th Regiment was formed very early in 1864 with only a few hundred.
- ❧ During their service, the CT 29th lost 2 Officers, 44 enlisted and 152 died of disease for a total of 198 of the almost 900 who were in the regiment.
- ❧ Among most all the northern states, over 200,000 Black men who fought in the CW. Over time at least 100 of them became officers. For the most part Black regiments were granted pensions, if requested, equal to their white counterparts.

Hartford Daily Courant ads for raising troops, Dec. 1863



DR. D. D. DEWEY & CO.
CHEMISTS,
POST OFFICE BUILDING.

GENERAL HEAD-QUARTERS, STATE OF CONNECTICUT—ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE, Hartford, Nov. 23, 1863—General Orders No 17.
FOR RECRUITING COLORED VOLUNTEERS.

I. Pursuant to orders from the War Department, the Commander-in-Chief directs that volunteers be accepted and mustered into service, sufficient to organize a regiment of Infantry, to be designated as the 29th Regiment Conn. Volunteers (colored), to serve for three years or during the war.

II. All regularly appointed recruiting agents are hereby authorized to procure able-bodied colored volunteers between the ages of eighteen and forty-five, and deliver them at the offices of the various Provost Marshals, in the same manner as is provided for the enlistment of other volunteers.

III. For each volunteer who shall be accepted and mustered into service, there shall be paid by the Paymaster-General of Conn., to such agents, or to any other party procuring such volunteer a premium of Ten Dollars; but no premium will be paid by the United States for the enlistment of colored men.

IV. Every volunteer non-commissioned officer, musician, artificer or private, enlisted and mustered into service under these orders, shall be paid by this State in addition to the regular pay and allowances of the United States, as follows, viz:

1st—A Bounty of three hundred dollars to every volunteer, who shall enlist on or before the fifth day of January, A. D. 1864, to be paid when such volunteer shall have been mustered into the service of the United States.

2d—Such sum as shall be sufficient to make his monthly pay equal to the amount received from the United States by the other volunteers from this State, and an allowance of three dollars and fifty cents a month for his clothing, in addition thereto, which payment shall be made quarterly and shall continue until said difference shall be provided for by the General Government.

3d—The sum of thirty dollars per year, or at that rate for any fraction of a year that he shall serve, ten dollars of which shall be paid when he is mustered into the service of the United States, and ten dollars at the end of each successive four months thereafter.

4th—There shall also be paid for the support and maintenance of his family the sum of six dollars per month for the wife, if any there be, and two dollars per month for each child under fourteen years of age; and in case there shall be a child or children and no wife, then the sum of six dollars per month for the younger child, and two dollars per month for each additional child under fourteen years of age, provided the amount paid for any

bited without permission.

see his patrons and friends. Respectfully,
dec 7 12d
A. WUNDER, Artist.



FALL IN! FALL IN!



Five Hundred Men Wanted,

—FOR THE—

16th Regiment C. V.

A rare chance is now offered for the young men of Hartford and vicinity to enlist and go into a Regiment where they have friends and acquaintance—one of the best in the service, composed entirely of volunteers—now in an excellent location in good WINTER QUARTERS, near Portsmouth, Va., and commanded by a regular army officer. Never, since the commencement of the war, has there been such chances for intelligent, energetic young men to rise to positions of prominence in the army as are offered to volunteers at this time.

COME NOW, AND SECURE THE BOUNTIES.

Apply to **Capt. JULIAN POMEROY,**
16th Conn. Volunteers.

Recruiting Office, No. 93 Asylum st. Allen Hall Building, Hartford.
dec 13 12d 1w6l



Ten Recruits Wanted!

IMMEDIATELY!

To complete the quota of a Town, for which the highest Bounty ever offered,

\$425,

Will be paid, (aside from U. S. Bounties) in CASH, as soon as sworn into service. Apply immediately to **E. C. DWIGHT,** at Strong's, 40 State st.
dec 18 8d



ATTENTION, COLORED MEN!—I have opened an office at No 4 Allyn Hall, for the purpose of enlisting a Hartford Company for the 29th Reg C V., now in camp at New Haven. Call and learn full particulars.
dec 11 ttd

ED. E. ROBERTS.



NOW TO THE RESCUE!

E. H. PHELPS

Having been appointed Agent for Recruiting to fill the quota of Hartford, will pay the Highest Bounty allowed by Government, amounting to \$692 and \$792, and will

Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

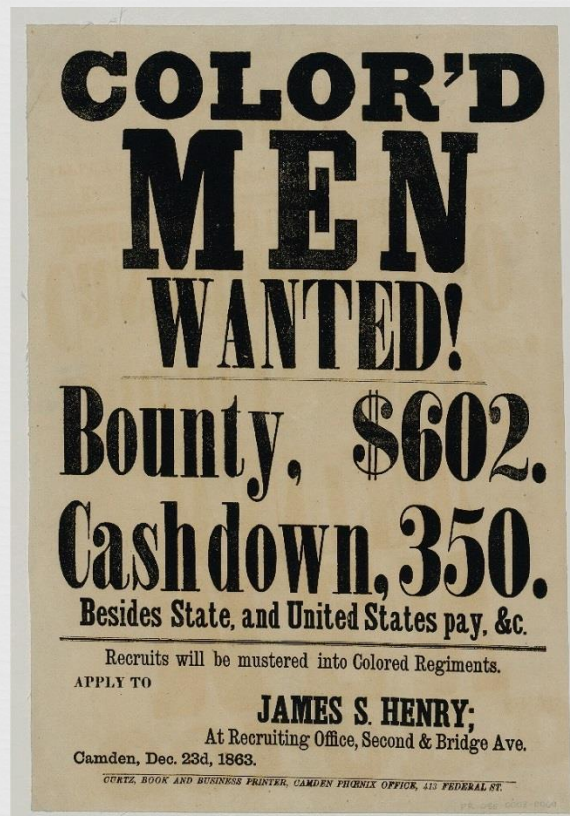
USCT



- ❧ It should be noted that the CT 29th and MA 54th were the ONLY state Black troops to retain their status as a regiment upon their return.
- ❧ All other state Black troops were eventually merged into what was called “U.S. Colored Troops” and given numbers by the government. For example, the CT 30th regiment became the “U.S. 31st Infantry Colored Troops.”
- ❧ Many USCT were Freedom seekers who either escaped to join the Union or were from free states without a formal regiment.

Enlistment Poster, Dec. 1863

Camden, New Jersey



Frederick Douglass speaks to the CT 29th and 30th in Fair Haven Jan. 29, 1864. Was Leverett Holden there?



A Way-Mark.

The U. S. rendezvous at Fair Haven, was, on Friday, January 29th, the scene of an event very unique, yet characteristic of to-day, and as such it finds a fitting place in our columns.

The colored soldiers of the 29th and 30th C. V. were addressed by the colored orator, Frederick Douglass.

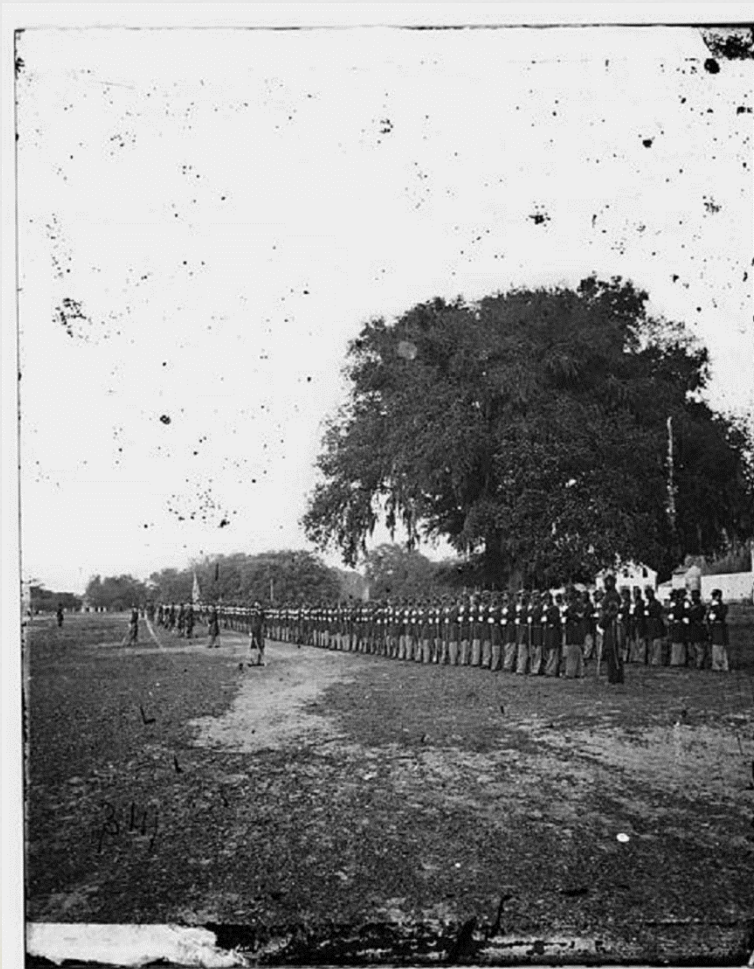
The soldiers were drawn up beneath the large garrison flag in front of the officers' headquarters. Mr. Douglass stood in full view upon a sort of rude balcony of the officers' quarters. He is a large, well-formed and dignified man, and is, without question, one of the finest orators of the country. His speech was brief, not rhetorically brilliant or eloquent, but it was clear in statement—packed with sound sense—exactly suited to the occasion and the audience—made powerful and effective by deep and earnest feeling.

He said to the negro soldiers, "You are pioneers of the liberty of your race. With the United States cap on your head, the United States eagle on your belt, the United States musket on your shoulder, not all the powers of darkness can prevent you from becoming American citizens. And not for yourselves alone are you marshaled—you are pioneers—on you depends the destiny of four millions of the colored race in this country. If you rise and flourish, we shall rise and flourish. If you win freedom and citizenship, we shall share your freedom and citizenship."

Douglass's most famous line in his speech that day reads:

"You Are Pioneers of the Liberty of your Race....not all powers of darkness can prevent you from becoming American citizens."

Only known photo of the CT 29th—
taken at Beaufort, South Carolina,
April 1864



Leverett Holden – what we know from research



- ❧ Upon enlistment into Co. D on Dec. 15, 1863, Leverett Holden stated he was born in Vernon, CT and was 38 years old, making him born in 1825. He was “5’ 8” in height, with a colored complexion, black hair and black eyes.” He told them his occupation was that of a farmer. Later records show he was illiterate, as many of them were.
- ❧ The 1820 U.S. Census shows a George Holden, a Black man, head of household with 6 family members in Vernon, CT. Could this be his father? Names of other household members were not listed until the 1850 census, so we cannot be sure.
- ❧ The Barbour Collection of the State Library does not show a birth or baptism record for a Leverett Holden in Vernon in the 1820’s, so his actual birth date and location are still a mystery.

H | 29 (Col'd.) | Conn.

Levett Holden

....., Co. *D*, 29 Reg't Conn. Inf. (Col'd).

Appears on

Company Descriptive Book

of the organization named above.

DESCRIPTION.

Age *38* years; height *5* feet *8* inches.

Complexion *Gold*

Eyes *Blk*; hair *Blk*

Where born *Vernon, Conn.*

Occupation *Farmer*

ENLISTMENT.

When *Dec. 15*, 1863.

Where *N. Haven*

By whom *Wm. Clarke*; term *3* y'rs.

Remarks:

Holden

b. 1825

Leverett Holden – what we know from research



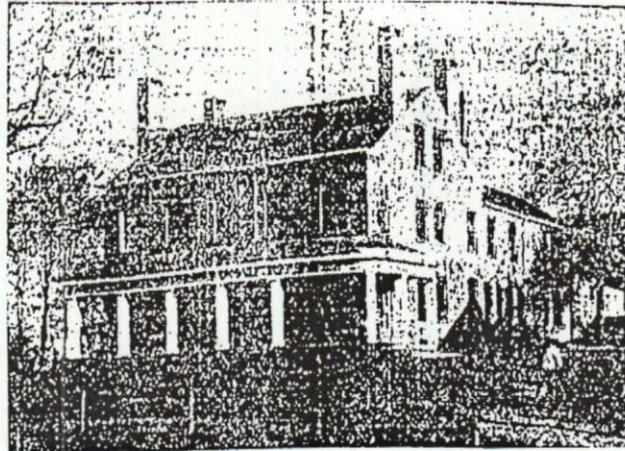
- ❧ The U.S. Census of 1850 has a “Leverett Holden” living with the Wadsworth family on Prospect Hill in Hartford. He is listed age 26 (b. 1824?) a member of the household, along with many others, which could mean he was a servant, stable hand, farmer, etc.
- ❧ The oldest house in the West End of Hartford today is the Elisha Wadsworth House, 1234 Prospect Avenue (corner of Albany Avenue) built in 1828. According to the Hartford Preservation Alliance, at the time it was built, “one could stand at the top of the hill and see open land and farmhouses stretching east all the way to central Hartford and the CT River.” In 1919 it was turned 90° to face Prospect Avenue.
- ❧ The Wadsworth family operated an inn at that house until 1862 (note: one year after the CW started) and Leverett Holden was employed there sometime from 1850’s until ??? Might he have traveled west to Avon while the CW was going on to seek other employment? (recall Rev. Pennington’s speech in 1856 in Hartford)

Wadsworth Tavern (1828 – 1862) on Prospect Hill, Hartford



SALE OF WADSWORTH TAVERN ANNOUNCED: Smith & Bassette Buy Colonial House On

The Hartford Courant (1887-1922); Feb 3, 1916;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Hartford Courant (1764-1986)
pg. 10



OLD WADSWORTH TAVERN ON ALBANY AVENUE.

SALE OF WADSWORTH TAVERN ANNOUNCED

Smith & Bassette Buy Colonial House
On Albany Avenue.

The heirs of Daniel Wadsworth have
announced through the real estate firm

handsome old lines of the building. When finished it will be one of the most beautiful old colonial houses in this section of the state. It is also their intention to leave ample grounds about the house and to build two more colonial houses adjoining, which will be in keeping with the ancient landmark, and thereby eventually

*How it
looked facing
Albany Ave!*

Today as 1234 Prospect Avenue,
after being turned 90° in 1919



Pvt. Leverett Holden's military service



- ❧ The CT 29th served in 6 battles. More research would need to be done to determine in which battles Leverett took part.
- ❧ Records show that he was ill from Sept – Nov 1864 and treated at an “X Corp Flying Hospital” (similar to a M*A*S*H unit) after the Battle of Petersburg, VA. X Corp hospitals treated Black units.
- ❧ It is well known that Clara Barton, founder of the U.S. Red Cross, was stationed at that particular X Corp Flying Hospital at the same time as a dietician and nurse. Could she have treated Leverett? Could he have met her?
- ❧ The CT 29th volunteers mustered out on October 24, 1865 at Brownsville, TX. Leverett was honorably discharged at New Haven, CT on November 25, 1865. Records show he was paid \$78.40 for his clothing allowance, \$6.00 for his arms and was owed \$100 by the government as his bounty for joining.

Leverett Holden – his return to Avon



- ❧ It is assumed that after leaving the Wadsworth Tavern he went west to Avon and joined the CW from there.
- ❧ Returning to CT after the Civil War, Leverett appears in the 1870 census as living with Martha Williams, a mulatto woman, in Avon, CT. He listed his age as 49, which would put his birth at 1821. (recall his enlistment age put his birth year at 1825 and in the 1870 census at 1824)
- ❧ According to the 1870 census he lived on West Avon Road, next door to the c. 1810 Derrin House, which is leased to the Avon Historical Society by the State Military Dept.

The c. 1810 Derrin House
on West Avon Road – Leverett lived next door
to this property, but do not know exactly where



Leverett Holden in Avon



- ❧ From a one line notation in the Nov. 14, 1869 ledger of The Avon Congregational Church, we found the following, “To L Holden for cleaning brick \$1.75.” The church was undergoing a cleaning of their chimney and it appears Leverett was paid to be part of that project. Coincidentally, the minister at ACC from 1869-1871 was Rev. Henry G. Marshall, who served as Captain in the CT 29th. We can assume he knew Leverett and most likely hired him!
- ❧ Leverett lived in Avon until his death on October 10, 1877 at either age 56, 53 or 52. He is buried in East Avon Cemetery (originally called Avon Cemetery) next to The Avon Congregational Church.

Something of interest discovered during research



- ❧ Leverett's gravestone in what was then called "Avon Cemetery" was found on the map from the Hale Collection of Oct. 1934 as being in the "back row" far from other graves. Appears to be the 'last grave' in the cemetery, well segregated. Assumption?
- ❧ Today, due to the change in configuration of the entrance to the cemetery on Simsbury Road, Leverett Holden is grave #1 in row #1, still segregated from others, but well noticed by anyone entering the cemetery. Redemption?
- ❧ Leverett Holden, who we have no image of, was from Vernon, CT and died in Avon, CT. He never married. He is a Civil War hero who made Avon his home and the Avon Historical Society honors him every year with a flag and medallion.

Pvt. Leverett Holden's grave at
East Avon Cemetery –
official Union soldier gravestone made in Hartford



Places to learn more about the CT 29th Regiment

- ❧ In 2008 the descendants of the CT 29th erected a monument to their ancestors in New Haven on the spot where they departed aboard ship in the Fair Haven section. It is now Criscuolo Park.
- ❧ Criscuolo Park is on the corner of James and Chapel Street. There is still a remnant of the railroad track on the street going in to the park which carried some of the 900 Freedom seekers to this spot to join the U.S. Civil War. It is worth a visit to see the names and read the regiment's story. Note: As Leverett is now FIRST in Avon's cemetery, he is also FIRST on the list of all 900 soldiers of the CT 29th.
- ❧ His name also appears on a monument outside The African American Civil War Museum in Washington, DC

Monument to the CT 29th in Criscuolo Park, New Haven, CT

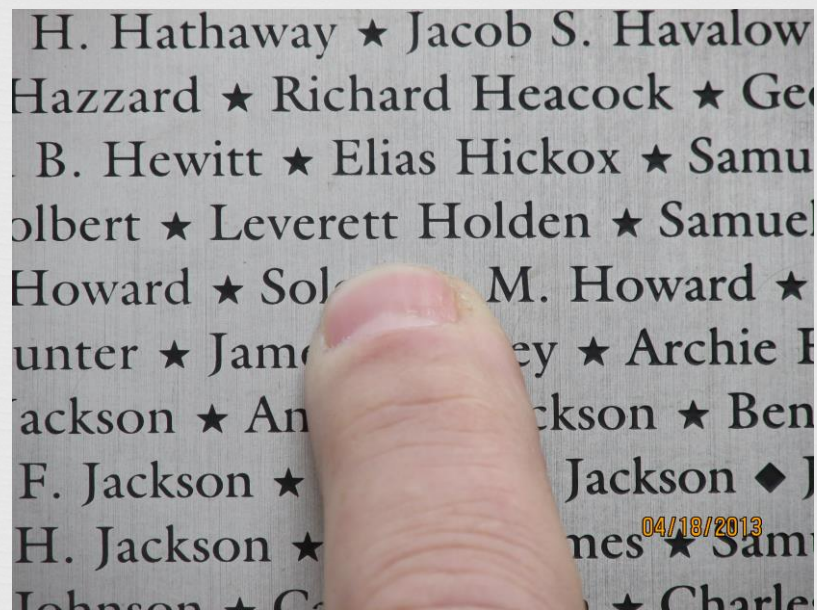


African American Civil War Museum

1925 VT Ave. NW, Washington, DC



Website is: <https://www.afroamcivilwar.org/>



P.S.



- ❧ Records show that some of the Black regiments from CT, and other states, had soldiers join who did not live in those states when they enlisted. Some returned to other states after the war. Therefore, not all 900 men in the CT 29th were from Connecticut.
- ❧ It should be mentioned that 2 other men are listed as being from Avon in the CT 29th and 30th; Joseph McFarland who deserted and Henry Williams who did not return to Avon. We do not have any records that they lived in Avon prior to enlistment or just used it at the place to enlist.

How we commemorated Leverett Holden and the CT 29th in Avon



- ❧ The Avon Historical Society recognized the CT 29th and 30th contribution to the Civil War with a special exhibit at the History Room of the Avon Free Public Library during Black History Month, February & March 2014.
- ❧ A special ceremony to rededicate the grave of Pvt. Leverett Holden took place on Saturday, February 22, 2014 with descendants of many other CT 29th soldiers present. A GAR ceremony of 1919 was used and speeches were given inside the church after about the regiment and the story of the African American Civil War experience.
- ❧ TODAY Magazine published an article about Pvt. Holden in their February issues in 2020 and 2021 for Black History Month.

Rededication of Pvt. Leverett Holden's grave with some CT 29th descendants - Feb. 22, 2014



The flag of the CT 29th



- ❧ The CT State Capitol was built in 1887 as a monument to the U.S. Civil War. A Hall of Flags on the first floor has regimental flags from all units on display EXCEPT the CT 29th.
- ❧ On May 1, 2015 their flag was brought up from storage in the cellar to be on permanent display along the walkway between the Capitol and Legislative Office Building. It was a large event with several speakers. Many of the 29th descendants attended to mark this occasion.

CT 29th regimental flag with descendants



Terri Wilson with John Motley whose African American military and items from the enslaved collection inspired this research. His collection is now at Tredegar Iron Works Museum, Richmond, VA.

CT 29th flag now on permanent display



To honor those who fought so bravely for our freedom...

The African American soldiers of the Connecticut 29th and 30th Regiments carried these flags with great dignity and determination for a soon to be recognized freedom. Like these flags, many of our soldiers returned to us tattered and torn, but with a great sense of pride for what they had achieved for the generations to come.

For too long the 29th flag resided in the basement of the State Capitol building, and the 30th flag awaited conservation. On May 1, 2015 they were given a new home ~ one which is out of the shadows of war and into the light of history.



Dedicated by The Descendants of the
Connecticut 29th C. V. Regiment

"That the Generations to Come Might Know Them"

References



- ❧ African American Civil War Museum, Washington, DC
- ❧ Avon Free Public Library, Marian Hunter History Room, especially Ann Emerson (now retired) reference librarian
- ❧ “Avon, Connecticut...an historical story,” by Francis MacKie, 1988
- ❧ “Out of the Briars” an autobiography and sketch of the 29th CT Volunteers, A. H. Newton, D.D., 1923
- ❧ “A Sketch of the 29th Regiment of Connecticut Colored Troops,” J.J. Hill, 1867
- ❧ “Connecticut in the American Civil War,” by Matthew Warshauer, 2011

References



- ❧ “American to the Backbone: The Life of James W.C. Pennington,” by Christopher L. Webber, 2011
- ❧ National Archives & Library of Congress, photos of civil war soldiers
- ❧ Hartford Preservation Alliance Magazine, Feb. 2009
- ❧ Connecticut State Library, especially staff member Kevin Johnson who portrays William Webb of the CT 29th, and is a scholar on this topic
- ❧ “Hartford Daily Courant” (Democrat Press) online
- ❧ “Hartford Times” (Republican Press) limited online
- ❧ Variety of U.S. Census data available on the internet
- ❧ National Park Service – information on Union graves

“The Forlorn Soldier,” c.1869, Hartford, CT.
Permanently placed in the CT State Capitol on
Sept. 17, 2013, the 152nd anniversary of the
Battle of Antietam.



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