



# **WE CAN, WE WILL!**

**The Story of the Buffalo Soldiers:  
The First African Americans  
to Serve in the Regular Army**

TEXAS  
PARKS &  
WILDLIFE







# BUFFALO SOLDIERS

HERITAGE & OUTREACH  
★★★★ PROGRAM ★★★★★  
TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

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## HISTORY OF THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS

As the American Civil War ended, the United States faced the task of rebuilding the war-torn country. Jobs were hard to find, food was scarce and thousands were homeless. People traveled west to start a new life on the frontier. Conflicts between American Indians and ever-increasing numbers of settlers were inevitable. New settlers repeatedly petitioned Congress for an increased military force to protect them from marauding bands of American Indians.

The United States Army had just completed four years of fighting in the Civil War. Congress decided to reduce the size of the Army dramatically. There was a shortage of soldiers to protect the settlers from attacks by American Indians and bandits. During the Civil War, 186,000 African-American men fought for the Union and distinguished themselves as soldiers. Congress decided to take advantage of this source of labor and created “colored” cavalry and infantry regiments. These men became the first black Regular Army soldiers. They were given many names, but only one ever meant anything to the African-American men and women of the armed forces: the Buffalo Soldier.

### FORMATION OF THE BLACK REGIMENTS

In 1866, the United States Congress reorganized the peacetime Regular Army and authorized two segregated regiments of black cavalry, the 9th and 10th United States Cavalry. They also authorized the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st black United States Infantry Regiments. The Buffalo Soldiers went to the American frontier to keep peace between the American Indians and settlers moving west. In 1869, Congress consolidated the black infantry regiments into the 24th and 25th U.S. Infantry. These regiments spent the next 30 years on the American frontier pushing it westward.

African-American soldiers enlisted in the Army for many reasons, including economic advancement and opportunity for adventure and recognition. On the way, many received education for the first time in their lives. They enlisted for five years at a time and privates



*Civil War-era recruiting poster for the United States Colored Troops, ca. 1863. David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Duke University*

were paid \$13 per month. Each soldier was given a bunk in a barracks, three meals a day, uniforms, medical care and an education. Those who enlisted in the cavalry were also issued a horse. This was only the beginning of the journey that lay ahead.

## **BUFFALO SOLDIERS AND THEIR OFFICERS**

When Congress first created the black regulars in 1866, there was extensive debate on who should command these new units. Some argued that the units should be self-contained and commanded by blacks only. The reality of the situation on the frontier prevented this from being a possibility. Limited funding and the large frontier demanded that all Army units be active. Those who opposed the use of African-American troops refused to consider the possibility of African-American officers commanding white enlisted men. The only alternative was for white officers to command.

Even after reaching this compromise, Congress and the Army continued to receive opposition to the inclusion of the black regulars. An amendment to the Army bill called for any officer who refused commission in the black regulars to resign. This created particularly strong outcry from many officers. Eventually, Congress and the Army allowed officers to decline these commissions. The most famous refusal came from George Armstrong Custer, who declined his commission for a lower rank in the 7th Cavalry. Even some officers who commanded U.S. Colored Troops during the war refused command. However, many accepted their commissions due to the limited number available.

The white officers of the black regulars ranged in abilities, knowledge and even prejudice. Some officers, like Edward Heyl of the 9th, allowed their feelings to affect how they treated their men. He abused his men regularly and this led to a near mutiny at San Pedro Springs in 1867. Although there were only a few bad officers, they were not the greatest problem faced by the black regulars. Rather, it was the lack of officers, especially in the 9th Cavalry. Organized in 1867, it would not have a full complement of officers until the mid-1870s. Despite this challenge, there were exceptional officers—Col. Edward Hatch, Lt. Col. Wesley Merritt, Cpt. Charles Parker, Lt. Charles Cooper and Lt. Powhatan Clarke, to name a few—who were able to set aside their prejudices. Another officer who was able to work with the black regulars was Maj. John Bigelow. He served as a lieutenant in Texas with the 10th Cavalry after graduating from West Point. When asked about the black regulars he said, “Colored Soldiers will follow wherever led, they will go without leading, and will stay with their leader through danger, and never desert him.” Despite facing criticism and discrimination from fellow officers and even the public, many officers served distinguished careers with the black regulars and their leadership helped the Buffalo Soldiers to succeed.



*Col. Edward Hatch, ca. 1865. He accepted command of the 9th Cavalry in 1866.  
Library of Congress*

## **THEIR FIRST TEST IN TEXAS: THE BATTLE OF LANCASTER**

Many politicians and citizens expressed their doubts about the African-American soldiers' ability to fight. They believed, despite the courage of African-American soldiers during the Civil War, that they would not fight due to cowardice. Despite the shortage of officers, the 9th pressed forward into Texas

through 1867. The companies were scattered from Fort Stockton to Fort Davis and south to Laredo and Brownsville. Through the fall, the 9th engaged in small scrimmages while on scout, but no major action.

Company K was dispatched to remote Fort Lancaster, one of the numerous small posts on the frontier built before the Civil War. At 4 p.m. on December 26, 1867, the company came under attack. The attack came from a combined force of 900 to 1,500 hostile American Indians and ex-Confederates. It is speculated that they were after the fresh horses and it is not known if they were working together. The attack continued into the evening hours and the soldiers held their ground with courage. On the next day, a second weaker attack was made, but it failed as well. Although a minor action in the grand scheme of the Indian Wars Campaign, it was a major victory against doubters of the Buffalo Soldiers.



*Wood engraving in Harper's Weekly, 1861. Tall mesas surrounding Fort Lancaster prevented soldiers from escaping when attacked. Regardless, they stood their ground. Library of Congress*

## THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET AN EDUCATION

Many of the African-American soldiers were newly freed slaves. They were illiterate and had little knowledge of the world outside the cities or plantations on which they had spent their lives. The Army usually allotted for a chaplain at each fort, but Congress realized this would not work for the black regulars. Each regiment of African-American soldiers had a chaplain assigned to it. In addition to his religious duties, the chaplain also taught the soldiers to read, write and do basic arithmetic. This was essential as they learned to become soldiers. Assisting the chaplain in educating these soldiers were the officers, who also taught the new African-American recruits rules and regulations of the United States Army. They were now on the road to becoming among the best soldiers on the American frontier.



Through the Indian Wars Campaigns, several chaplains came to serve with the black regulars. Some had better results than others. Perhaps one of the most renowned of these men was Chaplain George G. Mullins. Mullins came to the 24th Infantry in 1875. There he quickly realized the connection between the soldiers' desire to learn and their quest for equality in society. He worked tirelessly to increase education among soldiers; in 1881 he was promoted to Chief of Education of the United States Army.

Another important chaplain was Francis H. Plummer. Plummer was the first African American to receive a commission as an army chaplain. He joined the 9th Cavalry in 1884 and soon

*Chaplain Francis H. Plummer, 9th Cavalry. Plummer was an advocate for equal rights. Moorland-Spangarn Research Center at Howard University*

became very popular with the regiment. Plummer was not only a “charismatic preacher,” but also an excellent educator and advocate for equal rights. He spent the next 10 years with the 9th, but the Army discharged him after a minor social incident. Both Mullins and Plummer served tirelessly as spiritual leaders, educators and advocates for their men.

## THE LIFE OF THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS

Much of the work of soldiers, black or white, was unexciting. They constructed roads, telegraph lines and forts. Wherever they traveled, they also mapped streams, mountain passes and water holes. Mounted patrols operated from West Texas to Kansas. They provided escorts for the transport of goods, mail and people. The armed security presented by the soldiers was often an effective deterrent for outlaws and American Indian raiders.

On an average patrol, six men would take two pack mules each. The average load weighed 250 pounds and consisted mostly of sacks of corn for the animals. After they consumed their supply of corn, horses and pack mules could forage for grass. The troopers slept inside shelter tents that were composed of two halves. Each soldier carried one half of the tent attached to his saddle, and two men would join their pieces and tent together. Each company cooked and ate separately, and officers assigned privates as cooks on a 10-day rotating basis.



*“Marching in the Desert,” from Frederic Remington’s “A Scout with the Buffalo Soldiers,” depicts the 10th Cavalry. 068-1047, General Photograph Collection, UTSA Special Collections - Institute of Texan Cultures*



Patrols were difficult duty. Frequently troops suffered days of limited rations of hardtack and fatback. Although they mapped water sources on their patrols, water was not always available. American Indian raiding parties were often the least of the troopers' troubles. These formidable dangers and excitement of battle only occasionally interrupted the boredom of construction and escort duty.

Fort life was just as tedious as patrol. When not involved with construction projects, the Army found ways to keep soldiers busy. An average day started around 6 a.m. with roll call. Drill, manual labor and inspections filled their days. In the cavalry, soldiers also added stable duty to their list of jobs. Extra duties meant extra pay. Some of these duties included working in the post garden, hospital or bakery. Officers even hired some soldiers to work as servants for extra pay. Certainly the daily life of a soldier was not as glamorous or exciting as movies portray.

When their time was not occupied with work or drills, the Buffalo Soldiers, like all soldiers, found ways to enjoy their free time. Many enjoyed playing games like dominoes, cards or dice. Sometimes these games led to trouble in the form of drinking and fighting. One thing most soldiers enjoyed was competitive sports, particularly baseball. In fact, Abner Doubleday, one of the fathers of modern baseball, was stationed with the 24th Infantry and encouraged his men to play the sport. Some teams even traveled to compete against other teams. Another popular form of entertainment was music. African-American soldiers were often found joyfully singing even after long, hard days. However they could, soldiers found ways to have fun and break up the monotony of frontier service. Unfortunately, the black regulars' next challenge was never far away.



*Baseball team, Troop L, 9th Cavalry, Fort Wingate, New Mexico, 1899. Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA), 098374*

## **FACING THE CHALLENGES OF RACE**

The end of slavery did not end racial prejudice and it was a challenge routinely faced by the black regulars. All of the regiments were commanded by white officers and despite the best efforts of Congress and the Army to prevent it, several treated their soldiers very poorly because of the color of their skin. However, many white officers decided simply to perform their duties and learned to work alongside their African-American soldiers. Eventually three African Americans, John Alexander, Charles Young and the most famous being Henry Flipper, succeeded in becoming officers, but at great personal cost. Only Charles Young served for more than a few years.

Black regulars also faced racism from the civilians that asked for the Army's protection. After the Civil War, many Texans resented what they viewed as "occupation" by federal authorities. Yet trouble in West Texas led many to ask for expanded assistance. The Army's answer was the black regulars and this angered people. It was not uncommon for soldiers to be assaulted while visiting nearby towns. In one event near Fort McKavett, Texas, a local killed a soldier. It took the Army nearly three weeks to capture him as local authorities were not interested in assisting. In another event near Ringgold Barracks, when local authorities arrested two 9th Cavalry soldiers allegedly for murder,

*Alexander Gardner's camera caught six soldiers of the short-lived 38th U.S. Infantry serving as escorts on a stagecoach belonging to the United States Express Company at Hays City, Kansas in October 1867. The primary mode of transporting goods was by wagons, which were easy targets for thieves. DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University*

their officers attempted to intervene. When Col. Hatch did so, local officials brought him up on charges, as well. Only with great difficulty were the soldiers and officer released.

Sometimes the soldiers took matters into their own hands. The previously mentioned “mutiny” at San Pedro Springs was but one instance. Other white soldiers and officers harassed the black regulars, which was the experience of the 10th Cavalry at Fort Leavenworth in 1867. Fortunately, the commander of the 10th, Col. Grierson, stepped in before anything serious happened. Other such events occurred in San Angelo (1881), Brownsville (1906) and Houston (1917), to name a few. Far too often, when the black regulars took action, they received much harsher treatment than their white counterparts. Chaplain George Prioleau, while on a trip via the Southern Pacific Railroad from Fort Grant in Arizona Territory to New Orleans, Louisiana, was stopped and forced to leave a “white” coach and put into a newly added “Jim Crow” or “Negro” coach. From El Paso to Houston he had the coach car all to himself. At Houston, had he not displayed his military coat showing his rank and position as chaplain in the U.S. Army, he would have been accosted by a group of men. Sometimes prejudice was more subtle than direct physical challenges. Regardless of the challenge, the Buffalo Soldiers continued to strive forward and do their jobs.



*“The Worm Turns” by Frederic Remington. Based on an account of the shooting at San Angelo, Texas in 1881, the image captures the frustration and determination felt by the soldiers. 072-0903, General Photograph Collection, UTSA Special Collections - Institute of Texan Cultures*

## BECOMING KNOWN AS “BUFFALO SOLDIER”



*It is believed that the “wooly” hair of the bison inspired the name “Buffalo Soldier.” Lithograph by Augustus Kollner. Library of Congress*

The exact source of the term “buffalo soldier” is not known. The first published reference was in the October 1873 edition of *The Nation*. The author suggested that the Comanche gave them that name after noticing the African-American soldiers were “wooly” and resembled buffaloes. Due to the lack of written records by African-American soldiers, it is unknown how they felt about the name. Buffalo Soldier—as well as brunettes, nubians and moacs—were just one of the many names they received. The term continued to be used only sporadically through the remainder of the 19th century. Perhaps the most famous use of the term was by Frederic Remington in his 1891 article in *Century* magazine, “A Scout with the Buffalo Soldiers.”

Documented use of the term by an actual black regular would not come until 1930. Reuben Waller, 10th Cavalry, used the term to describe African-American troops at the Battle of Beecher Island. During both world wars, this was a term used to describe all African Americans enlisted in the military. In 1911, Col. Thaddeous Jones ordered the buffalo used as part of the 10th Cavalry’s blazon. In World War I, the 92nd Infantry Division adopted a shoulder patch with the buffalo. Eventually, this name became a title of honor for all African-American service people of the United States military.

## HENRY O. FLIPPER: FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN GRADUATE OF WEST POINT

The first African American to graduate from West Point and receive a commission in the United States Army was Henry O. Flipper. Both of his parents were slaves in Georgia; however, by the age of eight, he had learned to read and write. After graduation in 1877, 2nd Lt. Flipper joined the 10th Cavalry and spent the next three years riding in campaigns against the Apaches and tracking down thieves. He served at Fort Sill, Fort Concho, Fort Elliott and Fort Davis. While at Fort Sill he engineered a drainage system for the fort grounds. At Fort Elliott he served as Post Adjutant and oversaw the project of installing telegraph lines across the Canadian River to Fort Supply. In 1880, he was placed in charge of the military personnel store at Fort Davis, Texas. During this time, the Army charged him with stealing money and he faced a court-martial. Flipper was found innocent of embezzlement, but guilty of “conduct unbecoming an officer.” Flipper was not the only officer found guilty of this charge. Conduct unbecoming an officer was often a charge that many military courts used to dispose of “unwanted officers.”

He was dishonorably discharged in 1882, and then worked as a surveyor, mining consultant, land claims investigator and assistant to the Secretary of the Interior. Henry O. Flipper died in 1940. In 1976, relatives of Henry Flipper asked a special committee of the U.S. Army to review Flipper’s case. The committee determined the punishment was too severe for the crime, and he was granted an honorable discharge. Segregation of the Army continued until 1948 when President Truman issued Executive Order 9981 to desegregate the military.



*2nd Lt. Henry O. Flipper. Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin*

## FAR TOO FEW: BUFFALO SOLDIERS WHO RECEIVED THE MEDAL OF HONOR

During the Indian Wars Campaigns, the Medal of Honor was the highest award presented to soldiers. In order to have qualified, a soldier:

... distinguished themselves conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States or in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force. The deed performed must have been one of personal bravery or self-sacrifice so conspicuous as to clearly distinguish the individual above his comrades and must have involved risk of life. Incontestable proof of the performance of the service will be exacted and each recommendation for the award of this decoration will be considered on the standard of extraordinary merit.



*This original Medal of Honor was awarded from 1863 to 1896. Library of Congress*

Authorized in 1862, the Army first presented the Medal of Honor in 1863 to soldiers and sailors during the American Civil War. The Medal of Honor was awarded to 417 soldiers who fought in the Indian Wars between 1865 and 1899. Eighteen of these men were black regulars.

Emanuel Stance of the 9th Cavalry was the first to receive this honor. Stance joined the Army in 1867 at the age of 19. During his career the Army promoted him to sergeant four times and he was demoted each time. Although notorious for his strong temper, Stance’s natural leadership abilities were recognized early in his career.

## MEDALS OF HONOR AWARDED FOR ACTION IN TEXAS

Name, Unit, Rank	Date and Location	Citation
Emanuel Stance 9th Cavalry, Sergeant	May 20, 1870 Kickapoo Springs	Gallantry on scout after Indians
Adam Paine Indian Scouts, Private	September 26, 1874 Canyon Blanco, Staked Plains	Rendered invaluable service to Col. R. S. Mackenzie, 4th U.S. Cavalry, during this engagement
Isaac Payne Indian Scout, Trumpeter	April 25, 1875 Pecos River	With 3 other men, he participated in a charge against 25 hostiles while on a scouting patrol and secured the safety of their fallen commanding officer while under enemy fire.
John Ward Indian Scout, Sergeant		
Pompey Factor Indian Scout, Private		

On May 19, 1870, Stance was responsible for a scouting party sent looking for two abducted children of Philip Buckmeier. Shortly after departing Fort McKavett, Stance detected a small band of American Indian warriors who were about to attack two government wagons. Stance and his men advanced, causing them to retreat. The next day Stance and his detachment again attacked another band of warriors who were about to seize a government train. Stance quickly ordered his men to fire and the warriors disbanded. Stance decided to return to McKavett with captured horses and was harassed by the warriors through the afternoon. Although he failed to retrieve the children, Cpt. Henry Carroll was impressed with Stance’s performance and reported this to his superiors. On July 9, 1870, Emanuel Stance became the first black regular to receive the Medal of Honor.

The last black regular to receive the Medal of Honor was Cpl. William O. Wilson, a member of the 9th Cavalry. In December of 1890, a group of Sioux warriors attacked a government supply train. Cpl. Wilson volunteered to ride for reinforcements. Chased by warriors, he was successful and brought assistance for the besieged soldiers. He received the medal for “qualities of the most conspicuous bravery and gallantry.”

These black regulars represent just a few of the many Buffalo Soldiers who demonstrated bravery and self-sacrifice in the face of danger.

## CATHAY WILLIAMS: FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE ENLISTEE

Cathay Williams was born to a freeman father and slave mother in September of 1842. She lived her first 17 years as a slave in Independence, Missouri, until she was emancipated in 1861 by invading Union general, William Plummer Benton. The young woman soon found herself pressed into service as a cook for the 8th Indiana Volunteer Infantry Regiment. In return for cooking and tending to the soldiers of the 8th Indiana, the soldiers taught her how to read and write. Eventually she witnessed fellow African Americans serving as combat soldiers.

After the war she learned of the formation of these new, all African-American regiments. Williams decided she wanted to serve as well and disguised herself as a man. Because she knew how to read and write, she was able to change her name to William Cathay on her enlistment paperwork and she joined the 38th U.S. Infantry, an all African-American regiment. For the next two years, she managed to hide her true identity. But illness found her in the hospital five times during her enlistment.

Eventually her health forced her to reveal her identity to the commanding officer, Cpt. Charles E. Clarke. Rather than face the embarrassment of her deception, Clarke gave her an honorable discharge. Her story remained a secret until she was interviewed by the St. Louis *Daily Times* in 1876. Williams continued to struggle in her personal life and health. She attempted to apply for her pension in 1892, but was denied by a doctor. Cathay Williams would be the first of many African-American women to serve their country, often facing the same daunting task of being a woman in the military.



*Johnson, Chief of Tonkawa Scouts during the Red River Wars, was half Lipan-Apache and half Tonkawa. Lawrence T. Jones III Texas Photographs, DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University*

## INDIAN SCOUTS

When the United States Army came to Texas after the Civil War, they found that the Comanche, Kiowa, Kickapoo and various groups of Apache were very hard to track. When they engaged these tribes in battle it was a very different style of warfare compared to the Civil War. In order to be more effective against the tribes, the Army hired other tribes to help track. The Tonkawa, Lipan Apache, Tigua and the Seminole-Negro tribes were the most prominent tribes to serve as scouts and help the Army in Texas.

The Tonkawa tribe historically would ally themselves with whites and help in fighting their long-time enemy, the Comanche. Before the Civil War they were moved from Texas to Indian Territory. Being from Texas and having been allies of the Texas government since before the Texas Republic, they were naturally pro-Confederate. This relationship led to the massacre of about half their tribe. After the end of the Civil War the tribe moved back to Texas and lived at Fort Belknap, then moved to the new Fort Griffin. The Tonkawa scouts and their longtime ally, the Lipan Apache, helped the Army in many campaigns and traveled as far as Fort Bliss in

El Paso, Fort Clark in Brackettville and Fort Elliot in the Texas Panhandle. The most famous campaign they participated in was the Red River Wars against the Comanche and Kiowa. It was the Tonkawa who discovered the Comanche at their camp in Palo Duro Canyon and led the 4th, 9th, and 10th cavalries to them. After the Red River Wars, the Tonkawa and some Lipan Apache were moved to the former Nez Perce Reservation near present day Ponca City, Oklahoma.

Famous for their tracking skills, superior marksmanship and legendary horsemanship, the Seminole-Negro Indian Scouts were a unique and elite group of soldiers. They were descendants of escaped slaves who settled with Seminole Indians in Florida. During the 1830s, the United States government moved those tribes to Indian Territory. Many families moved to Mexico to escape persecution by slave-hunting Creek Indians.

The Army of the 1870s needed scouts skilled in surviving and fighting in the desert borderlands. Since the Seminole-Negro Indians had these skills, the Army recruited them. Lt. John L. Bullis of the 24th Infantry volunteered to be their commander. He developed the scouts into a very effective and highly mobile strike force. They engaged in 26 expeditions and 12 battles. They never lost a single scout in combat. An example of strength, they trailed Apache warriors for 1,260 miles over 34 days. During the Indian Wars, four of the Seminole-Negro Indian Scouts received the Medal of Honor. Three earned this prestigious medal in one dangerous battle on April 25, 1875.



*Lt. John Bullis, 24th Infantry*

Lt. Bullis ordered three Seminole-Negro Indian Scouts—Sgt. John Ward, Trumpeter Isaac Payne and Pvt. Pompey Factor—to help him track down and locate a band of American Indians. The warriors had stolen 75 horses. On April 25, they found 25 warriors with the stolen horses. Bullis and the Seminole Indian scouts quickly opened fire. Even though the scouts managed to capture the horses on two occasions, they lost them as they retreated. On their third try, the scouts had to retreat without the horses. It was during the last of these retreats that Lt. Bullis lost his horse. The three scouts went back for Bullis despite the danger and saved his life. It was for this action the brave scouts were awarded the nation's top honor.

*Seminole-Negro Indian Scouts in Brackettville, Texas, ca. 1889.  
074-1111, General Photograph Collection, UTSA Special Collections - Institute of Texan Cultures*



The Seminole-Negro Indian Scouts made a significant impact on the Indian Wars by helping the Army track, locate, and fight tribes that regular troops had difficulty tracking. The scouts served their country bravely but with little acknowledgment. The Seminole-Negro Indian Scouts remained in the Army for many years after the Indian Wars but they never received the land promised to them by the government. The Army disbanded the scouts in 1914.

## **BUFFALO SOLDIERS OF ANOTHER COLOR**

The United States has always been a country of immigrants. People have come to America since colonial times in order to escape oppression and persecution. They came in search of a better life for themselves and their families. One avenue these immigrants had for creating that better life was to join the United States military. During the Civil War many of these immigrants were pressed into service, including soldiers of Hispanic, Middle Eastern or Filipino origins. During this time the military had an unwritten policy that those with a fair complexion were placed in a white military unit. Those with a dark complexion were placed in a “colored” or black unit.

After the Civil War people were looking for ways to move on and rebuild their lives. Many moved west for new opportunities. Many joined the newly reorganized military for that same reason, as did many new immigrants. The military was a large organization and slow to change. When the Buffalo Soldier regiments were formed and started recruiting, that same policy held true. Hispanic, Middle Eastern, Indian and Filipino enlistees that were of a fair complexion were placed in white units. Those of a dark complexion were placed in the Buffalo Soldier regiments. Consequently, the muster roles for the Buffalo Soldier regiments list last names like Sanchez, Mazique or Zafaredes.

## **THE FIRST OF MANY**

### **Iron Riders**

Not only were the Buffalo Soldiers the first professional African-American soldiers in the Regular Army, they left a legacy of being some of the first in many other notable roles as the country grew. These new roles included mountain bikers, wildland firefighters, border patrol and even national park rangers.

On August 6, 1896, the 25th Infantry, commanded by Lt. James Moss at Fort Missoula, rode into the history books as the first African-American mountain bike riders. This was the first major outing of the newly formed United States Army Bicycle Corps. The Bicycle Corps was an experiment to see if it was feasible to replace the horse with the bicycle. This first major ride would take them from Fort Missoula to McDonald Lake near St. Ignatius. On their way, the Buffalo Soldier Bicycle Corps had to ride through Missoula, Montana. As they passed by on bike or on foot, the 10 soldiers were met with astonishment.

The new Bicycle Corps was the brainchild of Lt. Moss. He became intrigued with the idea of using this new form of transportation while on leave. The concept intrigued his commanding officers all the way to Washington, and they approved it. Lt. Moss convinced the Spalding Bicycle Company to donate the bicycles. The soldiers spent the spring and early summer learning to ride, adapting equipment to fit the bicycles, building their endurance with short rides of 14 to 40 miles a day, doing



riding maneuvers, and drilling in crossing fences and fording streams. With any new program comes learning by trial and error. Many of the written drills were impractical for bicycle corps, so Lt. Moss altered ones from the manuals or made up his own. Their bicycles weighed an average of 75 pounds once loaded with equipment. These single-speed bikes had iron frames, wooden rims and spokes, solid rubber tires cemented onto the wooden rims, and leather spring saddle seats.

Lt. Moss considered their first long ride to Lake McDonald a success despite hard rains and muddy conditions on the return trip and repairs they had to make. Shortly after their return, Lt. Moss began planning a longer trip to test the Bicycle Corps. He set his sights on Yellowstone National Park. Everyone had heard of the fascinatingly strange geysers, hot springs and bubbling mud pits at Yellowstone, so it was a natural choice being relatively close to Fort Missoula. On August 15, 1896, they headed towards Fort Harrison near Helena, Montana. As before, their route would follow railroad tracks, dirt roads and mountain trails. By using the railroad lines, they could avoid roads choked with mud and private toll roads. When they reached Bozeman, Montana, they were again met with great curiosity by the townsfolk. After leaving Bozeman, they encountered the black cavalry unit and its guest, the famous western artist, Frederic Remington. Once they made it to Yellowstone, they found that black soldiers on bicycles were just as much an attraction as the natural wonders of the park. They left Yellowstone on September 1 and returned along the same route. The trip was deemed another success for the Bicycle Corps. They continued doing maneuvers and drills, some against another unit. They also set up a courier detail. As winter fell upon Fort Missoula, bigger plans were made for the Bicycle Corps.

*Above:  
The newly formed Bicycle  
Corps fords a river.  
672-239, Mansfield  
Library, University of  
Montana*

*Right:  
The Bicycle Corps poses for  
a photograph at Minerva  
Terrace in Yellowstone  
National Park.  
H-3164, Haynes Foundation  
Collection, Montana  
Historical Society Research  
Center Photograph Archives,  
Helena, MT*





*The 25th Infantry heads to St. Louis. 73-0031, Mansfield Library, University of Montana*

On January 22, 1897, Lt. Moss requested permission for a 20-member Bicycle Corps to ride from Fort Missoula to St. Louis. This 2,000-mile route would take them through all sorts of terrain, climates and environments. This would be the ultimate test for the Bicycle Corps. With help from his commander, Col. Andrew Burt, the Army accepted Lt. Moss' proposal. In order to prepare for this ride, Lt. Moss was put on special duty to find ways to improve the bicycles and other equipment the Corps needed. Spalding again made the bicycles, this time made to Lt. Moss' specifications. They had steel rims, gear covers, special pans and specialized packs that fit the frame of the bicycle. They also had the new and specialized "Christie Saddle," which had springs and was anatomically correct for the rider's comfort. In June of 1897, Lt. Moss asked for volunteers for the St. Louis ride. Over 40 men stepped forward. He chose 20 of the most fit men; five had been on the earlier rides. They began training in earnest, this time with the help of experienced riders and new information Moss gleaned from the cycling world back east. The 20-man Corps divided into two squads with two lance corporals acting as chiefs. Sgt. Mingo Sanders served as first sergeant over the entire detachment. Lt. Moss was the commander, and Surgeon Kennedy was the medical officer and second-in-command of the Bicycle Corps.



*Members of the 25th Infantry Regiment Bicycle Corps pictured on Main Street, Livingston, Montana. Yellowstone Gateway Museum of Park County, Montana*

On Monday, June 14, 1897, the 25th Infantry Bicycle Corps left Fort Missoula with no fanfare or ceremony. The townsfolk of Missoula met them with cheers and chased after them wishing these "Iron Riders" well on this ultimate journey. Thanks to the help of a reporter from Missoula accompanying them, the Bicycle Corps stayed in the news as they progressed.

They used roads, railroads and trails just as before. The railroad lines sometimes proved more difficult than the muddy roads, as riding

over the rough ballast and ties was exhausting. Lt. Moss had them on a tight schedule; they rose early and cleared camp by daylight. They would ride until 10 a.m. and rest until 5 p.m. to avoid the afternoon heat. At five they would mount up again and ride until almost dark before making camp. They picked up supplies and rations roughly every 100 miles. If they kept their pace of 50 miles a day, they would restock with fresh provisions every other day. The bad trail conditions due to inclement weather didn't always allow for this, and sometimes they ran short.

One of their rest periods was at Fort Custer, the site of the Battle of Little Bighorn, where Gen. Custer and the 7th Cavalry fell. This gave them time to reflect, time to rest, and time to fill their stomachs for the remainder of the journey. As they got back on the trail, they faced another obstacle besides torrential rain, mud, blistering 100+ degree heat and harsh winds. Water in the badlands is alkaline and not fit to drink. Lt. Moss and many other riders took sick due to exhaustion and the alkaline water. Those who got sick caught up by train once they were well enough to ride again. They also encountered difficulties making repairs and were plagued with broken axles.

On July 24, 1897, just outside of St. Louis, over 1,000 cyclists welcomed the 25th Infantry Bicycle Corps and escorted them into town with much fanfare, thus completing their ultimate six-week journey. Ceremonies filled the next day and the Bicycle Corps performed maneuvers and drills for the public. The next day there was a parade through St. Louis in the Bicycle Corps' honor. After all the festivities and interviews were over and everyone was rested, Lt. Moss intended to return to Fort Missoula on the bicycles. The Army instead had the Bicycle Corps return by train and returned all the bikes to the Spalding Company.

Lt. Moss made plans again for another ride for the summer of 1898. He planned to ride from Fort Missoula to San Francisco and back. His commanders were in favor of the trip due to the success of the St. Louis trip. But the War Department turned down the request, saying "Sufficient experiments, to meet all knowledge of its merits, have been made with the bicycle, at present." On February 15, 1898, the same day that Lt. Moss submitted the request for the San Francisco ride, the USS *Maine* exploded in the harbor at Havana, Cuba. This ignited the Spanish-American War. The U.S. military had been preparing for the possibility of war due to growing tensions in the Caribbean. The very first unit called for duty was the 25th Infantry, thus ending any possible trips for the Bicycle Corps. Proving that bicycles could be used even under the toughest conditions, their legacy lives on today.

## Yosemite Rangers

In 1899, 1903 and 1904, the war-weary 24th Infantry and 9th Cavalry were stationed at the Presidio San Francisco after the Spanish-American and Philippine-American wars. This set them up for a very unique assignment as the first park rangers at Yosemite and Sequoia national parks, many years before the creation of the National Park Service. These Buffalo Soldiers protected and made improvements to the two parks. While only there for a short time, they left a huge legacy.



*24th Infantry at Yosemite National Park. Yosemite Conservancy*

In the summer of 1899, the 24th Infantry was sent to patrol Yosemite to deal with ranchers grazing their sheep and cattle herds on park land. It was the first time since the outbreak of the Spanish-American War that the military had patrolled the Yosemite and Sequoia national parks. The 24th Infantry was the only infantry unit to serve at a national park. Sadly, there is not much information about the 24th Infantry's service at Yosemite, and only a handful of known photographs exist.

In 1903 and 1904, the 9th Cavalry was assigned to patrol the Yosemite, Sequoia, and Grant national parks. Their job was to patrol and protect the natural resources of the parks. They searched for poachers killing animals, herds of sheep and cattle grazing illegally on park lands, and loggers illegally cutting down trees. If that was all they did, surely their time here would have been forgotten like the 24th Infantry's time at Yosemite. But the 9th Cavalry soldiers also left their mark on the parks they patrolled. They served as the first park rangers and built the first nature trail at Yosemite. Not only was it the first at Yosemite, but it was the first at any national park. They built the first road into Sequoia that finally allowed the public to glimpse into that forest of giant sequoia trees. They built the first trail to the summit of Mount Whitney, the highest peak in the lower 48 states. Their improvements certainly touched many for generations after.

They also performed some very special duties at Presidio and the national parks. President Theodore Roosevelt visited San Francisco in 1904. The 9th Cavalry, commanded by Charles Young, served as the honor guard and escort for the president. When President Roosevelt went to meet John Muir to camp at Yosemite and Sequoia, the 9th Cavalry again protected the two men.

When the 9th Cavalry was assigned to protect Yosemite National Park, Cpt. Charles Young became the first



*9th Cavalry escorting President Theodore Roosevelt to Presidio San Francisco. Detail from Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Park Archives, (Defender of the Gate Photos and Illustrations, GOGA-2991.175)*



*Cpt. Charles Young, 9th Cavalry*

African American to serve as superintendent of a national park. He was the third African American to graduate with a degree from West Point. He was commissioned a second lieutenant with the 9th Cavalry in 1889. He served with distinction in the Philippines, and in 1901, he was the first African American to be promoted to captain in the Regular Army. Charles Young had a long and illustrious career in the army and went on to retire as a full colonel. His one regret was having not been allowed to serve in World War I. He died in 1922 and was buried in the National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia.

Other military units had patrolled various national parks in the past, but the 24th Infantry and the 9th Cavalry didn't just patrol the parks. Under the leadership of Cpt. Young, they went above and beyond what was expected of them and made significant improvements to the parks they served. Truly the first national park rangers, these men left a lasting mark and legacy.

## Wildland Firefighters

In August of 1910, the young U.S. Forest Service was confronted with a massive forest fire in the northern Rocky Mountains. This fire would eventually burn over 3 million acres of Montana and Idaho in an area the size of Connecticut and would become known as the Big Burn. The Forest Service mustered 4,000 men to fight these fires and asked for more help from Washington. After much criticism, President Taft reluctantly sent the U.S. Army in to help. As part of the force sent to fight the fires, seven companies of the 25th Infantry Buffalo Soldiers were sent to Wallace, Idaho to help, becoming some of the first wildland firefighters.

With their arrival, the African-American population of Idaho tripled. Most of the population had never seen an African-American man, let alone one that was a soldier. Many asked "What did these Buffalo Soldiers know about fighting forest fires?" In all actuality they probably didn't know anything about fighting fires but they did as they were told by their commanding officers and jumped right into the fray to learn and do what was needed of them.

While fighting fires these soldiers were assigned many duties. When the town of Wallace was ordered to evacuate, soldiers were then tasked with keeping order. They had to enforce the rule that women and children only were to be evacuated. Next, the Buffalo Soldiers were sent to Avery, Idaho where they did the same. Once the town had been evacuated they were allowed to escape the flames. Their evacuation by train was a perilous one. Several of the bridges they crossed were on fire and the heat was so intense it burned the paint off of the train cars. Eventually the flames cut them off and they had to return to Avery, where they began battling the fire there. Their quick actions of starting a back fire to starve the main fire is what ultimately saved Avery from being destroyed.

The Buffalo Soldiers' participation is just a small part of the Big Burn story, but their dedication, bravery and tenacity went a long way in changing attitudes about African Americans.

*25th Infantry in Idaho, 1910. Museum of North Idaho*





*Members of the 555th (Triple Nickel) Parachute Infantry Battalion are briefed before takeoff from Fort Dix in New Jersey in 1947. The Triple Nickel was an all-black airborne unit in World War II and the end of the war became one of the first smoke jumping units in U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service. National Archives and Records Administration*

## Smoke Jumpers

During World War II, the Buffalo Soldiers were once again asked to fight fires in the Pacific Northwest. Originally, the 555th Parachute Infantry Company was formed to be reinforcements during the Battle of the Bulge in Europe. After training they reorganized as Company A of the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion. The need for the 555th in Europe had passed so they were reassigned to fight fires in the Pacific Northwest, making them the first Smoke Jumpers. The mission was called “Operation Firefly” and was considered clandestine by the Army because some of these fires had been set by balloons armed with incendiary bombs that the Japanese deployed against the United States. There were a total 9,300 bombs that the Japanese sent over to the U.S. The 555th fought 28 fires in 1945 and lost only one man while parachuting into these fires.

In 1947, the 555th was deactivated and its men transferred to the 3rd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division. From here many of the men went on to form the first all-black 2nd Ranger Infantry Company that fought in the Korean War. While in Korea this unit made the first and only combat jump by an all-black U.S. Army Ranger Unit on March 23, 1951, in a place called Munsan-Ni, Korea. Throughout their deployment in Korea, despite the harsh cold weather, lack of proper supplies and racial discrimination, the 2nd Rangers served with honor and achieved an outstanding combat record. They were deactivated in August of 1951.



*2nd Airborne Ranger Company patch*



## TIME MARCHES ON

By the 1890s, most of the American Indian tribes of the southwest were forced onto reservations. The towns and settlements of West Texas were maintaining a semblance of law and order. To assist with the settlement of the country, many of the Buffalo Soldier regiments transferred north to less populated areas. In 1898, the Spanish-American War erupted in Cuba, and the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments went to fight alongside Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders. The Buffalo Soldiers

*The Battle of Quasimas near Santiago, Cuba, June 24, 1898. The 9th and 10th colored cavalry support the Rough Riders. Library of Congress*

again distinguished themselves in battle. After the Spanish-American War and the Philippine-American War, the four Buffalo Soldier regiments were assigned to various places in country and were tasked to help settle the still growing American West. In 1906, the 25th Infantry was ordered to leave Nebraska for Fort Brown in Brownsville, Texas, despite the protests of many of the officers. Texas was known for “Jim Crow” laws and harsh treatment of the Buffalo Soldiers. After several weeks of tension, the soldiers of the 25th were accused of a mysterious shooting. Investigators could not find any evidence that the soldiers of the 25th were guilty, but this went unheeded and federal investigators were certain that the soldiers’ silence was to cover for the guilty parties. Despite having served with the Buffalo Soldiers in Cuba during the Spanish-American War, President Theodore Roosevelt dishonorably discharged the entire battalion without a fair trial. In 1972 the men accused of the 1906 Brownsville Shootings were found innocent and given honorable discharges.

In 1916 the 10th Cavalry was assigned to Gen. George Pershing’s “Punitive Expedition” that attempted to capture Mexican rebel leader Francisco “Pancho” Villa after he led attacks on Columbus, New Mexico and Camp Furlong. Villa’s forces burned the town, stole horses, mules, machine guns and munitions, and killed 10 civilians and eight soldiers. Over 10,000 soldiers would ultimately be assigned to the “Mexican” or “Punitive” Expedition. The 10th Cavalry was assigned the Namiquipa District. While participating in the expedition, the 10th Cavalry under the command of Maj. Charles Young also participated in its first cavalry charge since 1898. This cavalry charge was also the first to include cover fire by machine guns. By the end of Gen. Pershing’s expedition, the 10th lost two officers (Charles T. Boyd and Henry R. Adair) with 12 men killed and 24 taken prisoner. The Mexican forces lost 27, including the commanding officer, Gen. Félix U. Gómez, in a firefight at Carrizal on June 21, 1916.

When the United States entered World War I in 1917 its armed forces had to expand dramatically. Many thought that the Buffalo Soldier regiments would be the nucleus of a new all-black division. This would not come to fruition and none of the original Buffalo Soldier regiments were sent to fight in Europe. This was due to racism within the administration of President Woodrow Wilson. Instead, the 9th Cavalry was in the Philippines. The 25th Infantry was garrisoned in Hawaii. The 10th Cavalry and 24th Infantry were patrolling the Mexican border. Interestingly, in 1918, the 10th Cavalry supported the 35th Infantry Regiment in a border skirmish, the Battle of Ambos Nogales, in which German military advisors fought alongside Mexican soldiers. This was the only battle during World War I where Germans engaged and died in combat against United States soldiers in North America.

On a darker note, just after the United States declared war on Germany in 1917, the 24th Infantry was sent to the new Camp Logan in Houston. The citizens of Houston were opposed to the African-American unit being stationed there. Soldiers did not like having “Jim Crow” codes enforced upon them. This led to several clashes between Houston Police, civilians and soldiers of the 24th Infantry. Ultimately the unrest led to an all-out riot in the streets of Houston and 20 people died. Despite severe rainstorms during the riots, over 200 expert eyewitness testified against all the soldiers involved. They were court-martialed and convicted. Ultimately, 51 soldiers were sentenced to life in prison; 13 soldiers were hanged at dawn on December 10, 1917 and six more were hanged in September of 1918.



*Above: African-American soldiers of the 92nd Infantry Division (Buffalo Soldiers) in a trench head into action in the Argonne Forest, France, during World War I. Library of Congress*



*The gun crew of Battery "B"; 598th Field Artillery, 92nd Infantry Division, readies their 105 howitzer before receiving a fire mission on September 1, 1944 near the Arno River in Italy. U.S. Army Military History Institute (Edward M. Almond Collection)*

After World War I, the Regular Army was severely understrength and did not modernize like the armies of Japan and Europe had. The 9th and 10th Cavalry still used the horse just as they did during the Indian Wars. Racism was still pervasive in the military despite the achievements of men like Charles Young, who left a legacy of valor, honor and courage. Many felt that the black troops were better in service roles rather than in combat roles. This was especially true during the build-up of troops for World War II. The highly trained 9th and 10th Cavalry were sent to North Africa where they were deactivated and trained to be support units. African-American volunteers saw more action than the combat trained African Americans in the Regular Army.

During World War II, African Americans fought in every single branch of the U.S. Armed Forces. African-American servicemen were known as "Buffaloes"; rather than viewing the term negatively, the soldiers began to accept it with honor. After all, the bison was the toughest and strongest animal in North America. The 10th Cavalry even adopted it as part of their distinctive unit insignia. The 92nd Infantry Division was an African-American unit that saw action during the Italian Campaign in the Second World War. Despite all their successes in fighting to liberate the world from tyranny, they still faced racism back home.



*92nd Infantry Division patch*

In 1948 President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981 putting an end to racial segregation in the Army. This was not fully realized until the Korean War when the 24th Infantry, the 27th Cavalry, and the 28th Cavalry were all disbanded. African-American soldiers were integrated into all-white units. White soldiers were not integrated into African-American units until much later.

## BUFFALO SOLDIERS TODAY

Where are the original Buffalo Soldier units today? The 9th Cavalry was deactivated in 1944. The detachment from the 9th Cavalry that was posted to West Point in order to teach future officers riding instruction, mounted drill, and cavalry tactics was deactivated in 1947. The 9th Cavalry was reactivated during the Vietnam War and today is part of the 1st Cavalry Division stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. The 10th Cavalry was deactivated in 1944, and reactivated in 1958. Today, the 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry of the 4th Infantry Division is stationed at Fort Carson, Colorado. The 24th Infantry was deactivated in 1951. It was briefly reactivated from 1995 until 2006. The 25th Infantry was deactivated in 1957.

Life after the army was challenging but these men were up for it. Their time in the service prepared them to do almost anything. After serving their country these men had to make a living to support their families. Many went on to be cowboys, stunt men for Wild West shows, surveyors and track gangs for the railroads, miners, peace officers, Pullman porters, businessmen, entrepreneurs, civic leaders, teachers, doctors, lawyers and even politicians. Despite having fought for their country, these men still endured racial discrimination at almost every turn. Today, the legacy the Buffalo Soldiers lives on as a badge of honor for all African-American service men and women of the Armed Forces of the United States of America. Through it all, they lived up to the mottos of the 9th and 10th Cavalry: “Ready and Forward!” “We Can, We Will!”



*9th Cavalry*



*10th Cavalry*



*24th Infantry*



*25th Infantry*



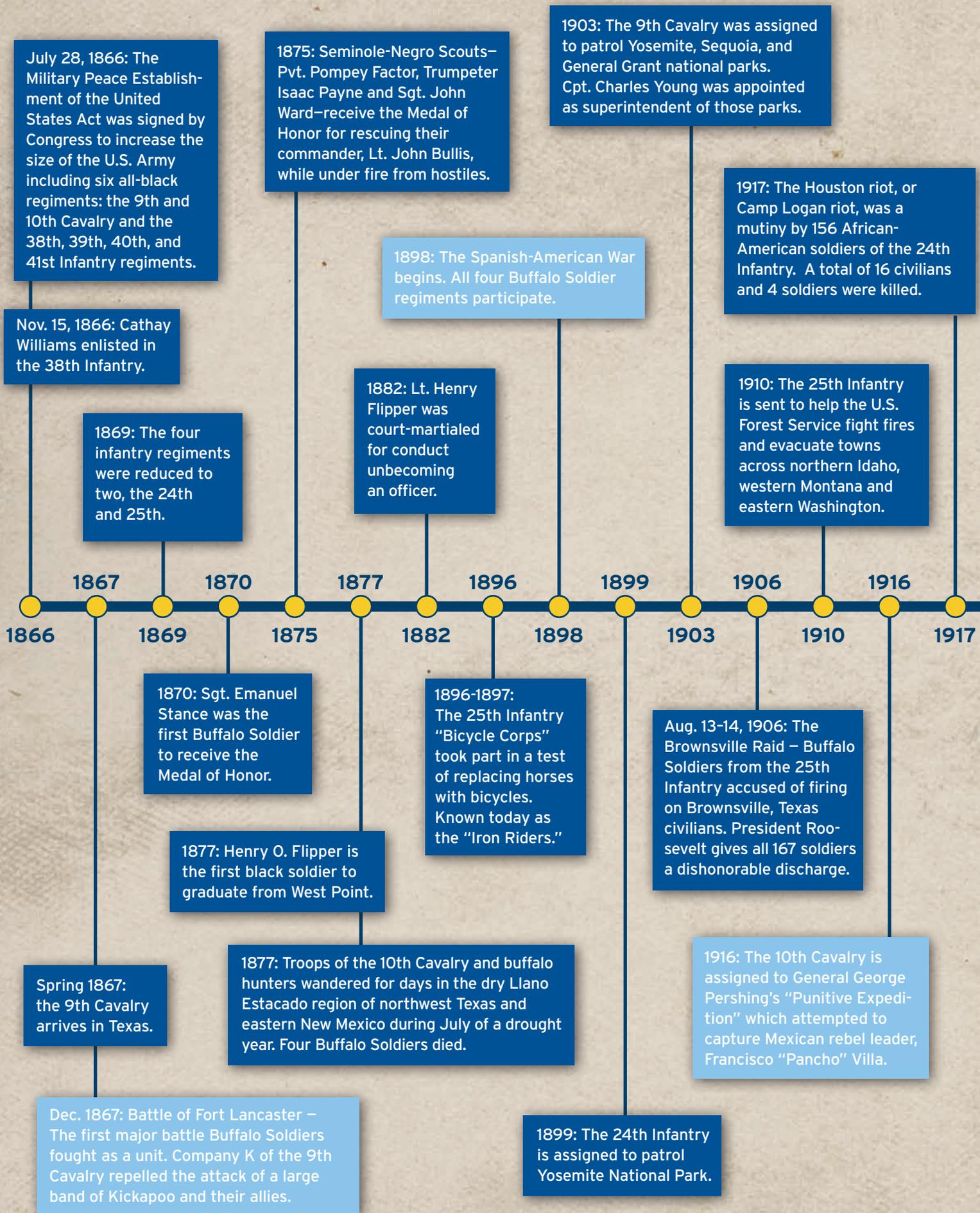
The Buffalo Soldiers National Museum has been a longtime partner and supporter of the Texas Parks and Wildlife’s Buffalo Soldier Heritage and Outreach Program. Located in Houston’s Museum District in the former Houston Light Guard Armory building, they are dedicated to telling the story of the Buffalo Soldiers and the entirety of the African American Military Experience from the American Revolution to present day. The museum is also home to the 9th and 10th Horse Cavalry Association. Together, these three organizations hosted the celebrations commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Buffalo Soldiers in 2016 at the Buffalo Soldier National Museum.

The museum hosts exhibits on every major war in which the United States fought. They also tell the story of The Camp Logan Riots in Houston in 1917, African American astronauts, and will also be home to the 25th Anniversary Plaque and Exhibit honoring the founders of the Soldiers in Blue, The Old Fort Griffin Memorial Regiment and the Texas Parks and Wildlife’s Buffalo Soldiers Heritage and Outreach Program.

*Buffalo soldiers of the 25th Infantry,  
Ft. Keogh, Montana. Library of Congress*

# BUFFALO SOLDIER TIMELINE





July 28, 1866: The Military Peace Establishment of the United States Act was signed by Congress to increase the size of the U.S. Army including six all-black regiments: the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st Infantry regiments.

Nov. 15, 1866: Cathay Williams enlisted in the 38th Infantry.

1869: The four infantry regiments were reduced to two, the 24th and 25th.

1875: Seminole-Negro Scouts—Pvt. Pompey Factor, Trumpeter Isaac Payne and Sgt. John Ward—receive the Medal of Honor for rescuing their commander, Lt. John Bullis, while under fire from hostiles.

1903: The 9th Cavalry was assigned to patrol Yosemite, Sequoia, and General Grant national parks. Cpt. Charles Young was appointed as superintendent of those parks.

1917: The Houston riot, or Camp Logan riot, was a mutiny by 156 African-American soldiers of the 24th Infantry. A total of 16 civilians and 4 soldiers were killed.

1898: The Spanish-American War begins. All four Buffalo Soldier regiments participate.

1882: Lt. Henry Flipper was court-martialed for conduct unbecoming an officer.

1910: The 25th Infantry is sent to help the U.S. Forest Service fight fires and evacuate towns across northern Idaho, western Montana and eastern Washington.

1866 1867 1869 1870 1875 1877 1882 1896 1898 1899 1903 1906 1910 1916 1917

1870: Sgt. Emanuel Stance was the first Buffalo Soldier to receive the Medal of Honor.

1896-1897: The 25th Infantry "Bicycle Corps" took part in a test of replacing horses with bicycles. Known today as the "Iron Riders."

Aug. 13-14, 1906: The Brownsville Raid – Buffalo Soldiers from the 25th Infantry accused of firing on Brownsville, Texas civilians. President Roosevelt gives all 167 soldiers a dishonorable discharge.

1877: Henry O. Flipper is the first black soldier to graduate from West Point.

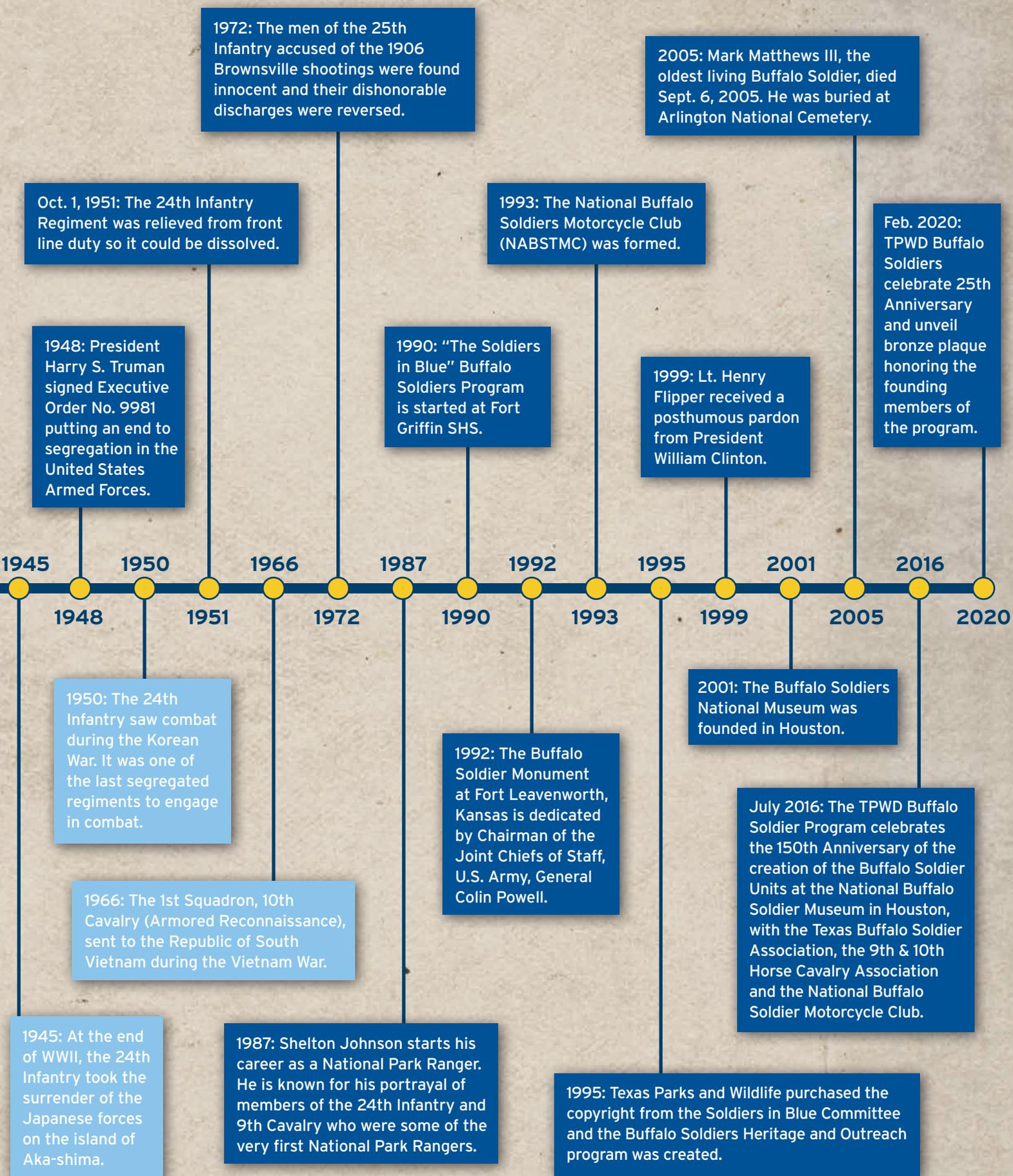
1916: The 10th Cavalry is assigned to General George Pershing's "Punitive Expedition" which attempted to capture Mexican rebel leader, Francisco "Pancho" Villa.

Spring 1867: the 9th Cavalry arrives in Texas.

1877: Troops of the 10th Cavalry and buffalo hunters wandered for days in the dry Llano Estacado region of northwest Texas and eastern New Mexico during July of a drought year. Four Buffalo Soldiers died.

1899: The 24th Infantry is assigned to patrol Yosemite National Park.

Dec. 1867: Battle of Fort Lancaster – The first major battle Buffalo Soldiers fought as a unit. Company K of the 9th Cavalry repelled the attack of a large band of Kickapoo and their allies.





Allen Mack (center), 51, with Luis Padilla (left), 35, and Ricky Dolifka, 38; Buffalo soldier; Austin. Photographed with an 1853 Enfield musket (Mack), an 1859 New Model Sharps carbine (Padilla), and an 1858 Remington revolver (Dolifka). Photograph by Dan Winters

## TEXAS MONTHLY

Texas Parks and Wildlife's Buffalo Soldier Heritage and Outreach Program was honored by *Texas Monthly* to be a part of the photo essay "Called to Arms" in the April 2016 issue. This photo, taken at Blanco State Park, was the centerfold. The program is lucky to have a very nice collection of period and replica firearms that we put on display at some of our events.

*As a kid, I was never taught enough about African-American history, so as I got older, I was hungry to learn more. Becoming a Buffalo Soldier was a great honor. We travel around the state teaching kids about everything the soldiers did. Of course, they want to see the weapons, but we try to show them that the guns were just one of the many tools the soldiers used.*

— Allen Mack

Read more at  
[www.texasmonthly.com/the-culture/called-to-arms/](http://www.texasmonthly.com/the-culture/called-to-arms/)

KEEP  
TEXAS  
WILD »

Included in *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine, the Keep Texas Wild series provides educational resources for students and teachers.

# Keep Texas Wild

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## BUILDING THE WEST



THE FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICANS TO SERVE in the U.S. military during a time of peace were called "Buffalo Soldiers" by the Cheyenne Indians. The soldiers were given this name because of their strength and courage in battle and their dark, curly hair, which resembled the mane of the buffalo. Life on the frontier was hard, but during the Indian War campaigns of 1866-1892, four regiments of Buffalo Soldiers lived and worked in some of the most remote and dangerous parts of the United States. Their dedication helped to build the American West.

# BUFFALO SOLDIER

## DAILY LIFE

SINCE WOMEN WERE NOT allowed to serve in the army in 1866, Cathay Williams changed her name to "William Cathay" and pretended to be a man. Williams was the first African-American woman to enlist in the U.S. Army, and the only known female Buffalo Soldier. Two years later, a doctor discovered her real identity and she was discharged. Today she is a famous and honored historical figure.



**Famous figures**  
**CATHAY WILLIAMS**

SINCE MOST BUFFALO SOLDIERS had been slaves before the Civil War, very few had received formal education. Serving in the military gave them an opportunity to learn. Often chaplains (military preachers) taught the soldiers how to read and write. Playing cards, which had no written numbers in the late 1800s, were used to teach memorization and counting. For example, soldiers learned to count to six by counting the number of hearts, spades, clubs or diamonds on the card.



## LEARNING

WHILE ON CAMPAIGN, Buffalo Soldiers lived and worked in military camps. These were arranged in a straight line, almost like a street. Most soldiers had to carry their own tents when they moved camps. The type of tent would vary according to the soldier's



OFTEN THE MOST DIFFICULT PART of being a Buffalo Soldier wasn't fighting battles or saving stagecoaches; it was the long weeks spent waiting for the next mission, the days spent doing routine assignments. In this way, the life of a Buffalo Soldier was very similar to our own. He even



"READY AND FORWARD!"

# SOLDIERS

## Life in Camp

rank. For example, pairs of enlisted men, the lowest rank, shared a tent and each man carried half of it. Even after a long day of traveling, Buffalo Soldiers liked to sing around the campfire before they went to sleep.



**SERGEANT EMANUEL STANCE** was the first African-American to receive the medal of honor after the Civil War. He was commended for leading two brave charges against Indians raiding wagons and trying to steal horses. During the Indian Wars, 18 Buffalo Soldiers received the Medal of Honor, the highest award of the U.S. military.



**Famous figures**  
**EMANUEL STANCE**

**IN ADDITION** to protecting frontier outposts and railroads from attack, Buffalo Soldiers scouted out many of the roads we use today, aided officers in taking measurements and drawing maps, and built the first telegraph lines in Texas.



had to brush his teeth, though his toothbrush wasn't quite like the kind we buy at the store! The handle was made of wood or bone, and the brush was made of pig bristles or some other type of stiff, coarse animal hair that had been cleaned and boiled. For toothpaste, a soldier would use baking soda or even fire ash.



## A SOLDIER'S LIFE



ILLUSTRATION BY AUGGIE HAUND/TPWD



# Spike's Activity Page



## » WILD SCIENCE



SINCE BUFFALO SOLDIERS were often on the move, they needed food stores that would stay good for a long time. A type of bread called "hardtack," which looks a lot like a Pop-Tart® with no frosting, would not mold and could be eaten up to several years after it was made.

Here's an experiment you can do at home. With your parents' help, make your own hardtack using the recipe below, and then test the hardtack in different conditions. For example, will the hardtack mold if it gets wet? How quickly does regular sliced bread mold under the same conditions? What do you think makes hardtack so special?

### Ingredients:

- 4 cups flour (preferably whole wheat flour)
- 4 teaspoons salt
- Water (about 2 cups)

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Mix the flour and salt together in a

bowl. Add just enough water (less than two cups) so that the mixture will stick together, producing a dough that won't stick to your hands, rolling pin or pan. Mix the dough by hand. Roll the dough out, shaping it roughly into a rectangle. Cut the dough into 3-inch squares about 1/2-inch thick.

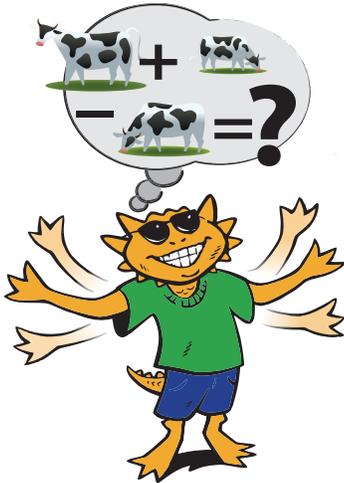
After cutting the squares, press a pattern of four rows or four holes into each square, using a nail or other such object. Do not punch through the dough. The appearance you want is similar to that of a modern saltine cracker. Turn each square over and do the same thing to the other side.

Place the squares on an ungreased cookie sheet in the oven and bake for 30 minutes. Turn each piece over and bake for another 30 minutes. The crackers should be slightly brown on both sides.

The fresh crackers are easily broken but as they dry, they harden and assume the consistency of fired brick.

(Yield: 10 pieces)

## » WILD MATH



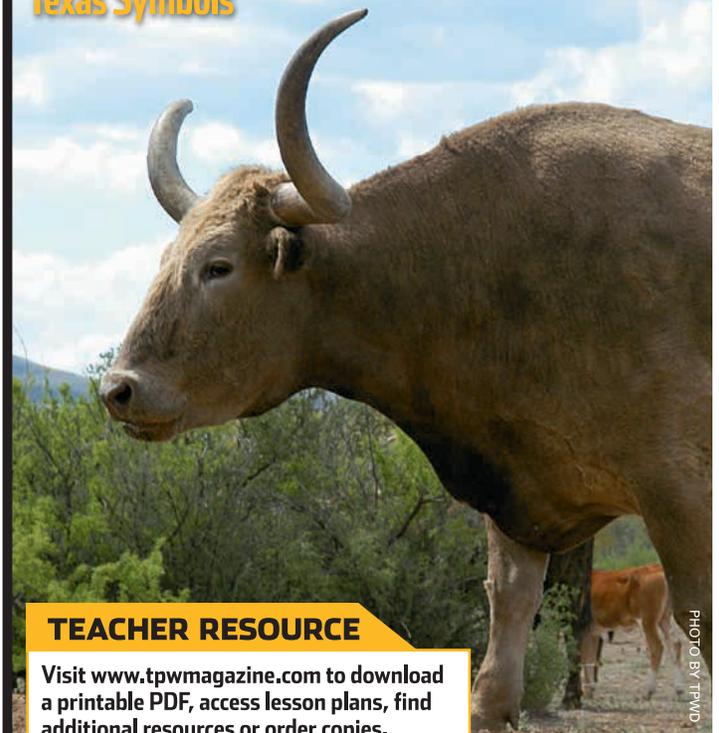
IN THE 1800s, it was difficult to transport meat out to a fort, which meant living cattle had to be brought where they were needed and butchered there. If the officers at the fort purchased \$400 of beef at 5 cents per pound, how many pounds of beef did they purchase?



### Participate!

You don't have to imagine what life must have been like as a Buffalo Soldier — you can experience it for yourself at one of the Texas Buffalo Soldiers' living history events! View their calendar at [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/community\\_outreach\\_programs/buffalo\\_soldiers/calendar.phtml](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/community_outreach_programs/buffalo_soldiers/calendar.phtml).

## NEXT MONTH: Texas Symbols



### TEACHER RESOURCE

Visit [www.tpwdmagazine.com](http://www.tpwdmagazine.com) to download a printable PDF, access lesson plans, find additional resources or order copies.

PHOTO BY TPWD

# MAKING CONNECTIONS

In 1995 Texas Parks and Wildlife Department embarked upon a bold new experiment, just as the United States Congress did in 1866 when it created all-black units in the army. The modern experiment was to create a statewide educational program to tell the story of the Buffalo Soldiers.

But it is not just the story of the Buffalo Soldiers; it is our mission to offer a much broader view of life in Texas during the 1800s. Most of what we teach isn't in history textbooks. It takes some digging down into the nitty-gritty parts of history to tell the whole story of all the peoples of Texas. If you want a true picture of history and of Texas, consider that even in the 1800s, Texas was a melting pot of many different cultures. The Buffalo Soldier program is NOT just about the Buffalo Soldiers. It is also

about building connections. We show how all the different peoples of Texas interacted and had a role in building Texas and the United States. Although 150 years separate the Buffalo Soldiers from the people of today, they really were people just like us. We make those connections—those stories—come alive.

Today, TPWD's Buffalo Soldier Heritage and Outreach Program reaches across the great state of Texas delivering about 90 programs to over 30,000 people a year. Both the U.S. Army's and Texas Parks and Wildlife's experiments were a resounding success. But don't take our word for it. Enjoy the following article published in *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine in July 2016, celebrating of the 150th anniversary of the creation of the original Buffalo Soldier regiments.





TPWD outreach assistant Allen Mack portrays a Buffalo Soldier with the banner of the 9th Cavalry's K Company behind him.

**Opposite:** Former Buffalo Soldiers program leader Ken Pollard.

# THE UNKNOWN ARMY



PHOTO BY BILL REAVES / TPWD

## **Buffalo Soldiers connect kids with Texas history beyond the textbook.**

*Words: Sheryl Smith-Rodgers  
Photography: Earl Nottingham*

“So, who were the Buffalo Soldiers?”

Surrounded by schoolkids at Blanco State Park, Luis Padilla, who’s portraying a first sergeant with the U.S. 9th Cavalry, poses the question while rocking back and forth on his heels. He’s “riding” horseback, outfitted in 1870s military jacket, black knee-high boots and a muskrat hat that covers his ears. Beside him, a third-grade girl wearing a too-big military jacket and campaign hat mimics his every move.

Instantly, hands shoot up in the air, and a chorus of young voices shouts out the answer.

“The first professional black soldiers in the U.S. Army!”

Padilla grins and gives his volunteer sidekick a thumbs-up. From beneath her wide-brimmed hat, she grins back.

Chalk up another successful history lesson for the Buffalo Soldiers Heritage and Outreach Program with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. In its 20th year, the program seeks to accomplish two main goals: interpret the pivotal role that Buffalo Soldiers played in American history, and encourage people to spend more time outdoors, especially in state parks.

“But we’re not just telling a ‘black’ story,” Padilla, the program supervisor, tells me later. “It’s a ‘we’ story. We’re living historians, not re-enactors, who also talk about vaqueros, Native Americans, Seminole scouts, frontier women and other cultural groups in Texas during the late 1800s.”

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Throughout the Civil War, thousands of African Americans fought and died for the Union. Yet those same men, who'd proven themselves on the battlefield, returned home to find they were still treated much like slaves. Meanwhile, the nation's Army, downsized after the war ended in 1865, wasn't large enough to handle growing tensions on the Western frontier, where Indian wars and other dangers threatened settlers and their families.

Though some people still doubted the combat abilities of black soldiers, the Army needed to beef up its ranks. As an experiment, Congress in July 1866 formed six new regiments made up of black troops led by white officers. (Later, the Army consolidated four infantry units into two.) Ultimately, the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments would serve on posts that stretched from Texas to the Dakota territories.

For the first time ever, former slaves and freedmen, most of whom were illiterate, could work as professional soldiers and earn the same monthly \$13 that white soldiers received. What's more, the job came with food, clothing, shelter and a basic education. Recruits signed up in hopes of bettering their lives.

They succeeded, but it was no easy task. The black soldiers faced hostile enemies, extreme weather, infectious diseases, rugged terrain and plenty of prejudice. Often the very people whom they were sent to protect treated them with outright contempt. Still, the troops, even when meagerly fed and supplied, stoically and heroically performed their assigned duties. They escorted stagecoaches and trains, protected mail carriers, scouted out and mapped new regions, fought Indians, constructed forts and bridges, and tracked down bandits and cattle rustlers.

The soldiers endured the harshest of conditions with few complaints. Under fire, they showed little fear, only courage, cool restraint and the fiercest kind of determination. (Desertion rates among black soldiers ranked among the lowest in the Army.) Nothing seemed to be able to rattle the black soldiers in blue wool uniforms. That fighting spirit likely reminded the Indians of their revered buffalo (bison). So did the black men's dark eyes and hair. As early as 1872, the troopers became known as Buffalo Soldiers.



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**Above:** TPWD volunteer Jonathan Hopkins, 9th Cavalry.

**Below:** TPWD seasonal employee Cale Carter, 25th Infantry.



**Above:** The uniform of the Buffalo Soldier.

**Below:** Volunteer Nathaniel Booker, Camp Mabry Company A 9th Cavalry.



### CONNECTING WITH THE PAST

Ken Pollard, now retired after 30 years with TPWD, won't forget the day that changed his life in 1990. As a maintenance supervisor in Abilene, he oversaw a western region that included several frontier posts. On a stop at Fort Griffin State Historic Site, Pollard asked why vintage photographs of black men hung on a wall in the visitors center.

"The park manager told me about Buffalo Soldiers," Pollard says. "In all my years, I'd never heard of them before. That's when I first connected with them."

His ties deepened when he dug back and learned that several of his own ancestors had served as Buffalo Soldiers. Soon Pollard joined the Old Fort Griffin Memorial Regiment, which presented Buffalo Soldier programs at schools and special events. He also became involved with Abilene's Soldiers in Blue Committee, a volunteer group dedicated to retelling the Buffalo Soldier story.

"At the time, a lot of African

American history focused on slavery, picking cotton and slaughtering hogs," Pollard says. "I realized that a part of our history was not being represented in TPWD's interpretive programs."

Department officials agreed. In 1995, Pollard transferred to Austin, where he was assigned to develop a new statewide educational program.

"TPWD purchased the copyright from the Soldiers in Blue Committee, and we got to work," he says.

For 15 years, Pollard led the department's Buffalo Soldiers Heritage and Outreach Program, which coordinated and produced living history events for schools and other groups. To ensure accurate portrayals of life on the frontier, he and research historian Vicki Hagen spent hours delving into historical materials to learn what Buffalo Soldiers ate, what they packed and how they spent their leisure time. At events, Pollard wore the dark blue jacket and sky blue trousers of a 9th Cavalry soldier, while Hagen, dressed in long-sleeved blouse and floor-length skirt, depicted a frontier woman.



With time, more volunteers signed up to help. Within TPWD, Pollard successfully recruited staff from other divisions, such as law enforcement, wildlife and state parks, to participate in outreach programs. Statewide, Pollard partnered with Buffalo Soldier groups and community organizations.

“To get the program more in the public eye, we involved as many people as we could,” he says. “Whenever we could, we tied our programs into local history.”

The far-reaching network of

volunteers and resources broadened the program’s scope. In 1999, a Buffalo Soldier color guard participated in Gov. George W. Bush’s inauguration parade. That same year, Pollard and Hagen and other Buffalo Soldier historians worked with the 76th Legislature to have July officially designated as Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Month. They also helped to develop the Texas Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Trail, part of a statewide heritage tourism initiative.

In January 2005, Pollard and his staff coordinated the Huff Diary Wagon Train Project, a three-week

trek in horse-drawn wagons that retraced a route taken in 1849 by William P. Huff on his way to the California Gold Rush. The hands-on history project involved sixth-graders from Texas and California who made the 650-mile trip and read Huff’s journals along the way.

“It took a year to plan,” Pollard recalls. “For nearly a month, the kids rode in wagons and camped out. We had dust storms, freezing temperatures, sleet and frozen mud. But the trip was an amazing learning experience.”

Whatever project or event Pollard



**Pictured:** Allen Mack describes the life of a Buffalo Soldier to new "recruits."

took on, he always added his own special touch.

"I'd ask the kids, 'What is your gift? What are you good at doing?'" he recalls. "I wanted to instill a sense of pride in themselves, like the Buffalo Soldiers did. I told them that education was crucial for achieving their dreams and bettering their lives."

#### **MOVING FORWARD**

Back at Blanco State Park, a crowd of third-graders has gathered at the canvas tent of Ricky Dolifka, a TPWD outreach assistant who portrays a white officer with the U.S. 9th

Cavalry. On a wooden table, he's laid out a collection of old-time baseballs, mitts and bats.

"We had a lot of time to relax and play games," Dolifka tells the students. "We learned how to play baseball from officer Abner Doubleday, who's believed to have invented the game and commanded the 24th Infantry at Fort McKavett."

After the baseball history lesson, he teaches the kids how to play trap ball, an old English game that uses a soft leathery ball, a wooden paddle and a levered wooden trap. Even the teachers try their hand at stomping

the ball into the air, then whacking it with a paddle.

At another tent, the third-graders listen as Clifton Fifer, a retired Kerrville teacher dressed as a Seminole scout, tells a Native American legend about a turtle and demonstrates how Indian shamans used a whip to remove arrows from victims. While Fifer plays a wooden flute, three students accompany him, beating a drum and shaking rattles.

At a third tent, Allen Mack (another TPWD outreach assistant) teaches the kids how to identify wildlife by their hides, scat and tracks.



**Left:** Lee Reed portrays Cathay Williams, a woman who posed as a man to serve as a Buffalo Soldier with the 38th U.S. Infantry.

**Opposite:** TPWD outreach assistant Ricky Dolifka, 9th Cavalry.

**Below:** TPWD volunteer Courtney Runnels, 9th Cavalry.

“Where do you think this poop comes from?” he asks, holding up a rubberized specimen. “A meat eater? Plant eater? Come on, even if you’re wrong, you’ll get a fist bump!”

Giggling, several kids wave their hands in the air and holler an answer. Everyone’s smiling in the small crowd.

“Our programs are about having fun and learning,” Padilla says.

Like Pollard, Padilla recalls the day his own life took a turn. As a temporary clerk hired in 2006, he was entering data in a computer when Pollard, his supervisor, walked into the office, outfitted in his cavalry uniform.

“I asked why he was dressed like that,” Padilla says. “I’d never heard of a Buffalo Soldier before. Ken tossed a book at me and said, ‘Read this.’”

The historical narrative written by William and Shirley Leckie about Buffalo Soldiers intrigued Padilla. He stayed on another half-year at TPWD and was hired full-time to work with the program. When Pollard assigned him a uniform and a soldier history, Padilla knew he’d found his calling.

“I portray a sergeant with the 9th Cavalry,” Padilla says. “I use my own story as a backdrop. Like me, not all Buffalo Soldiers were from Texas. On the frontier, what they saw was brand new and multicultural to them. I was born in New York and raised as a city boy in Austin, and I come from a mixed background. Plus, I didn’t know anything about the outdoors. I tell kids that the Buffalo Soldiers saw a window of opportunity, and they walked through it. Their life is the same in that they can walk through windows of opportunity, but it’s up to them to take the steps, like I did with this job.”

After Pollard retired in 2010, Padilla stepped up as director.

“We’re taking Ken’s program and adding to it to reach a new generation, especially minorities,” he says. “We use hands-on activities, like fishing, to show kids how the Buffalo Soldiers fished. Then we give them the tools to fish themselves. We use history as an empowering tool to tell kids to get

outside, explore and seek adventure, like the Buffalo Soldiers did.”

Selton Williams, a TPWD maintenance mechanic who portrays a soldier with the 9th Cavalry, has volunteered with the Buffalo Soldiers program since 1994.

“A lot of people don’t know about Buffalo Soldiers,” he says, watching the Blanco students load back up on buses. “The more you can educate them, the more history comes alive — particularly for black kids, so they can better understand their own significance in history.”

Later, Williams, Fifer and other volunteers head home. Not Padilla, Mack and Dolifka. They’re bunking overnight in the canvas tents that they’ve set up at the park. In the evening, they share stories about Buffalo Soldiers with campers who wander over to their encampment and with visitors who come by the following day.

Outfitted as a sergeant, Horace Williams, who serves as president of the Camp Mabry Buffalo Soldiers Company A 9th Cavalry, breaks out some Buffalo Soldier grub — hardtack, beans and brick tea. Across the grounds, Kevin and Sharon Briscoe with the Killeen Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Club work a “frontier” photo booth, where visitors can put on a wool jacket and pose on a wooden horse. Cale Carter, a TPWD seasonal employee dressed as an infantry soldier, stands ready to discuss the essentials of outdoor survival, then and now.

“Buffalo Soldiers took pride in themselves,” Padilla reflects. “Their life was hard. They got up early, took care of their horses, battled in unknown places and worked in the heat, never knowing if they’d make it back alive. But they saw their window of opportunity and walked through it. That window of opportunity has passed from Ken to me. Like the Buffalo Soldiers, I want to keep it open for whoever comes behind me.” ★

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*Sheryl Smith-Rodgers is a writer living in the Texas Hill Country.*



# LIVING HISTORY PRESENTATIONS & SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Remember sitting in history class listening to the teacher recite dates, facts and other trivia? Was that fun? Did it make you want to learn more? For most people, it did not. When Texas Parks and Wildlife's Buffalo Soldier Heritage and Outreach Program goes to a school, library, state park or historic fort, we educate and have fun at the same time. It is our goal to engage the kids, make them think, and make learning fun.

Buffalo Soldier school programs center on making connections between the lives of the Buffalo Soldiers in the 1800s and the lives of the children in our audience.

We use period uniforms, saddles, tents and even coffee grinders to help reinforce and drive those connections home. The legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers and their contributions impact us in many ways to this day. It is that legacy and history that we strive to keep alive!

Please visit our website to schedule a program at your school or event.

[tpwd.texas.gov/buffalo-soldiers](http://tpwd.texas.gov/buffalo-soldiers)





## COLOR GUARD PRESENTATIONS

Life in the military for the Buffalo Soldiers was not always about fighting in battles or helping the community. Often times it involved special jobs like escort duty or hosting big events at the forts. It was about looking good and showing off for the visiting generals, dignitaries, and the public at special events.

This holds true for the Texas Parks and Wildlife's Buffalo Soldier Heritage and Outreach Program, as well. The program has participated as Color Guard for many programs in its 20-year history. These include TPW commission meetings, civic and military banquets, University of Texas sporting events and historic plaque unveilings. The program has also marched in inaugural parades for various Texas governors, Juneteenth celebrations and Texas Independence Day festivities.



For more information or to request us at your event, please visit our website:

[tpwd.texas.gov/buffalo-soldiers](http://tpwd.texas.gov/buffalo-soldiers)

# BLAZING NEW TRAILS

## LIFE ON THE FRONTIER



Blazing New Trails is a historically based program designed to engage people in the outdoors and help everyone learn that “Life is better outside!”

Participants at our Blazing New Trails events experience the outdoors and natural resources of Texas. Blazing New Trails consists of outdoor educational skills workshops at a Buffalo Soldier encampment. TPWD-certified instructors teach programs such as basic angler education,

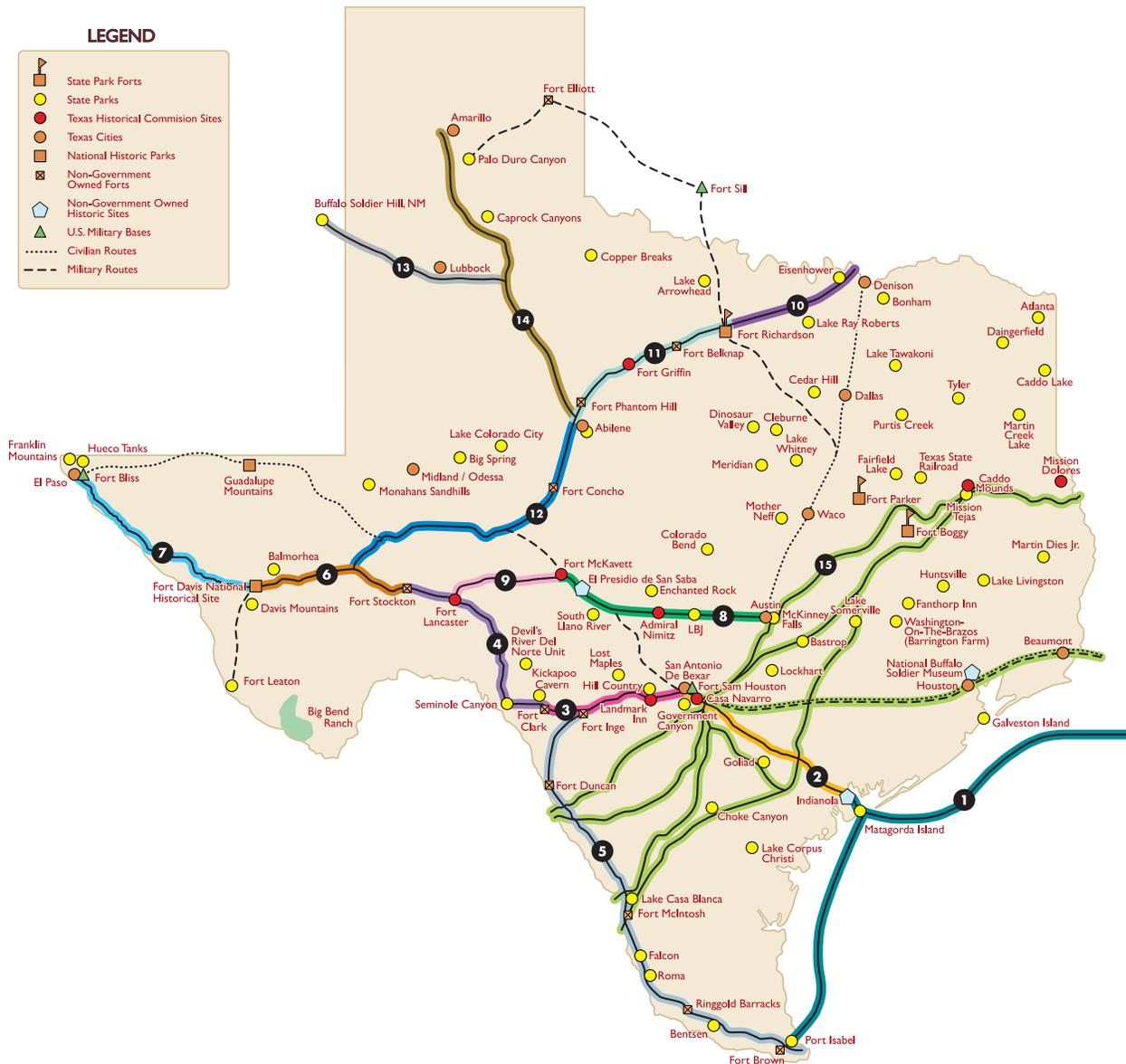
beginner navigation skills using map and compass, tracking and identification of wildlife, and also traditional outdoor recreational programs like frontier baseball and bicycling.

A unique component of the Blazing New Trails program is the emphasis on our natural heritage. These workshops involve the observation and study of early pioneers’ way of life. We try to make history come alive in an outdoor setting by exploring the contributions and outdoor skills of Texas pioneers, American Indians, vaqueros and Buffalo Soldiers.



# EXPLORE THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS HERITAGE TRAILS

The history of Texas is rich and diverse. The Texas Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Trails explore the heritage of Texas during the 1800s, based on natural and cultural history. The trails follow the military and civilian routes in Texas during the 1800s. Many of these same trails became the highways and interstates we know today. Along these routes you'll find many state parks and state historic sites important to Texas. Meshing the stories of those sites with the stories of the Texas Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Trails lets us tell the full "Story of Texas."



## 1 The Move to Texas

### NEW ORLEANS TO INDIANOLA AND BROWNSVILLE

After forming in New Orleans, Louisiana, the 9th Cavalry and the 41st Infantry moved to Texas. They traveled by Morgan Line steamers.

**State Parks/Historic Sites along the Trail:** Sabine Pass Battleground, San Jacinto Battleground, Battleship *Texas*, Matagorda Island Wildlife Management Area, Varner-Hogg Plantation and Port Isabel Lighthouse state historic sites; Fort Brown; and Resaca de la Palma State Park.

## 2 Old Indianola Trail

### INDIANOLA TO SAN ANTONIO

From soldiers to stagecoaches, all made their way into the interior of Texas on this trail from Indianola to San Antonio.

**State Parks/Historic Sites along the Trail:** Goliad, Palmetto, Choke Canyon, Lake Corpus Christi and Goose Island state parks; Casa Navarro, Lipantitlan, and Fulton Mansion state historic sites; Chisholm Trail Museum in Cuero, Mt. Zion Baptist Church and School, Hopkinsville Community - A Colony of Freedmen, Sebastopol House, Lake Texana Park and Campground.

## 3 Out to the Forts

### SAN ANTONIO TO FORT CLARK

After completing military instruction and training, the 9th Regiment U.S. Cavalry headed to the forts of west Texas. In the latter part of April 1867, the regiment received orders for permanent station: six companies to Fort Davis, headquarters and four companies to Camp Stockton, and two companies to Brownsville.

**State Parks/Historic Sites along the Trail:** Government Canyon, Hill Country, Honey Creek, and Lost Maples state natural areas; Garner, Kickapoo Cavern, Guadalupe River, Seminole Canyon state parks; Kerrville Park.

## 4 The Scouts

### FORT CLARK TO FORT STOCKTON

The Seminole-Negro Indian Scouts fought valiantly for the United States and were one of the toughest units in the Army. They were honest, tough, daring, excellent hunters, splendid fighters and a highly mobile strike force. Soldiers were selected for their frontier skills, superior marksmanship and first-rate horsemanship.

**State Parks/Historic Sites along the Trail:** Seminole Canyon and Kickapoo Cavern state parks; Devils River and Devil's Sinkhole state natural areas; Fort Lancaster State Historic Site, Historic Fort Stockton and Annie Riggs Museum.

## 5 The Rio Bravo

BROWNSVILLE TO FORT INGE

The roads along the Rio Bravo have a rich natural and cultural heritage. This trail featured prominently during the Indian Wars.

**State Parks/Historic Sites along the Trail:** Lake Casa Blanca, Falcon, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley, Estero Llano Grande state parks; Historic Old Morgue at Fort Brown; Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Park; Fort Macintosh National Historic Site and Cemetery; Fort Ringgold and Fort Inge national historic sites; and Fort Duncan Museum.

## 6 The Davis Mountains

FORT STOCKTON TO FORT DAVIS

Mescalero Apaches roamed the Davis Mountains, the Spanish explored them, and early pioneers settled them. The Davis Mountains were also a focal point of military activity on the Texas frontier.

**State Parks/Historic Sites along the Trail:** Big Bend Ranch, Balmorhea, Davis Mountains, and Indian Lodge state parks; Fort Leaton State Historic Site; Barton Warnock Visitors Center; Chinati Mountains State Natural Area; Comanche War Trail, Fort Pena Colorado; and Big Bend National Park.

## 7 The Chihuahuan Desert

FORT DAVIS TO FORT BLISS

The rugged mountains of West Texas offer everything from lush spring-filled canyons to the salt flats of the dry deserts. Military duty in this area of Texas was hard on both man and animal.

**State Parks/Historic Sites along the Trail:** Davis Mountains, Indian Lodge, Wyler Aerial Tramway, Franklin Mountains, Hueco Tanks state parks; Guadalupe Mountains, Big Bend, and Fort Davis national parks; On the Trail of Victorio, Rattlesnake Springs, Salt Flats/El Paso Salt War, The Mission Trail/El Paso, Indian Hot Springs, and Eagle Springs.

## 8 Escort Duty

AUSTIN TO FORT MCKAVETT

The soldiers, both infantry and cavalry, stayed busy rebuilding posts, building roads and telegraph lines, scouting, surveying and making maps, protecting crews building railroads, escorting trains and stages, and guarding the mail stations to the north and west. A diary of an officer's wife from Fort Davis described this route.

**State Parks/Historic Sites along the Trail:** McKinney Falls, Pedernales Falls, Blanco and LBJ state parks; Enchanted Rock State Natural Area; LBJ National Park, Fort McKavett State Historic Site, The National Museum of the Pacific War - Admiral Nimitz Museum, Peyton Colony, Fort Martin Scott, and El Presidio de San Saba.

## 9 The First Battle

### FORT McKAVETT TO FORT LANCASTER

The first major test of the 9th Cavalry was at Fort Lancaster on Dec. 26, 1867. This engagement gave Company K their first opportunity to face their foe toe to toe. At Fort Lancaster, Company K, a squad of 70 men and two women, faced a force of approximately 1,000 Native Americans, Mexican bandits and other renegades.

**State Parks/Historic Sites along the Trail:** South Llano River State Park, Fort Lancaster State Historic Site, Historic Fort Stockton and Annie Riggs Museum.

## 10 Red River Country

### DENISON TO FORT RICHARDSON

A 19th century government report once described this area as uninhabitable to man or beast. American Indians and hardy pioneer settlers proved this report wrong.

**State Parks/Historic Sites along the Trail:** Eisenhower, Ray Roberts Lake, Lake Arrowhead, Fort Richardson, Lake Mineral Wells and Trailway state parks; Eisenhower Birthplace State Historic Site, Fort Belknap.

## 11 Fort Griffin Town on the Clearfork

### FORT RICHARDSON TO ABILENE

Water and game were plentiful in this area making it a popular destination for hunters, settlers and travelers. Living here, however, was dangerous and required a military presence for protection.

**State Parks/Historic Sites along the Trail:** Lake Mineral Wells and Trailway, Possum Kingdom, Palo Pinto, Lake Arrowhead state parks; Brazos Indian Reservation, Fort Belknap, Fort Phantom Hill, Texas Frontier Museum in Abilene, Warren Wagon Train Massacre State Historic Site.

## 12 Concho to the Pecos

### ABILENE TO FORT DAVIS

The Concho and the Pecos rivers were magnets for settlement in this area of Texas. Many stories and legends arose from these rivers. And, although the Pecos River provided much-needed water, it also proved to be a formidable foe to man.

**State Parks/Historic Sites along the Trail:** Abilene, San Angelo, Big Spring, Lake Colorado City, and Monahans Sandhills state parks; Fort Concho National Historic Landmark, Historic Fort Chadbourne.

## 13 Trails of the Living Waters

### OUT ON THE STAKED PLAINS

The Panhandle Plains region, sometimes known as the Staked Plains, encompasses a vast amount of Texas history. Historical trails and trade routes crisscrossed these plains, traced by the earliest Native American inhabitants, Spanish explorers, buffalo hunters, the U.S. Cavalry and other guardians of the vast west Texas frontier. This was where Nolan's Lost Expedition of 1877 took place.

**State Parks/Historic Sites along the Trail:** Lake Lubbock Park; Monuments at Cemetery in Morton, Texas; Buffalo Soldier Hill, New Mexico.

## 14 Mackenzie's Trail

### RED RIVER WARS

During the summer of 1874, the U.S. Army launched a campaign to remove the Comanche, Kiowa, Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian tribes from the Southern Plains and relocate them to reservations in Indian Territory. Led by Col. Ranald Mackenzie, the Army attacked the tribes on the Staked Plains from Fort Griffin, Fort Concho, Fort Richardson, Fort Sill, Fort Union and Camp Supply. Buffalo Soldiers, under the command of Col. Buell, were a part of this new offensive to force the tribes of the Southern Plains onto their reservations once and for all. The offensive culminated in the Battle of Palo Duro Canyon.

After the Battle of Palo Duro Canyon, the Army established Fort Elliott to help keep the peace in northwest Texas and Indian Territory. Lt. Henry Flipper served as the Adjutant Officer at Fort Elliott. While stationed at Fort Elliott, Lt. Flipper oversaw the construction of telegraph lines across the Canadian River.

**State Parks/Historic Sites along the Trail:** Palo Duro Canyon and Caprock Canyons state parks, Adobe Walls and Fort Elliott state historic sites, and the Old Jail at Mobeetie, Texas.

## 15 El Camino Real

### THE ROAD HOME

Built in the 1700s to link all the Spanish missions in Texas, El Camino Real has been a major route for anyone coming from and going to Texas. The Old Spanish Trail stretches from Laredo to San Antonio, up through the Pineywoods to Nacogdoches, and then on into Louisiana. Later this trail was called The Old San Antonio Trail and it was used by the military and civilians. When on leave visiting their families back east or moving their families out west, the Buffalo Soldiers traveled this highway as well.

**State Parks/Historic Sites along the Trail:** McKinney Falls, Lockhart, Bastrop, Lake Somerville, Fort Boggy, Mission Tejas, Washington-on-the-Brazos, Barrington Farm, Fanthorp Inn, Fort Parker, Daingerfield, Fairfield Lake, Purtil Creek, Tyler, Caddo Lake, Martin Creek Lake, Huntsville, Lake Livingston, Atlanta, and Martin Dies, Jr. state parks; Caddo Mounds and Mission Dolores state historic sites; Davy Crockett, Angelina, and Sabine national forests.

## On Campaign

### OUTPOSTS, PATROLS & BATTLES

Campaign duty for the cavalry and infantry led them many times into the Staked Plains of Texas. The soldiers had to accomplish many difficult duties in this seemingly empty area of the state.

**State Parks/Historic Sites along the Trail:** Palo Duro Canyon, Caprock Canyons, and Copper Breaks state parks; Lubbock Lake National Historic Landmark.

## Duties on the Frontier

### FROM SLAVERY TO GLORY

Events before and during the Civil War set the stage for the success of the United States Colored Troops, later known as the Buffalo Soldiers. Many duties were routine and uneventful. Many others were dangerous and life-threatening. The Medal of Honor, our nation's highest tribute, was awarded to 11 soldiers and four officers of the 9th Cavalry during the Indian Wars.

**State Parks/Historic Sites along the Trail:** Fort Parker, Fanthorp Inn, Washington-on-the-Brazos and Barrington Farm state parks; Historic Old Fort Parker, Texas State Railroad, Swanson Slave Cemetery.

# TEXAS AND BEYOND

In looking at the map of the Buffalo Heritage Trails, one can see that the soldiers' reach in Texas was extensive. These soldiers left an indelible mark on most of Texas and played a significant role in taming the West. You will also notice that many of these historic trails went beyond the borders of Texas. As time went on, the Army sent the soldiers wherever they were needed. New orders first took them west to New Mexico and Arizona and then north to Nebraska and Montana, as the focus on the Indian Wars changed. After the Indian Wars, they served overseas in Cuba and the Philippines during the Spanish American War. The Buffalo Soldiers would go on to serve throughout the entire United States, including California, Alaska and Hawaii. No matter where, no matter the hardships they endured, the Buffalo Soldiers would always answer the call and get the job done.

The Buffalo Soldiers served all over, but most were forged in fire here in Texas. They laid down a foundation of honor, valor, bravery, and devotion while serving. These foundations are expressed in the 9th and 10th Cavalry mottos, "Ready and Forward... We Can! We Will." The rich legacy left by Buffalo Soldiers truly gives credence to the phrase "What starts here in Texas changes the world."



# THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS

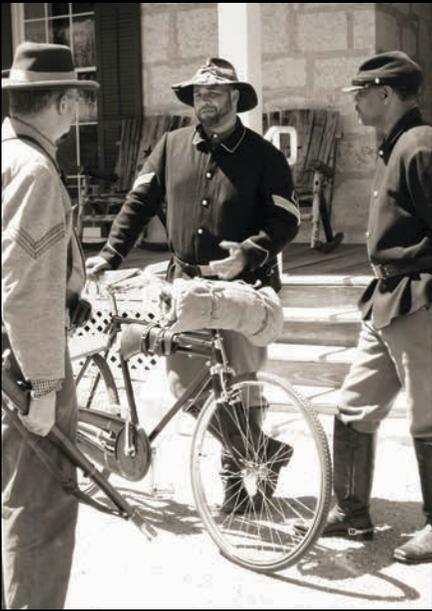




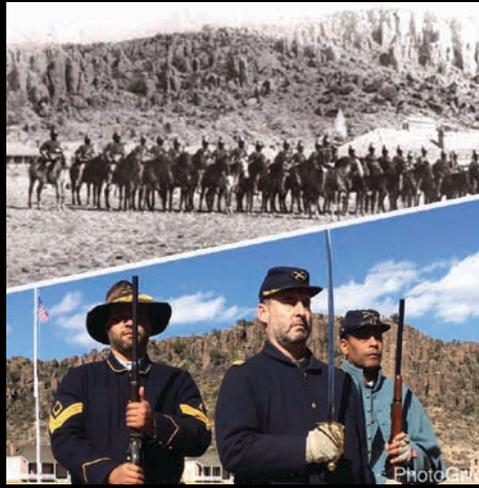




# ON THE TRAIL









# SUNSETS & SMILES







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# VOLUNTEERS WANTED

FOR

# U.S. 9TH CAVALRY BUFFALO SOLDIERS

LIVING HISTORY  
-REG'T-

Individuals needed for 19th century soldiers, vaqueros, Native Americans, civilians, immigrants and frontier women interpretations.

**NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED**

Students of history, education, recreation, outdoor education, African-American studies, drama, theater arts, English, or military veterans – get volunteer hours or experience.

[buffalosoldiers@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:buffalosoldiers@tpwd.texas.gov)