

THE BUFFALO SOLDIER

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PRICE





Researched and written especially for the
American Scene by Donnie D. Good.

Illustrations in this issue were produced
exclusively for the American Scene by
Paul A. Rossi, one of America's
foremost authorities on frontier military
history, and supplemented with sketches
by Frederic Remington.

Cover: Corporal, 9th U. S. Cavalry — Fort Davis, Texas, 1880.
Watercolor by Paul A. Rossi

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THE BUFFALO SOLDIER

As the sound of gunfire died away at Appomattox in April, 1865, it was being echoed from the western frontier by restless Indians. While the weary war-worn army was dispersing its trained volunteers, the Blackfeet were running wild in Montana, the Cheyennes were becoming a force to be dealt with along the Platte and Arkansas Rivers, and there were rumblings of activity among the Apaches in New Mexico. Withdrawal of troops from the frontier to support the war efforts had been interpreted by the Indians as cowardice and inferiority.

During the four years of Civil War the Plains Indians, for the most part oblivious to the conflict,

became powerful and confident. Small white settlements and individual settlers on the frontier were being killed, mutilated, and scalped, their women, children, and supplies stolen, and their days as well as nights threatened by terror. Thousands of savages covering hundreds of miles were a very real and frightening problem to settlers and to the grossly undermanned assigned to protect them.

After their formation in 1866, two Negro regiments of cavalry, the Ninth and Tenth, proved to be among the best of those fighting the Indian. Many nick-names were given to the Negro soldiers. They were occasionally called "brunettes" by the white troops. However, the name that became synonymous with colored cavalry came shortly after their contact with the Indians when these troops were dubbed "Buffalo Soldiers." The name was believed to be a consequence of comparison made by the Indians of the Negro's hair with that of the buffalo. During winter campaigning the troops wore buffalo coats which heightened the image. Since the Indians had high regard for the buffalo, it was reasonable to assume they meant no insult to the soldiers.

Of the advances made by and for the American Negro during the Civil War, among the hardest won was his place in the army. More than a year of fighting for what the Negro believed he had a right to fight for had gone

*"I cannot give them too much credit
for manly endurance without complaint!"*

LT. COLONEL BUELL—1874

before legislation was passed July 17, 1862, providing for recruitment of Negroes into the army. Within a year there were fourteen battle-ready regiments and another twenty-four in stages of organization and training. Before the formation and training of colored regiments, many military men had doubted the outcome. Among those who were first to recognize the Negro's ability was General David Hunter who reported: "I find the colored regiments hardy, generous, temperate, strictly obedient, possessing remarkable aptitude for military training...I believe them capable of courage and persistence of pur-

pose which must in the end extort both victory and admiration."

In August, 1863, with an estimated 37,000 Negro troops in the Union Army, General Grant wrote in a letter to the President: "I have given the subject of arming the negro my hearty support. This, with the emancipation of the negro is the heaviest blow yet given the Confederacy...By arming the negro we have added a powerful ally. They will make good soldiers."

And another, General Ullman, said: "I am well satisfied from my seven months' intercourse with them that with just treatment they can be made soldiers of as high an average as any in the world." These sentiments were generally believed and often reflected by officers serving with Negro troops for decades to come.

Robert Cowden, who was later Colonel of the 59th U. S. Colored Infantry, wrote: "The average plantation negro was a hard-looking specimen, with about as little of the soldier to be seen in him as there was of the angel in Michael Angelo's block of marble before he had applied his chisel...His dress a close-fitting wool shirt, and pantaloons of homespun material, butter-nut brown, worn without suspenders, hanging slouchily upon him, and generally too short in the legs by several inches...The first pass made at him was with a pair of shears...the next was to strip him and scour him thoroughly with soap and water. A clean new suit of army blue was now put on him, together with a full suit of military accoutrements, and a gun was placed in his hands, and lo! he was completely metamorphosed, not only in appearance and dress, but in character and relations also. Yesterday a slave...today a freeman...a soldier."

Although the status of the Negro was not so revolutionized as it appeared at the close of the Civil War, his place in the U. S. Army had been won and clearly justified. Some 180,000 Negroes had served in the Union Army. As Negro volunteers left the army to return to a South in the throes of reconstruction or to the North where job competition between black and white laborers was driving wages to an unbelievable "low," four and a half million emancipated Negroes found living difficult and "making a living" nearly impossible.

The known, though it be unpleasant, is a source of security when compared to the



Sergeant Major Retired
Medal of Honor Recipient,
Full Dress Uniform, 1880

A Scout with the Buffalo Soldier

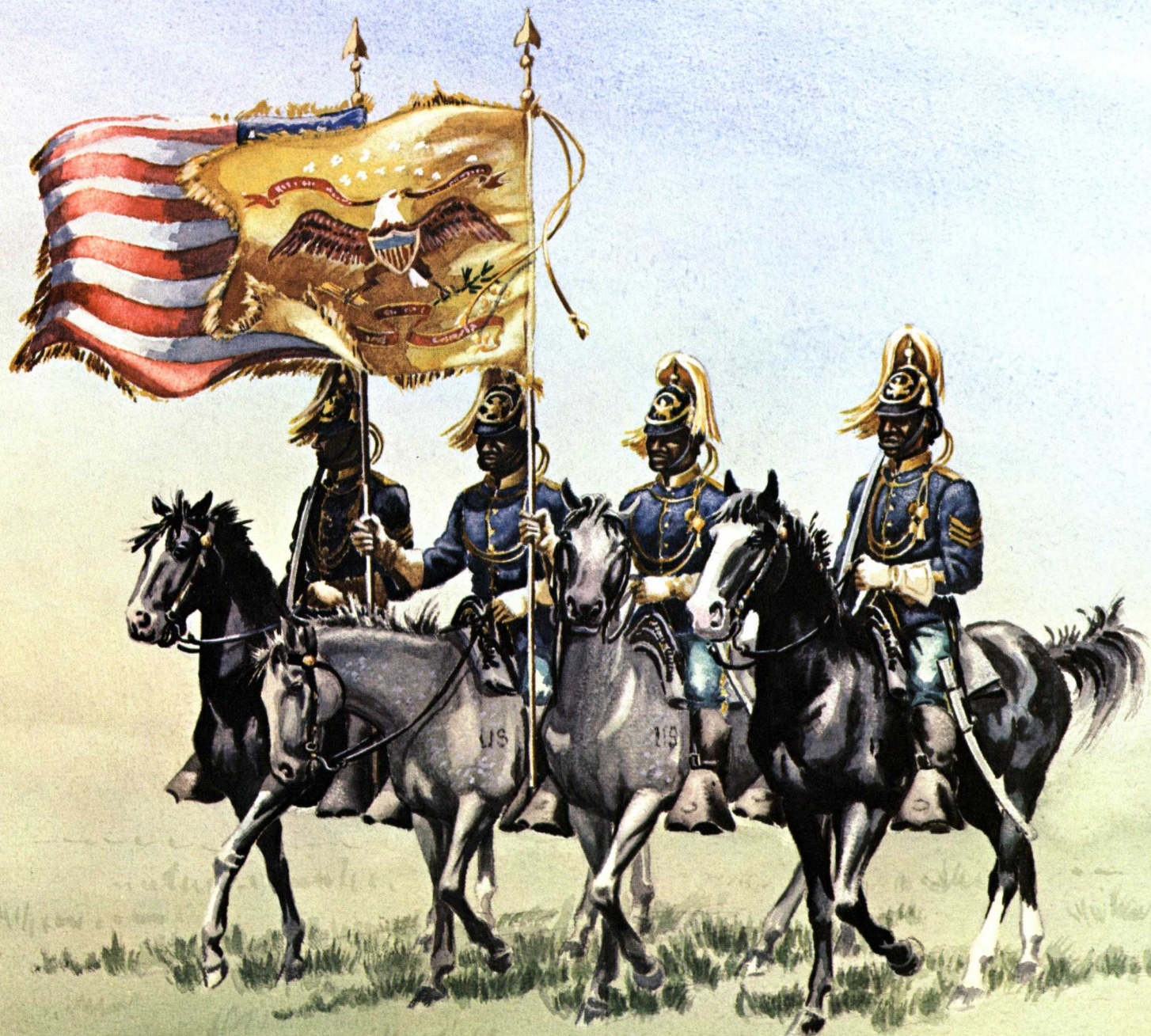
The negro troopers sat about, their black skins shining with perspiration, and took no interest in the matter in hand. They occupied such time in joking and in merriment as seemed fitted for growling.



PEN & INK SKETCH BY FREDERIC REMINGTON



Trooper, Campaign Dress, 1875



© Paul A Rossi 69

10th Cavalry Color Guard, Full Dress Uniform, 1895

unknown. As a slave, a Negro could feel a security of belonging which he might not feel as a freedman. After two centuries of this "belonging," to belong only to oneself could be a frightening thing. However, as a freedman, the former slave could choose to belong to a regiment of the U. S. Army where he could find a new and acceptable security. Not only did he find security but also pride. Being proud was a completely new experience which served the Negro well in his development as a soldier.

While depredations mounted in the West, the army had only six regiments of cavalry, five regiments of artillery, ten regiments of infantry with ten companies and nine infantry regiments of twenty-four companies each. It became apparent to the government that the army was too small to take care of all the nation's problems. With soldiers manning 134 posts in the South, it became necessary to make changes in the structure and size of the regular army in order also to cope with the situation in the West.

The widely distributed army was in a jumbled state. Officers who had been brevet major generals and brigadier generals during the war were dissatisfied with serving as field and company officers. Enlisted men were restless and unruly. Desertions ran high.

In July, 1866, President Andrew Johnson signed an act concerning the reformation of the Army. The new legislation provided for ten regiments of cavalry with twelve companies each, five regiments of artillery and forty-five of infantry. The twenty-four company size of the infantry regiment, established as most efficient in the Civil War, was abandoned in favor of having ten companies in each regiment of infantry. The total increase was only 134 companies for the entire army. Of the new regiments, two of the cavalry and four of infantry were to be composed of Negro men.

Although Negro troops had proved their worth in the Civil War, the use of Negro troops in the peacetime army was considered a new experiment. General William Sherman, commander of the Military Division of the Missouri, at the recommendation of General Grant, chose Colonel Benjamin Grierson to lead the Tenth. Grierson set high standards of physical and mental fitness for the regiment forming in Missouri as did Colonel Edward Hatch organizing the Ninth in Louisiana. Because

the army afforded the Negro social and economical opportunities not open to them in civilian life, many young Negroes were eager to enlist. After the initial enlistment of five years, many chose to remain in the army. The pay of only \$13 a month, though meager, assured them of a better life than they could expect to earn as civilians.

Lieutenant Grote Hutcheson, adjutant of the Ninth, wrote of the recruitment and early training of that regiment:

"On August 3, 1866, Major General Philip H. Sheridan, then commanding the Military Division of the Gulf, at New Orleans, La., was authorized to raise, among others, one regiment of colored cavalry, to be designated the 9th Regiment of U. S. Cavalry, which was to be enlisted within the limits of his own command. Men serving in volunteer colored regiments who desired to enlist in regular regiments were authorized to be discharged from the volunteer organizations. This class of men was desired, and many took advantage of the opportunity to join the regular service, and later proved of some value as non-commissioned officers.

The mustering officer at New Orleans was directed to take temporary charge of the recruiting, and shortly afterward it was transferred to Major Francis Moore, 65th U. S. Colored Infantry. The men obtained by Major Moore formed the nucleus of the enlisted strength, and were principally obtained from New Orleans and its vicinity. A little later in the autumn, recruiting was established in Kentucky, and all the men for the new regiment were obtained from that state and Louisiana. The horses were obtained at St. Louis, and proved to be excellent mounts.

About the middle of September all recruits were assembled in New Orleans, and preparations made for organization. Empty cotton presses were used as barracks, and the rations were cooked over open fires. In the latter part of September an epidemic of cholera caused the camp to be moved to Greenville, and later, for other reasons, it was moved to Carrollton, both of which places are suburbs of New Orleans.

During the winter of 1866-67 every effort was made to bring about an efficient state of drill, discipline and organization. The orders regarding stables and the performance of that duty were especially strict. Few officers had as yet joined, and the number on duty with

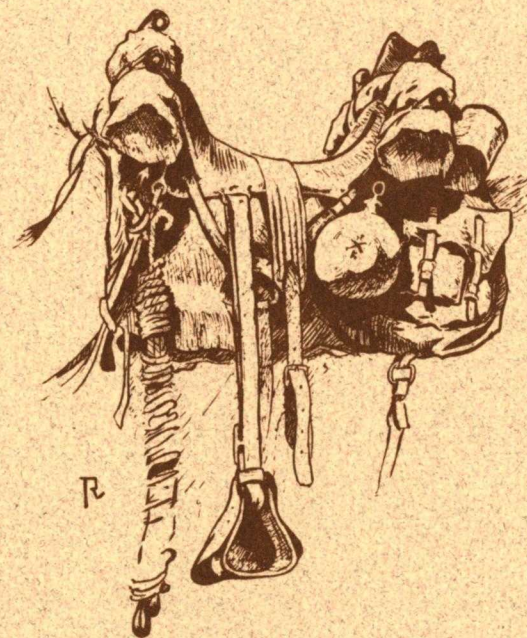
the regiment was so small that a scheme of squadron organization was resorted to, so that at least one officer might be present with each squadron for every drill or other duty. . . . By assiduous labor and constant drilling, much headway was made, however, and by the middle of March, 1867, a change of station was determined upon. The middle of this month found the regiment with nearly its full strength, the return at that time showing a total of 885 enlisted men, or an average of over 70 to the troop."

The Act passed by Congress "to increase and fix the military peace establishment of the United States" required white officers for the colored regiments. Concerning the officers for the regiments Lt. Hutcheson reported these directives from the Act:

"That no person should be commissioned in any of the regiments authorized by the Act, until he had passed a satisfactory examination before a board to be composed of officers of the arm of the service in which the applicant was to serve. This board was to inquire into the service rendered during the war by the applicant, as well as into his capacity and qualifications for a commission in the regular forces. Appointments were to be made without reference to previous rank but solely by a consideration of present qualifications and past meritorious services. . . . The original vacancies in the grades of first and second lieutenant were to be filled by selection from among the officers and soldiers of volunteer cavalry; two-thirds of the original vacancies in the higher grades by selection from among officers of the regular army."

Obtaining officers was difficult at the onset for many able officers refused to serve with Negro troops. In October, 1891, Colonel F. W. Benteen, retired, wrote in a letter to T. W. Goldin that in 1866 he could have gone into the Tenth Cavalry as a major but that he preferred to accept the rank of Captain in the Seventh. George Custer also turned down a commission in a Negro regiment. In spite of the possible opportunities of more rapid promotion and higher rank, the business of getting officers for the Negro regiments was slow. The primary result of these problems was that the Ninth and Tenth were led by officers dedicated to their belief that Ne-

gro troops could be top-notch cavalrymen. This attitude, coupled with the amount of time officers necessarily spent training these men, caused a closeness between enlisted men and officers which did not exist in other regiments.



Lt. Hutcheson reflected on being an officer in a Negro regiment:

"It is difficult nowadays fully to appreciate all the work and labor devolving upon the officers in those early days. The men knew nothing, and the non-commissioned officers but little more. From the very circumstances of their preceding life it could not be otherwise. They had no independence, no self-reliance, not a thought except for the present, and were filled with superstition. The government depended upon the officers of those early days to solve the problem of the colored soldier. . . . They [the officers] were all equally enthusiastic in proving the wisdom of the experiment of colored soldiers, and in forcing the issue to a successful solution were compelled, not only to attend to the duties that naturally attach to the office of a troop commander, and his lieutenants, but, in the endeavor to make finished individual soldiers of the negro and to feel that the troop, taken

as a unit, was an independent fighting force, well drilled, well clothed, well fed, suitably armed and equipped, and thoroughly able to take care of itself in garrison or campaign. They were forced to enter into the minutest details of military administration, and personally to assume nearly all the duties of the non-commissioned officer. For some years the latter, from lack of education, were such only in name. . . . Troop officers were in fact squad commanders, and it took both time and patience to teach the men how to care for themselves.

The amount of writing devolving upon officers during the earlier years of the regiment is not to be passed over lightly. Fully to appreciate this, it must be borne in mind that the enlisted men were totally uneducated; few indeed could read and scarcely any were able to write even their own names. It is related that but one man in the entire regiment was found able to write sufficiently well to act as sergeant-major. It was not an uncommon thing for a captain to assist his first sergeant in calling the roll, and every record, from the morning report to the monthly return, was prepared by an officer. In time the simpler reports were mastered, but it is only in later years that troop clerks are found, and even now [1895] considerable difficulty is experienced at times in finding reliable men of sufficient education to conduct properly the routine clerical work pertaining to a troop.

The banishment from the gentler influences of settled communities and separation from the varied society of large cities, was keenly felt by officers, and the exiles' life they were forced to lead caused a few to give up in disgust and resign; but the majority continued in service, fighting bravely against the hardships surrounding them. Of luxuries they had none; of comforts few; but the canvas homes and outdoor life furnished good digestions and hearty appetites for the limited bills of fare presented at the mess. Nearly all were bachelors, with the careless habits this class of army officers are noted for, though the presence of an occasional lady served to check in part the familiarity engendered by lack of privacy and constant association—serious objections to any long continued camp.

Fortunately, lack of education had no effect upon dexterity, physical balance, and

most important, interest and willingness to learn. Some soldiers received not only military training but also some degree of training in elementary subjects. The regimental chaplain's duties often included this type of instruction.

By the summer of 1867, the Ninth was settled into garrison life in Texas with two companies stationed at Brownsville on the Rio Grande River and the remainder of the regiment divided between Forts Stockton and Davis in West Texas. Among the objectives of the regiment was the protection of the mail and stage route across Crockett County from San Antonio to El Paso. Another duty of the command was the establishment of law and order in the area which included problems with Mexican bandits and revolutionaries as well as marauding by roving Indian bands.

"I cannot speak too highly of the conduct of the officers and men under my command, always cheerful and ready, braving the severest hardships with short rations and no water without a murmur. The negro troops are peculiarly adapted to hunting Indians, knowing no fear and capable of great endurance."

MAJOR ALBERT P. MORROW—1870

Lt. Hutcheson reported:

"Having landed the regiment in this far-away part of the country, a word or two of every-day garrison life during those early days when the nearest railroad was 600 miles distant, may be of interest.

In many respects the every-day life of the men in garrison was similar to that of the present time [1895]. There was the same drill, stables and parade; there were logging teams for the sawmill and special details for the garden; men mixing mud for adobes and burnishing brasses for orderlies; but guard duty, though no more tedious than now, was spiced with an element of danger which added zest to the duty. Strict orders prohibited all persons from leaving the immediate vicinity of

the garrison except in small parties, and they were enjoined always to carry their carbines. Heavy herd guards were detailed, and look-outs were posted on high ground during grazing hours.

The appliances for the personal comfort of the soldiers were few, and should the improvements now surrounding them be suddenly exchanged for what they had then, there would be such a skurrying off of recruits that I doubt if the whole state of Kentucky could furnish satisfactory material to fill the depleted ranks. Ashen slats on bunk irons and a bed-sack filled with straw made a very good bed for the fortunate possessor, while the less favored ones were often at their wit's end to improvise a comfortable resting place out of two blankets. Sheets, pillows, white shirts, linen collars and barrack shoes, were not dreamed of and bath tubs were unknown, for the water system was limited to a huge tank on wheels and a surly driver.

The stomachs of the men, even more than their bodies, were subject to a Spartan simplicity, and the numerous delicacies now supplied them could not then be found on officers' tables. The commissary kept only the component parts of the regular ration, and the pound of fresh vegetables was not part of it.

...Horseback riding on pleasant days was almost the only outdoor amusement, but the danger from Indians so contracted the safety limits, that all ground was soon visited, and only the hope of a shot at a stray wolf or coyote, or the rare advent of some visitor to be entertained, kept up interest in this kind of outing. A great event was the distribution of the mail, and whether weekly, semi-weekly or daily, the hour of its arrival was looked forward to by all; and as the cloud of dust in the distance heralded its approach, the entire garrison, from the commanding officer to the latest recruit, hastened to the postoffice where they formed an eager crowd, anxious for the latest news from the states.

Late in October, 1867, a party of Kickapoos claimed the first casualty of the Ninth. After a year of campaigning, the regiment was a hard hitting unit experienced in opposing the hit and run tactics of its enemy. Apache raiding was heavy during 1869-70, with the widely dispersed companies of the regiment making every effort to keep on top of the situa-

tion. Although a lack of decisive victories over the Kickapoos, Lipans, and Mescaleros was disappointing to the troops, they had scouted and pursued extensively in the southern part of West Texas. Their greatest frustration was in not being allowed to follow the raiding parties across the Mexican border to their villages in Mexico.

Remaining in Texas for eight years, the Ninth was involved in frequent conflict with Indians, patrolling vast stretches of prairie, and being called upon to furnish protection to the settlers on the West Texas frontier. Many of these people had been a part of the Confederacy during the war and held no fondness for the Union Army, much less for the Negro. Therefore, they had little inclination to give aid and assistance to the colored troops. Being a buffalo soldier in Texas was a thankless job.

The Negro found other sources of satisfaction, however, for as his training and experience developed him and his regiment into a well-coordinated unit, his pride grew in proportion to his accomplishments. During those first ten years, members of the Negro regiments learned to rely upon themselves and upon each other. They became soldiers, among the best in the army.

For many years obtaining decent horses for the Negro regiments was a problem. Officers of the colored cavalry were constant in their efforts to get better mounts for their men. At times the equipment issued was also inferior. As to dress, in all the frontier army, the only uniform thing about clothing was its name. Each man was issued a uniform but they generally were not all alike. For many years after the Civil War, surplus uniforms from that period were used to clothe the army of the frontier.

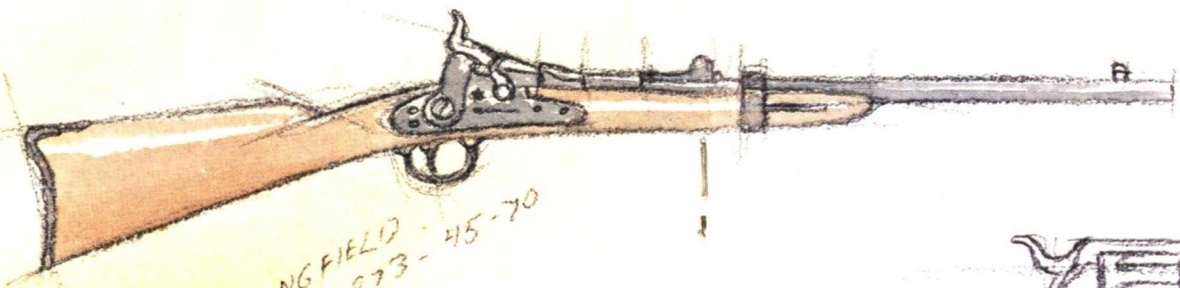
Violations of the military code were limited in the Negro regiments. Due to prejudices shown against them, the men learned that no quarter would be given in whatever form of punishment was meted out for their infractions of the rules. However, being of a naturally jovial temperament, the Negro men showed less tendency to complain of conditions or to try to act against them than soldiers in white units. The records show that there were generally fewer desertions in the colored regiments than in the white.



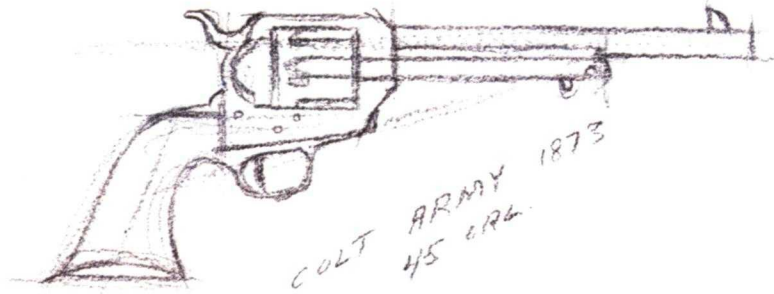
Recruit in Full Dress Uniform, 1885



FULL DRESS
1875



SPRINGFIELD
CARBINE 1873-45-70



COLT ARMY 1873
45 CAL.

INDIAN CAMPAIGN
MEDAL AUTHORIZED - 1905



- SERGEANT MAJ.
- QUARTER MASTER
SERGEANT
- FIRST SERGEANT
- ORDNANCE
SERGEANT
- SERGEANT
- CORPORAL



"STAND TO HORSE"
9th CAVALRY - 1866

"DOWN UNDER FIRE"





10th Cavalry Trooper, 1867

Highly superstitious, troopers often placed charms or amulets on their hats or around their necks. Blue jay feathers, rabbits feet, and Indian medicine bags were among those used.

The experiment of using Negro troops in a peacetime army proved to be a success. Their labors were not limited to fighting the Indian. They built, rebuilt and expanded dozens of posts along the frontier. A regular assignment was to escort stages, cattle herds, and railroad work crews and surveyors. During their many patrols they mapped thousands of miles of uncharted country. They realized and accepted the fact that they would get little recognition for their deeds. Although there were some individual failures, as in any army unit, there never was an instance recorded of failure on the part of a group of Negro troops to carry out orders or to show determination and bravery.

"Colored Troops will hold their place in the Army of the United States as long as the government lasts."

COLONEL BENJAMIN GRIERSON — 1867

Grierson's Tenth had eight companies in the field by late summer, 1867. Three of the companies were stationed at Fort Arbuckle in Indian Territory as a border patrol, with the others located in Central Kansas. Their first assignment was to protect the construction of the Kansas Pacific Railroad. The Tenth suffered its first casualty in a skirmish with marauding Indians at Campbell's Camp located thirteen miles down the track from Fort Hayes. In August, regimental headquarters was transferred to Fort Riley, Kansas, where organization of the remaining companies of the regiment was completed during the next few months.

When troops had withdrawn from the Plains at the beginning of the Civil War the Indians lost no time in taking land, homes, and lives from the unprotected whites who had settled in their territory. In 1867, the Ninth and Tenth began more than twenty years of service covering the mountains, plains, and deserts of the West. They marched into a full scale Indian uprising with the Comanches, Kiowas, and Cheyennes on the warpath.

In July, 1867, peace talks were held at Medicine Lodge, Kansas, between government

representatives and Comanches, Kiowas, Kiowa-Apaches, Cheyennes and Arapahoes. Although great numbers of the tribesmen accepted the terms of the treaty, there were many important chiefs and their followers who had refused to take part in the talks. Six months later, with the treaty still not ratified by Congress, many of those in favor of the treaty joined the dissenters in raids and depredations. The Kiowas and Comanches didn't limit their raids to white settlers on the frontier, but included raids on members of the Five Civilized Tribes settled in Indian Territory. The situation continued to be threatening until August, 1868, when the first provisions of the finally ratified treaty were distributed to the Indians on the reservation.

During the summer, troubles continued with those Indians not committed to the treaty. Cheyenne and Arapaho raids in Kansas and Colorado caused companies of the Tenth stationed there to be constantly on the move. In September, thirty-six men of Company I were involved in a bitter fight by an estimated one hundred Cheyennes at Big Sandy Creek. On September 21, Captain Louis H. Carpenter and H Company set out to attempt to engage the Cheyennes who had been at Big Sandy Creek. Although they encountered no Indians, Captain Carpenter sent out scouting detachments and remained in the area.

Many years later Ruben Waller, a member of H Company at the time of the rescue at Beecher Island, wrote the following report for publication in the "Beecher Island Annual":

"One great sensation was the rescue at Beecher Island, on the Arickare Creek, in Colorado, September, 1868. The Indians had surrounded General Forsyth and fifty brave men, and had killed and wounded twenty men, and had compelled the rest to live on dead horse flesh for nine days on a small island. Colonel L. H. Carpenter, with his Company H, 10th U. S. Cavalry, was at Cheyenne Wells, Colorado, 100 miles from Beecher Island. Jack Stilwell brought us word of the fix that Beecher was in and we entered the race for the island, and in 26 hours Colonel Carpenter and myself, as his hostler, rode into the rifle pits. And what a sight we saw—30 wounded and dead men right in the midst of 50 dead horses, that had lain in the hot sun for ten days."

And these men had eaten the putrid flesh of those dead horses for eight days. The men were in a dying condition when Carpenter and myself dismounted and began to rescue them.

By this time all the soldiers were all in the pits and we began to feed the men from our haversacks. If the doctor had not arrived in time we would have killed them all by feeding them to death. The men were eating all we gave them and it was a plenty. Sure, we never gave a thought that it would hurt them. You can imagine a man in starvation, and plenty suddenly set before him. He can't think of the results until too late. That is the condition that Company H, 10th Cavalry, fixed for the Beecher Island men. We were not aiming to hurt the boys. It was all done through eagerness and excitement.

...and I say further that in all the fights we had with the Indians, I mean the regular army, we never killed as many Indians. I saw Lone Wolf, who was in the Beecher fight, and he told us that they lost 400 killed and fatally wounded in the Beecher fight. Well, after the fight and rescue we stayed at the island three days. We buried the five men who were killed. Lieutenant Beecher, Dr. Mooers, Louis Farley and others, with military honors. We used the funeral flag of Company H to bury the dead...

We arrived at Fort Wallace and the scouts were disbanded, and were reorganized under the leadership of Lieutenant Pappoon... Well, after we had been at Fort Wallace about two weeks, and the scouts had gotten rested a lot of us soldiers took French leave one night and went to Pond Creek, three miles west of Wallace. Well, when we got there we met the Beecher scouts, as they had been paid off. They sure treated us black soldiers right for what we had done for them."

While four companies of the Tenth participated in General Sheridan's winter campaign, 1868-69, other buffalo soldiers were dispersed at Fort Cobb, Fort Arbuckle and in camps along the Kansas frontier. In late November, General Sheridan assigned to Grierson and all the companies of the Tenth regiment the responsibilities of building a new post at Camp Washita, later renamed Fort

Sill, and of serving as an army of occupation among the Kiowas, Comanches, Southern Cheyennes, and Arapahoes settling on the reservation in that area.

Ruben Waller reported the activities of Carpenter's H Company:

"We wintered at Fort Wallace and in the spring of 1869 we took our last farewell of Fort Wallace and we never returned there any more.

We went on a long Indian campaign, almost two years in the cavalry saddle. In the winter of 1870 we go to Camp Supply and build winter quarters for men and horses. Here we had six thousand Indians on our hands to feed. We had to herd cattle for their beef. Well, we had some exciting times getting acquainted with the Indians. They were on a treaty, you know, and just as we were getting acquainted, every devil of them broke and went on the warpath. We lost several men.

There was a stage station about 30 miles from the fort, taken care of by eight white soldiers. They knew the Indians were at peace at the fort and the Indians were at the station every day to trade with the soldiers. But the soldiers didn't know that they had "broken for the warpath," and the Indians slaughtered them at one stroke.

Now came some hard times for us worn out soldiers. We had a hard campaign all winter, but in the spring of 1870 we rounded them up at Fort Sill, Indian Territory. We had the same gang that we had at Fort Supply. We got them all good and fat and they broke again and raided a family by the name of John Friend, scalped Mrs. Friend, brutally outraged several young girls and killed several others.

Well, we were on their trail. We followed them down through Mexico and back through Colorado and Kansas and rounded them up at Fort Sill. Old Chief Santank and Santa, Lone Wolf and Big Tree, were the chiefs that were at the head of all this.

As 1871 progressed, troubles with the Indians continued to increase. Raids by Comanches and Cheyennes as well as Kiowas made ceaseless patrols necessary. In June of 1872, Grierson and four companies of the Tenth moved to Fort Gibson in an attempt to deal more effectively with increasing numbers of undesirables coming into the territory. They succeeded temporarily in ridding

the Territory of hundreds of these unscrupulous intruders who came for illegal trading with the Indians. Trading of whiskey, ammunition, and guns for stolen cattle and horses encouraged the Indians in their raiding of the white settlements south of the Red River.

The need to strengthen defenses on the Western frontier and along the Red River caused part of the companies at Fort Gibson to return to Fort Sill, with several other companies of the Tenth being stationed at posts in Texas. For the first time parts of the Ninth and Tenth were serving together. Coordinating their operations from the new locations, the troops protecting the frontier were able to intercept and handle the forays of the Indians so effectively that in 1872-73 the army was able to make some headway toward controlling the situation. During one of the skirmishes several members of a group of young Kiowa and Comanche warriors were killed. In 1874 the Southern Cheyennes joined the Kiowas and Comanches in seeking revenge.

Many factors added to the Indians' unrest. The unlicensed trade of arms, ammunition and whiskey continued. Thieves crossing into Indian Territory from Texas stole as many cattle and horses from the Indians as the Indians stole on their raids into Texas. Activities of the professional buffalo hunters added fuel to the already flaming Indian desire for revenge. In May, 1874, the Comanches held a Sun Dance on the Red River. Cheyennes, Arapahoes and Kiowas, as well as Comanches attended. Trouble-seeking war parties left the talks at the Red River to strike in Texas and Kansas. The Red River War had started.

For a year the frontier army scouted, hunted and fought the hostile Indians. Renegades who sought to hide themselves on the reservations found no peace there; and while every precaution was taken to protect the innocent reservation Indians, the army did not spare the intruders. The Indians banded together in their efforts, but they found the well organized troops to be too much opposition. Relentlessly, the army followed during summer and winter, making unbelievable marches under near-impossible conditions. In December, when the last of the renegade bands were returned to the reservations, the Red River War came to an end. In a letter to General Sherman, General Sheridan wrote: "This cam-



paign was not only very comprehensive, but the most successful of any Indian campaign in this country since its settlement by whites."

In 1875, as the Ninth was being transferred to New Mexico, companies of the Tenth not already stationed in Texas were transferred there. Grierson and the Tenth experienced many of the same problems and prejudices as the Ninth had in Texas. One major difference came when the Tenth was given permission to pursue Indian raiders across the Rio Grande into Mexico. During the winter of 1876-77 the Tenth, with not more than nine hundred men, was the only cavalry regiment in West Texas.

"They were excellent regiments and a credit to the service. They had very high esprit de corps, the men being proud of their profession and enlisting practically for life, the officers claiming that these men were superior to white soldiers in discipline, fidelity, neatness, sobriety, and equal in bravery . . . In my subsequent career I often served in garrison with colored troops and I found them to have very estimable qualities. I believe that the colored race are a valuable military asset."

GENERAL JAMES PARKER — *The Old Army Memories*, 1929

The regimental Christmas party, given by Grierson for the garrison at Fort Concho, was an outstanding social event in the history of the unit. Following a hard year of being almost constantly in the saddle, the buffalo soldiers enjoyed the rare treat of turkey, buffalo tongue, olives, raisins, cheese, cakes, candies and fruits. The regimental band provided music for the festivities while the men enjoyed the heady holiday atmosphere as well as the food.

Although social activity was rare at the remote frontier posts, the Negro units were known to have exceptionally high morale in even the most sobering situations. They often

passed their leisure time singing, dancing, joking or playing various musical instruments. The regimental band was a source of great pride and enjoyment to the buffalo soldiers and to their officers.

In the spring of 1876, an uneasy quiet existed among the Apaches in New Mexico. For many months the Indians had opposed the efforts of General George Crook and his forces to get them to their reservations. When this finally was accomplished, white opportunists had convinced the government of the need to move the Indians to a less desirable area, San Carlos. After the Mescaleros had been moved, the army was also requested to remove the Chiricahuas from their Warm Springs reservation to San Carlos. Geronimo and some four hundred of his followers had then fled the reservation. Later they returned to the vicinity of Warm Springs.

This was the situation confronting Hatch and the Ninth as they took their newly assigned stations in New Mexico. Far under strength, the regiment was widely scattered over completely unfamiliar country. Two companies were stationed at Fort Bayard, two at Fort Wingate, three at Fort Stanton and one each at Forts McRae, Union, Seldon, and Garland. Their assignment was to keep the Apaches on the reservations. As the Indian Bureau did not furnish an adequate food supply to the Indians, it was necessary for the army to run almost constant patrols to prevent the Indians' raiding.

In the spring of 1877, Chiricahua raiding increased. The buffalo soldiers were ordered to aid the Indian Agent and his Apache police in ferreting out Geronimo and his trouble makers from among those Chiricahuas still in the Warm Springs area. The agent, however, decided to remove all the Apaches from Warm Springs to San Carlos. This marked the beginning of one of the bloodiest chapters in the history of New Mexico.

On September 2, 1877, the Indian leader Victorio and three hundred Apaches left the San Carlos reservation. The pursuit and capture of this group was accomplished after several months. In the spring of 1878, they were placed on the reservation at Fort Stanton.

As summer arrived, civil disputes proved to be an entanglement for the Ninth. Some buffalo soldiers were sent to El Paso to pro-



PEN & INK SKETCH BY FREDERIC REMINGTON

Winter Patrol

"Thus the army in this period after the Civil War plodded along, too dispersed most of the time to collect in even respectable detachments. It marched through parching heat and arctic cold. Why they went on, why they went through the agonies of hell for a nation that kicked them at every turn, is almost beyond human analysis."

WILLIAM GANOE—*The History of the United States Army*. 1924.





Recruit in Winter Uniform, 1875

tect government property while the citizens there were having a local "war." The "Lincoln County War" involved an officer of the Ninth in a court of inquiry into his use of troops in that bloody civil feud.

Meanwhile, other companies of the Ninth continued to face the constant problem of containing the Indians. To the North, the Utes in Colorado were aroused over the desire of whites in that area to have the government move the Indians to other locations. It was the same old story: as the white men came into an area, they found the Indians on the most desirable land and therefore wanted them relocated. The army was the enforcing arm in those usually unjustified moves.

Lieutenant Colonel E. V. Sumner wrote of the massacre of 1879, when troops "besieged by the Utes" were rescued by the buffalo soldiers:

"In the summer of 1879 trouble occurred between the White River Utes and their agent, N. C. Meeker. The trouble finally became serious enough to warrant the call upon the Secretary of War for the support of troops. In September an expedition was organized... commanded by Major T. T. Thornburgh... Thornburgh, not having had experience with Indians and trusting to appearances, anticipated no trouble... after leaving his infantry company at a supply camp, pushed on with his three troops of cavalry, and while on the march on the 29th of September, at 10 A.M., at the crossing of Milk River, the Indians opened fire on the column from all directions... F Troop, 5th Cavalry and E Troop, 3rd Cavalry, were quickly brought into line, and for some time fought well and bravely, but the superior tactics of the Indian, in his usual role of turning the flanks, and the loss of many brave men including the commander, soon caused a retreat, and these two troops fell back perhaps half a mile... Here there was a halting place, and the whole command was concentrated behind and about the wagons. The Indians then surrounded the soldiers, fired upon them from all directions, and, setting fire to the grass, advanced to within a short distance of the wagons, being screened by the thick smoke from the fire of the troops.

In this situation the battle was carried on for the rest of that day, the troops being strictly on the defensive, and keeping behind the wagons... [The Indians] were able to kill most of the animals and occasionally to pick

off a soldier or teamster. The loss of the animals and the number of wounded men to be cared for and protected made any movement from this spot out of the question. There was nothing to do then but fight it out and hold on until reinforcements could reach them...

At an early hour on the morning of October 2nd, the sentinel heard the approach of a column of horsemen, and the besieged soon welcomed Captain Dodge, 9th Cavalry, at the head of his troop. The captain, having heard of the situation, came at once to the assistance of his comrades, and managed to get through to the intrenchment without losing any of his men. This reinforcement of two officers and fifty enlisted men added materially to the fighting strength of the command, and they brought with them also the cheering news that the courier had passed through safely. The horses upon which this party rode were soon disposed of by the enemy, and Dodge and his troop became as much of a fixture as any of the besieged. The gallant dash made by these colored troopers brought them into high favor with the rest of the command, and nothing was considered too good for the "Buffalo" soldiers after that. Captain Dodge almost immediately received well-merited promotion, and was the hero of the campaign.

From August, 1879, to October, 1880, Victorio and his followers fought the buffalo soldiers of the Ninth and Tenth regiments. First they played their ceaseless game of hide-and-seek with the Ninth in southern New Mexico, then moved into Texas where they finally were driven into Mexico by the tireless efforts of the Tenth. Although the buffalo soldiers had spent fourteen gruelling months pursuing and fighting the Apaches in bloody skirmishes, they were not involved in ending the "Victorio War." For when the warriors were driven into Mexico, it was the Mexican troops who killed Victorio and most of his followers. The buffalo soldiers got very little credit for their part in the campaign against the Southern Apaches.

In November 1881, regimental headquarters of the Ninth was transferred from Santa Fe to Fort Riley, Kansas. The Ninth was entitled to a rest after fourteen years of frontier service: eight years in Texas followed by six years in New Mexico and Colorado.

They didn't have much time to rest, however, for their new assignment was to rid Indian

Territory of "Boomers." Activities of these illegal white intruders had been increasing since 1879. At that time a warning was issued by President Hayes that the land in question was not open to homestead and, if it proved necessary, intruders would be expelled by force. The Ninth was assigned to this almost impossible and unpopular job. For four years unending patrols were maintained to prevent attempts by "Boomers" to colonize in Indian Territory. Finally, in June, 1885, the Ninth was transferred to Fort McKinney, Wyoming. There, they finally got the long-promised respite from frontier service.

That same year, Grierson and the Tenth were transferred from Texas to Arizona where they assisted in what proved to be the grand finale of the Apache wars. Led by Geronimo, Nana, and Mangus, the Chiricahuas broke from the reservation near Fort Apache, Arizona, in May, 1885. Sixteen months of endless scouting, lonely patrolling and bloody fighting passed before the last of the renegade Apaches were brought in. With the last chapter of the Apache wars finished, the buffalo soldiers continued their patrols and kept vigil over the reservations in the dry and dusty loneliness of Arizona.

Frederic Remington, foremost western artist, observed cavalry life in a Negro regiment while on patrol with the Tenth. He reflected on these observations in an article in *Century Magazine*, April, 1889:

"The negro troopers sat about, their black skins shining with perspiration, and took no interest in the matter in hand. They occupied such time in joking and in merriment as seemed fitted for growling. They may be tired and they may be hungry, but they do not see fit to augment their misery by finding fault with everybody and everything. In this particular they are charming men with whom to serve. Officers have often confessed to me that when they are on long and monotonous field service and are troubled with a depression of spirits, they have only to go about the campfires of the negro soldier in order to be amused and cheered by the clever absurdities of the men. Personal relations can be much closer between white officers and colored soldiers than in the white regiments without breaking the barriers which

are necessary to army discipline. The men look up to a good officer, rely on him in trouble, and even seek him for advice in their small personal affairs. In barracks no soldier is allowed by his fellows to "cuss out" a just and respected superior. As to their bravery, I am often asked, "Will they fight?" That is easily answered. They have fought many, many times. The old sergeant sitting near me, as calm of feature as a bronze statue, once deliberately walked over a Cheyenne rifle-pit and killed his man. One little fellow near him once took charge of a lot of stampeded cavalry horses when Apache bullets were flying loose and no one knew from what point to expect them next. These little episodes prove the sometimes doubted self-reliance of the negro."

During the 1890's the frontier army saw the end of Indian resistance. They also witnessed the unhappy outcome of the reservation life to which their once vital enemy was subjected. Things had changed—the railroad and telegraph had crossed and criss-crossed the continent. Gone were the construction crews, the surveyors, the professional buffalo hunters, and most of the early frontiersmen. In many places the second-generation westerner was going about his normal business of ranching, farming or mining. There were no longer problems with savage Indians to be handled. There were only the problems of white men dealing with each other and of building the growing communities. As the old must always make way for the new, the Indian and buffalo had been removed to make way for progress in the west.

The buffalo soldier "belonged" in the history of the formation of the west. His blood and energy, as well as that of the white soldier, was given in the struggle. This is a part of the heritage of our nation.



PEN & INK SKETCH BY
FREDERIC REMINGTON



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