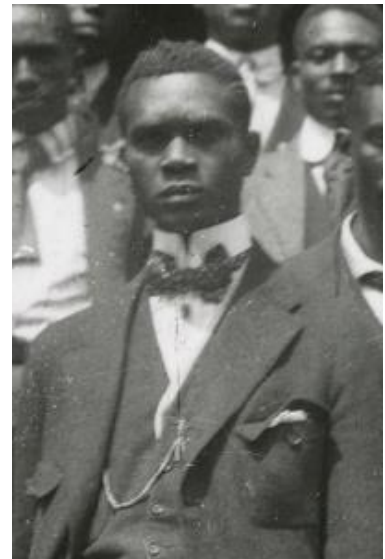


# William Service Bell

Corporal, U.S. Army Engineers

William Service Bell lived in Hartford and worked at a clothing shop. In 1917, he was chosen to be the President of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Hartford. The NAACP works for equal rights for all people and to end discrimination (the unfair treatment of a person or group of people because they are different). In 1918



William Service Bell was drafted, which means the government told him he had to join the army. Almost 3 million men were drafted during World War I. William Service Bell went to Massachusetts for training and then sailed for France.

During World War I African American soldiers were segregated (kept separate) from white soldiers. Most were given jobs that involved very hard work, like loading and unloading ships, building roads, or digging trenches (the long holes in the ground that helped protect soldiers during the fighting.) These jobs were very important. They could also be very dangerous. William Service Bell worked with other African American soldiers repairing roads, so that other soldiers could get where they needed to go. The group worked for two weeks with German bombs falling all around them. They had to find stones to fix the roads and then carry them a long distance, sometimes over big holes in the ground left by bombs.

After the war, William Service Bell returned to Hartford. He continued working with the NAACP. He spoke out about how African Americans were treated in the army and fought against discrimination. Today the Connecticut State Library saves photographs and papers that help tell the stories of Connecticut soldiers—including William Service Bell—during World War I.