

United States Colored Troops, 19th Regiment, Company A muster rolls, Chaffin Farm, Virginia

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1865

Title Statement

United States Colored Troops, 19th Regiment, Company A muster rolls, Chaffin Farm, VirginiaUnited States Colored Troops, 19th Regiment, Company A muster rolls, Chaffin Farm, Virginia MSS 16963

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Publication Statement

Publisher: Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

P.O. Box 400110

University of Virginia

Charlottesville, Virginia 22904-4110

URL: <https://small.library.virginia.edu/>

2026-05-29

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Unit ID

MSS 16963

Unit ID

[Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/1919

Unit Date

1865

Mixed Materials [X032762930]

1 (folder)

Language

English

Extent

0.03 Cubic Feet One letter-size file folder 2 folded muster rolls

Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

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Preferred Citation

MSS 16963, United States Colored Troops, 19th Regiment, Company A muster rolls, Chaffin Farm, Virginia, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library.

Biographical / Historical

In late 1863, Brigadier General William Birney and Colonel Samuel Bowman (promoted to Brevet Brigadier General) were stationed at Benedict, Maryland to superintend the recruitment and organization of African American soldiers. On December 15, 1863, Brigadier General Birney organized the 19th United States Colored Infantry Regiment, which primarily consisted of enslaved men from Southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore. According to the muster rolls in this collection, some of the men were from Chaffin Farm, Virginia. The operation at Benedict was heavily tied to the enlistment and liberation of Black troops:

The Location: Training and organizing took place at Camp Stanton (also referred to as Camp Birney), located on the Patuxent River in Benedict, Maryland.

The Recruitment: General Birney was tasked by the U.S. War Department to raise Black regiments. Enslaved men were liberated from regional slave prisons and used Benedict as a staging point to build up their ranks.

The Regiment's Future: After organizing the 19th USCT, the regiment remained at Benedict for basic training until March 1, 1864, before deploying to Baltimore and eventually joining the Army of the Potomac.(1) The regiment was present at the surrender of Confederate General Robert E. Lee at Appomattox Court House on April 9-10, 1865.

USCT were Union Army regiments during the American Civil War that primarily comprised African Americans, with soldiers from other ethnic groups also serving in USCT units. Established in response to a demand for more units from Union Army commanders, USCT regiments, which totaled 175 by the end of the war in 1865, constituted about one-tenth of the manpower of the army, according to historian Kelly Mezurek, author of *For Their Own Cause: The 27th United States Colored Troops* (The Kent State University Press, 2016). "They served in infantry, artillery, and cavalry." Approximately 20 percent of USCT soldiers were killed in action or died of disease and other causes, a rate about 35 percent higher than that of white Union troops. Numerous USCT soldiers fought with distinction, with 16 receiving the Medal of Honor.

The courage displayed by Blacks during the Civil War played an important role in African Americans gaining new rights. As Frederick Douglass said in an 1863 speech:

Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters U.S.; let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder, and bullets in his pocket, and there is no power on the earth or under the earth which can deny that he has earned the right of citizenship in the United States.(2)

The 19th Regiment USCT were among the first Union soldiers to enter and capture Richmond when the Confederate capital fell on April 3, 1865. In fact, the soldiers of both the 19th (and 39th) Regiments played a central role in the Appomattox campaign leading to General Lee's April 9, 1865 surrender at Appomattox Courthouse.(3)

Source: 1"United States Colored Troop, 19th Regiment Company A" Wikipedia. Accessed 5/29/2026 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/19th_United_States_Colored_Infantry_Regiment

2. "United States Colored Troops" Wikipedia. Accessed 5/29/2026 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Colored_Troops

3. The 19th Regiment US Colored Troops from Queen Anne's County. Queen Anne's County Maryland website. August 12, 2025 <https://visitqueenannes.com/the-19th-regiment-us-colored-troops-from-queen-annes-county/>

For more information "William Birney" Wikipedia. Accessed 5/29/2026 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Birney

"Colonel Samuel Bowman 19th Regiment" https://colcohist-gensoc.org/wp-content/uploads/A_Civil_War_General_Bowman.pdf

Content Description

This collection contains two muster rolls documenting the officers and enlisted men of Company A, 19th

Regiment of United States Colored Troops (USCT), while stationed at Chaffins Farm, Virginia, during the final year of the Civil War.

The first muster roll records details for seven officers, a surgeon, a chaplain, and four sergeants at Chaffin's Farm. Muster rolls reveal the place and date of enlistment; mustering details; last date of pay; and comments on the current status of each individual, including promotions, demotions, absences due to sickness, detached duty, and leave.

The second muster roll documents two months of Company A's activity from December 31, 1864 through February 28, 1865, also at Chaffin's Farm. It lists three officers, five sergeants, seven corporals, and approximately eighty privates, including one soldier who died of pneumonia in January 1865. Enlisted men were recruited from various counties throughout Maryland, as well as Accomack County, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., for three-year terms under a variety of colonels. An inspection report on the verso rates the company "Good" across all six evaluated categories: discipline, instruction, military appearance, arms, accoutrements, and clothing.

The 19th Regiment USCT was organized at Camp Stanton, Maryland on December 25, 1863, and served primarily in Maryland and Virginia before mustering out on January 25, 1867. The regiment was present at the surrender of Lee's Confederacy at Appomattox Court House in April 1865.

Keywords

muster rolls

African American soldiers

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- African Americans

African Americans -- Virginia

United States. Army. Colored Infantry Regiment, 19th (1863-1867)