

= Prince Romerson =

Prince Romerson (c . 1840 ? March 30 , 1872) was an American Union Army soldier of Native Hawaiian descent . One of the " Hawai'i Sons of the Civil War " , he was among a group of more than one hundred documented Native Hawaiian and Hawaii @-@ born combatants who fought in the American Civil War while the Kingdom of Hawaii was still an independent nation .

Living in the American Northeast before the war , Romerson enlisted in the Union Navy in 1863 as part of the Blockading Squadrons responsible for maintaining the blockade of the ports of the Confederacy . After being discharged from naval service , he continued fighting and reenlisted in the Union Army under the 5th Regiment Massachusetts Colored Volunteer Cavalry , a United States Colored regiment , and was promoted to the rank of sergeant on June 1 , 1864 . Romerson fought with the 5th USCC until the end of the war . Illness prevented him from continuing with his regiment 's reassignment to Clarksville , Texas , and he was mustered out in 1865 . After the war , like many former USCT veterans , he fought in the frontier army as part of the Buffalo Soldiers . He died in 1872 . In 2010 , the Hawai'i Sons of the Civil War were commemorated with a bronze plaque erected along the memorial pathway at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu .

= = Life = =

After the outbreak of the American Civil War , King Kamehameha IV declared the Kingdom of Hawaii 's neutrality on August 26 , 1861 . Many Native Hawaiians and Hawaii @-@ born Americans (mainly descendants of American missionaries) abroad and in the islands volunteered and enlisted in the military regiments of various states in the Union and the Confederacy . Native Hawaiian participation in American wars was not unheard of ; Native Hawaiians had served in the United States Navy and Army since the War of 1812 , and even more served during the American Civil War . Many Hawaiians sympathized with the Union because of Hawaii 's ties to New England through missionaries and the whaling industry , and the ideological opposition of many to slavery .

Prince Romerson was born around 1840 , but little is known about his life before the war . There is no indication that his first name denotes any royal status , and his surname was often listed as " Robinson " . Different versions of his enlistment records noted his birthplace as " Owyhee , Sandwich Island " (the island of Hawaii) , or " India " . There is also disagreement over his ethnicity . Some Filipino historians have claimed him as one of their own , and he is included in lists of Filipino American Civil War combatants .

Romerson worked as a barber prior to his enlistment in 1863 . It is thought that he came to the United States as a sailor aboard a merchant or whaling ship in the Pacific ; Hawaiian sailors were highly regarded in the 18th- and 19th @-@ century maritime industry and sought out as crew members . Regardless , it is known that Romerson was living in New York prior to joining the Navy . Probably helped by his experience at sea , he enlisted on January 22 , 1863 , as a landsman in the Union Navy . He served on the USS Wamsutta and USS Mercedita as part of the Blockading Squadrons , responsible for maintaining the blockade of the ports of the Confederate States .

After serving in the Navy for a year , Romerson joined as a private in Company M of the 5th Regiment Massachusetts Colored Volunteer Cavalry . Like most Native Hawaiians who participated in the war , he was probably assigned to the colored regiments because of his dark skin color and the military 's segregationist policy . Romerson is one of the few Hawaiian soldiers of the Civil War whose real name is known ; many combatants served under anglicized pseudonyms (nome de guerre) because they were easier for English @-@ speaking Americans to pronounce than Hawaiian names . They were often registered as kanakas , the 19th @-@ century term for Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders , with the " Sandwich Islands " (i.e. Hawaii) noted as their place of origin .

Romerson was quickly promoted to sergeant on June 1 , 1864 , possibly because he was literate . Serving in the same regiment was another Hawaiian soldier named Charles Heatley . Romerson fought with his regiment at the Second Battle of Petersburg and took part in the Richmond ? Petersburg Campaign , better @-@ known as the Siege of Petersburg . He also served as a guard

for the Confederate prison camp at Camp Lookout , Maryland . Between the Union victory at Appomattox and the 5th Regiment 's reassignment to Clarksville , Texas , Romerson fell ill and was sent to the Corps d 'Afrique USA General Hospital in New Orleans on July 8 , 1865 . Never recovering sufficiently to rejoin his regiment , he was transferred to De Camp USA General Hospital , David 's Island , New York , before being mustered out on October 9 , 1865 .

In the post @-@ war period , Romerson sought to rejoin the military , and in 1867 he enlisted in the 39th United States Infantry Regiment at the reduced rank of private . The 39th later consolidated with the 40th to create the 25th United States Infantry Regiment . A racially segregated unit of the United States Army , its personnel were dubbed " Buffalo Soldiers " and included many Civil War veterans from colored regiments such as the 5th USCC . Romerson served in the 25th for a full three @-@ year term fighting in the American Indian Wars along the Texas frontier . He died on March 30 , 1872 , possibly at Fort Griffin , where he was initially buried . On May 11 , 1872 , he was re @-@ interred at the San Antonio National Cemetery .

= = Legacy = =

After the war , the military service of Hawaiians , including Prince Romerson and many others , was largely forgotten , disappearing from the collective memories of the American Civil War and the history of Hawaii . In recent years , Hawaiian residents , historians , and descendants of Hawaiian combatants in the conflict have insisted on the need to remember " our boys from Hawaii " . Renewed interest in the stories of these individuals and this particular period of Hawaiian @-@ American history has inspired efforts to preserve the memories of the Hawaiians who served in the war . On August 26 , 2010 , on the anniversary of the signing of the Hawaiian Neutrality Proclamation , a bronze plaque was erected along the memorial pathway at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu recognizing these Hawai'i Sons of the Civil War , the more than one hundred documented Hawaiians who served during the American Civil War for both the Union and the Confederacy . As of 2014 , researchers have identified 119 documented Native Hawaiian and Hawaii @-@ born combatants from historical records . The exact number still remains unclear because many Hawaiians enlisted and served under anglicized pseudonyms , and little is known about them due to the lack of detailed records .

In 2015 , the sesquicentennial of the end of the American Civil War , the National Park Service released a publication entitled Asians and Pacific Islanders and the Civil War , concerning the service of the large number of combatants of Asian and Pacific Islander descent who fought during the war . The history of Hawaii 's involvement and the biographies of Romerson and others were written by historians Ruthanne Lum McCunn , Anita Manning and Justin Vance .