



AMERICAN COMMEMORATIVES

BUFFALO SOLDIERS



Nearly sixteen months after the end of the Civil War, Section 3 of an Act of Congress authorized the formation of six all black regiments, two cavalry and four infantry. The 9th Cavalry was established in Greenville, Louisiana, and the 10th Cavalry at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Infantry regiments initially designated as the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st Infantries were merged in 1869 into the 24th and 25th Infantries.



For over two decades, the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments conducted campaigns against American Indian tribes on a Western Frontier that extended from Montana in the Northwest to Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona in the Southwest. They engaged in several skirmishes against such great Indian Chiefs as Victorio, Geronimo, and Nana. Throughout the era of the Indian wars, about 20 percent of the cavalry troopers were black and fought in more than 117 engagements. The combat prowess, bravery and courage on the battlefield of these black troopers inspired the Indians to call them "buffalo" soldiers. Indian warriors learned quickly that the black men in blue uniforms would, when cornered and under attack, like the sacred buffalo, fight ferociously until the end. The buffalo symbol was adopted prominently to the company crests of both the 9th and 10th Cavalry. Their official motto: "Ready and Forward."

These former slaves, veterans of the Civil War and black free-men, distinguished themselves as the most decorated U.S. military regiments of all time. Eighteen black soldiers received the Medal of Honor, and the units had the lowest desertion rate of any Army unit from 1867 to 1898.

Black soldiers in the Civil War were assigned to segregated units, received less pay than their white counterparts and were denied status as regular army soldiers. The Buffalo Soldier often received inferior uniforms, military equipment and horses, and

routinely confronted extreme discrimination. Yet, they proved themselves as reliable and formidable fighting men in that war, and after it, won the right to join the regular army.

The 1994 Buffalo Soldiers stamp commemorates the spirit of these brave and determined African American soldiers of the Old West. This stamp was designed by Mort Kunstler of Oyster Bay, New York, and was issued in Dallas, Texas on April 22, 1994.





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Buffalo Soldiers Stamp

Who were these proud, determined African-Americans who helped win the West? They were the Buffalo Soldiers ... four regiments of black recruits sent to fight in the Indian Wars and guard forts out West, following the Civil War. Many had earned the respect of their white counterparts in the Union army, and these cavalry and infantry troops went on to impress the Native Americans with a fighting spirit as fierce as the Great Plains buffalo.

Cavalry recruits volunteered for five-year terms and served in segregated units commanded by white officers. Major Albert P. Morrow, who led a detachment of 9th Cavalry Buffalo Soldiers, said of them in 1870 that they were "... always cheerful and ready, braving the severest hardships, with short rations and no water, without a murmur ... fearless and capable of great endurance." Eleven members of the 9th and 10th Cavalry received the Congressional Medal of Honor.

By the 1890s, the conflicts with the Indians had come to a close, allowing the Buffalo Soldiers to enlarge their legacy of bravery and daring in the Spanish-American War. Along with the Rough Riders, commanded by future president Theodore Roosevelt, the Buffalo Soldiers joined in the bold charge up San Juan Hill.



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