

LEGENDS OF THE NAME:

BUFFALO SOLDIERS IN NEBRASKA



WRITTEN BY TODD ROBINSON
ILLUSTRATED BY WATIE WHITE
PRODUCED BY TEGWIN TURNER

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

During the summer of 2013, eight Omaha Public Schools teachers each developed an iBook on a topic of Omaha and Nebraska history as it relates to African American History. The four 3rd grade books are: *Then and Now: A Look at People in Your Neighborhood*; *Our City, Our Culture*; *Civil Rights: Standing Up for What's Right to Make a Difference*; and *The Great Migration: Wherever People Move, Home is Where the Heart is*. The four 4th grade books are *Legends of the Name: Buffalo Soldiers in Nebraska*; *African American Pioneers*; *Notable Nebraskans*; and *WWII: Double Victory*.

Each book was written by a local Omaha author, and illustrations were created by a local artist. Photographs, documents, and other artifacts included in the book were provided by local community members and through partnership with the Great Plains Black History Museum.

These books provide supplemental information on the role of African Americans in Omaha and Nebraska history topics. It is important to integrate this material in order to expand students' cultural understanding, and highlight all the historical figures that have built this state. Each book allows students to go beyond the content through analysis activities using photos, documents, and other artifacts. Through these iBooks, students will experience history and its connections to their own cultures and backgrounds.

Put your thinking caps on!

Always try to “Think Like a Historian”.

- Ask, “Why?”, “When?”, “How?”
- Ask, “Is this source reliable?”

Important Vocabulary Words in the Book

apocalyptic

cattle rustler

cavalry

corps

integrated

prejudiced

regiment

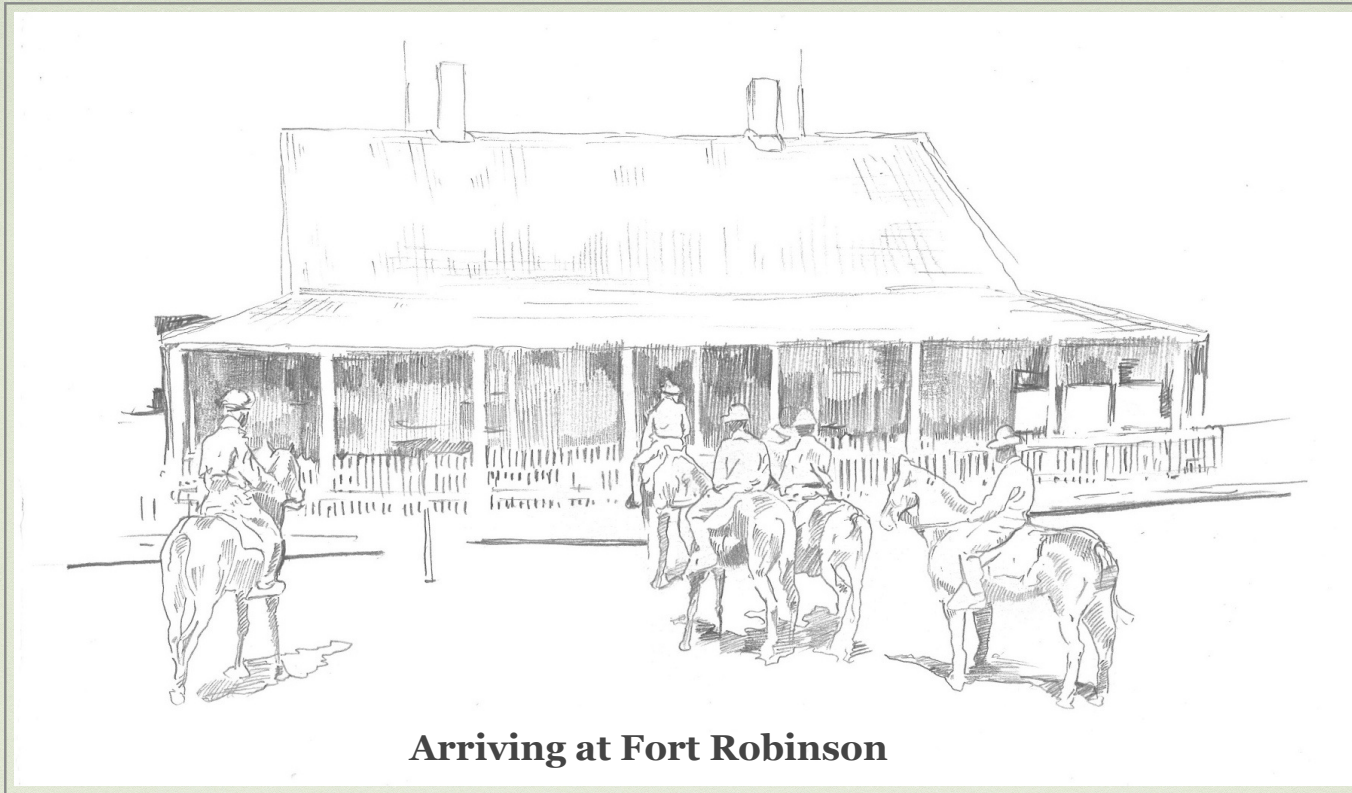
revered

segregated

war path

Enjoy learning about the buffalo soldiers!

LEGENDS OF THE NAME: BUFFALO SOLDIERS IN NEBRASKA

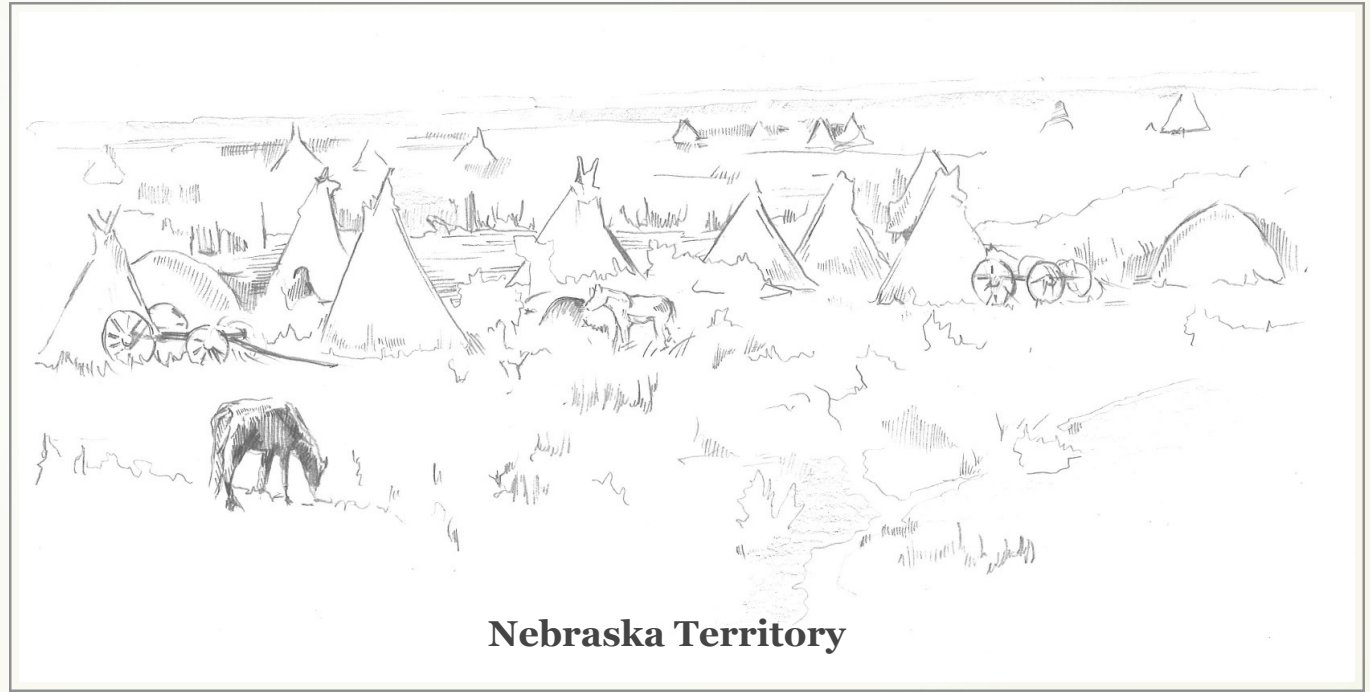


In the summer of 1885, after twelve years of dusty duty in the American Southwest, the first soldiers of the Ninth **Cavalry** of the United States Army arrived in Nebraska. These troops, the first entirely African American **regiments** in the Army, were battle-tested veterans of the “Indian Wars.” For the last twenty years they had represented the United States Government in its unending **migration** west across the continent.

Did You Know...

1. ... that an 1866 act of Congress created six all African American Army regiments?
2. ... the 9th Cavalry began in Louisiana?
3. ... the 10th Cavalry began at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas?
4. ... the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st Infantry Regiments were located in the Southwest United States?
5. ... "William Cathay" was actually a woman that disguised herself as a man to serve as a buffalo soldier? She was the only woman to be a buffalo soldier at that time.

Why Buffalo Soldiers?



Nebraska Territory

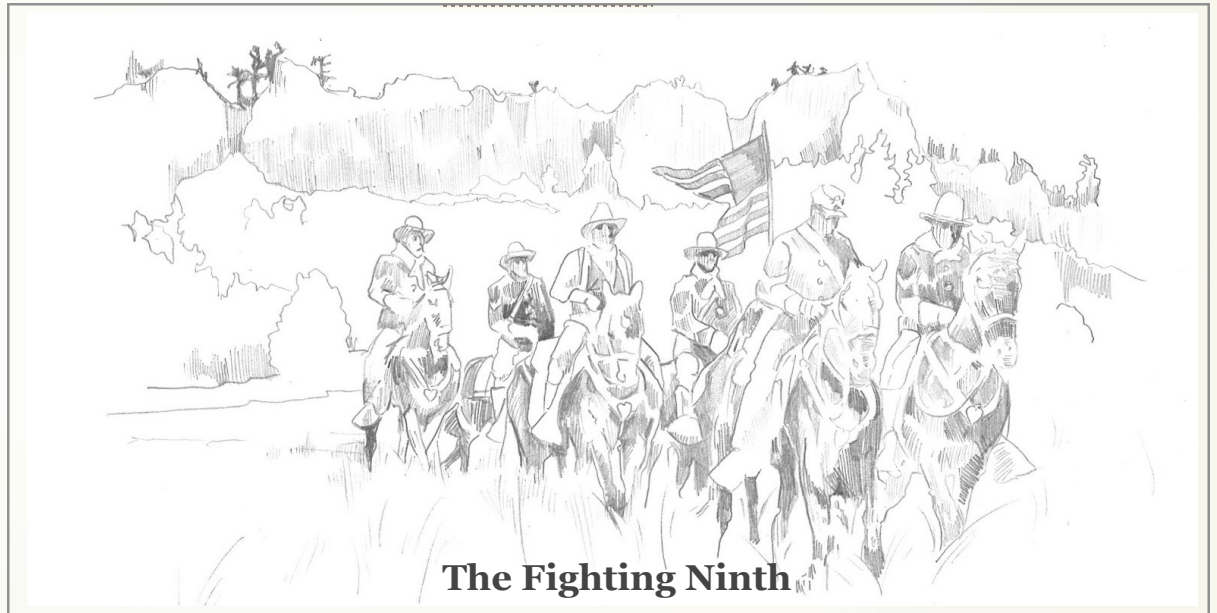
They earned the name “Buffalo Soldiers” during their contact and conflict with the Native American peoples who had struggled to preserve their ancestral lands and ways against the westward rush of American settlers. Some say the Comanche and Cheyenne respected

the powerful courage of these Black soldiers they had fought for so long. They saw the nobility and beauty of the buffalo in these fierce men, but the two groups generally did not look on one another kindly. They were on opposite sides of a heartbreaking time in history.

The Cavalry Has Arrived!

Did You Know...

1. ... the main reason the Buffalo Soldier regiments were created was to protect settlers as they moved west and to support the westward expansion by constructing buildings, roads and power supplies needed for the operation of new settlements?



Photograph of a Buffalo Soldier.
Courtesy of History Nebraska.

When the “fighting Ninth” arrived in Nebraska, the majority were posted to Fort Robinson, in the far northwestern corner of the state, just outside the frontier town of Crawford. A smaller group was sent to Fort Niobrara, 170 miles to the east, where they were to keep watch on the

Rosebud reservation. These soldiers were combat veterans who had fought from the Southern Plains to the Sonoran Desert.

• Life in the Barracks •



They were tough enough to handle the hard life of the frontier forts, which were remote and lonely places. At night the soldiers only had candles for light and iron stoves for heat, and their mattresses were filled with straw.

They had no running water and no privacy. The War Department expected its soldiers to bathe once a week, but Forts Robinson and Niobrara had no bathrooms!

Did You Know...

1. ...hardtack was issued to the Civil War soldiers, soaked in water and fried in pork fat as food rations.
2. you can make your own hardtack? Here is an easy recipe you can make at home!

Hardtack

How to make Hardtack

You will need:

5 cups flour

2 cups water

4 teaspoons salt

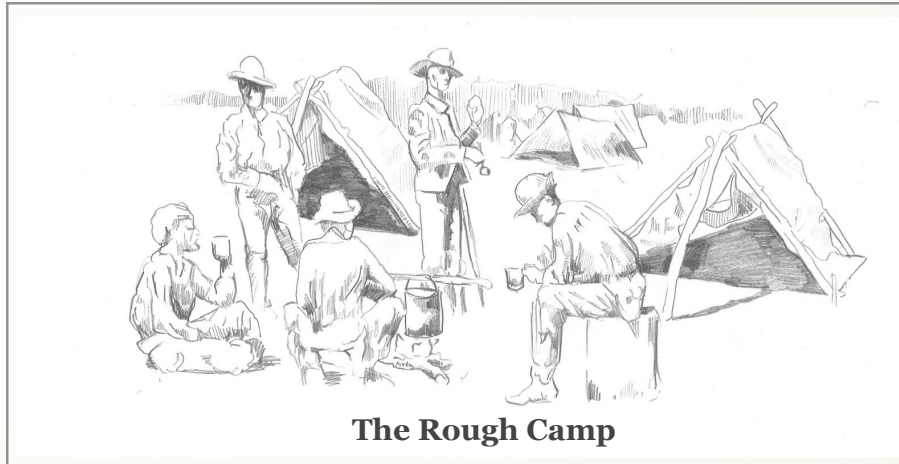
cookie sheet

mixing bowl

oven, preheated to 375°

cook for 30 minutes

Beans and Hard Work



The Rough Camp

Their food was simple—beans, bacon, flour, coffee, coarse bread, cheap beef, and **hardtack**, a dark, stale cracker. In addition to grim conditions, the soldiers often had to perform “fatigue duty” such as building roads and bridges, cutting wood, cleaning stables, and filling barrels full of water. This last chore was especially difficult in winter, when water froze, and they had to saw ice into chunks to get it to melt. These tasks were made harder by the circumstances surrounding them—the buffalo soldiers had to manage

a variety of groups: Native Americans upset about the continual loss of their land, horse thieves and **cattle rustlers**, greedy land barons, **prejudiced** white commanders, land-hungry homesteaders, and the always unpredictable Nebraska weather.

• Family •

Did You Know...

...families of buffalo soldiers of the 25th Infantry in Fort Lawton, Washington often arrived to the fort making up 1/3 of the population of Seattle. (1910)

Families were an important part of everyday life! Many soldiers of various ranks brought their families with them when they were stationed in the West.

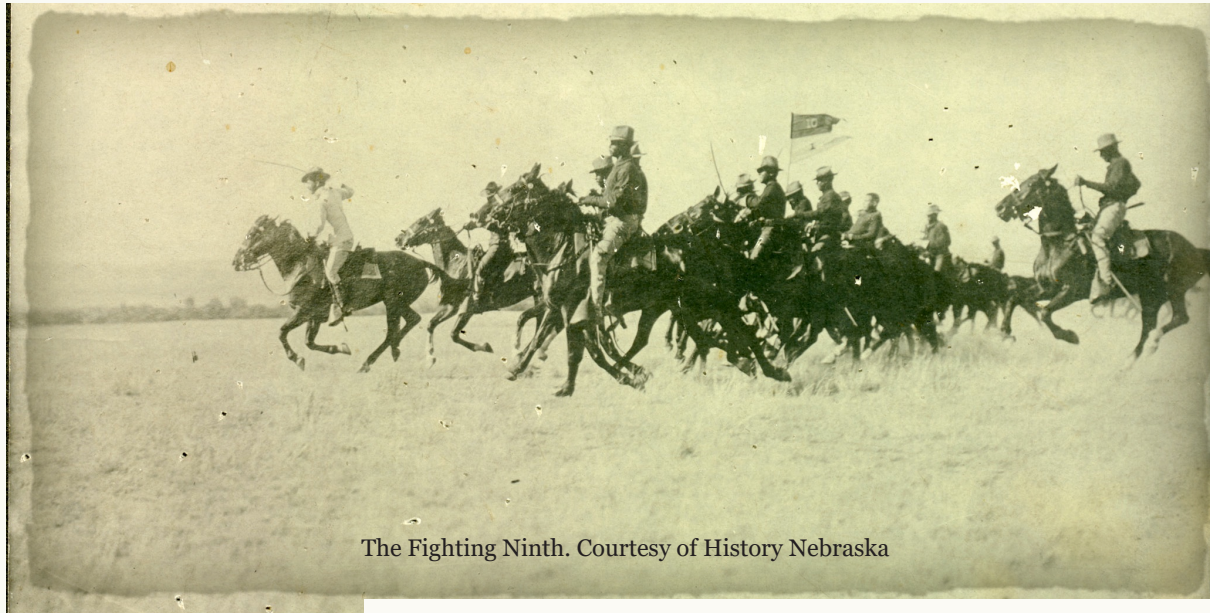


Madge Bailey, wife of 9th Cavalry Troop at Fort Robinson.

Courtesy of the Great Plains Black Museum



Tension Builds



The Fighting Ninth. Courtesy of History Nebraska

Fort Robinson was more racially mixed than other forts, but relations were strained. Not only was each company led by a white officer, but the few black officers were excluded from officers' social gatherings. Still, no serious violence ever erupted between the black cavalymen and the white infantrymen forming the garrison. These sometimes tense communities found ways to

entertain themselves on the plains: the soldiers fielded baseball and football teams, competed in track and field events, boxed, raced horses, and played polo. They competed against each other as well as with teams from Crawford, Sidney, and other western towns. The buffalo soldiers were known as fine athletes, and Fort Robinson's baseball team defeated Fort Niobrara's team 21-20 in 1889.

Recreational Time

Did You Know...

1. ... the 25th Infantry Regiment were champion baseball players and was rated the best non-professional team in the country?
2. ... that only in the Army could African Americans compete against whites in athletics?



African American football team. 10th Cavalry, Ft. Robinson
Courtesy of History Nebraska

In addition to sports, troopers and their families picnicked and hunted small game. They formed social clubs and bands and held big holiday meals. Thousands of people visited the nearby town of Crawford to see a giant tug of war: “Tenth Cavalry Against the World.” During the 1897 Independence Day celebration, the 25th Infantry’s experimental bicycle **corps** pedaled through town on their way from Montana to St. Louis. The

buffalo soldiers were legends in ways great and small.

Yet tensions between the soldiers of Fort Robinson and the settlers of nearby Crawford were high. Crawford, crawling with saloons and gambling dens, was known as “the stinkpot of northwest Nebraska.” Troopers had been beaten with six-shooters and had pistols drawn on them. Still, there was a small, close-knit Black community in Crawford.

War on the Plains



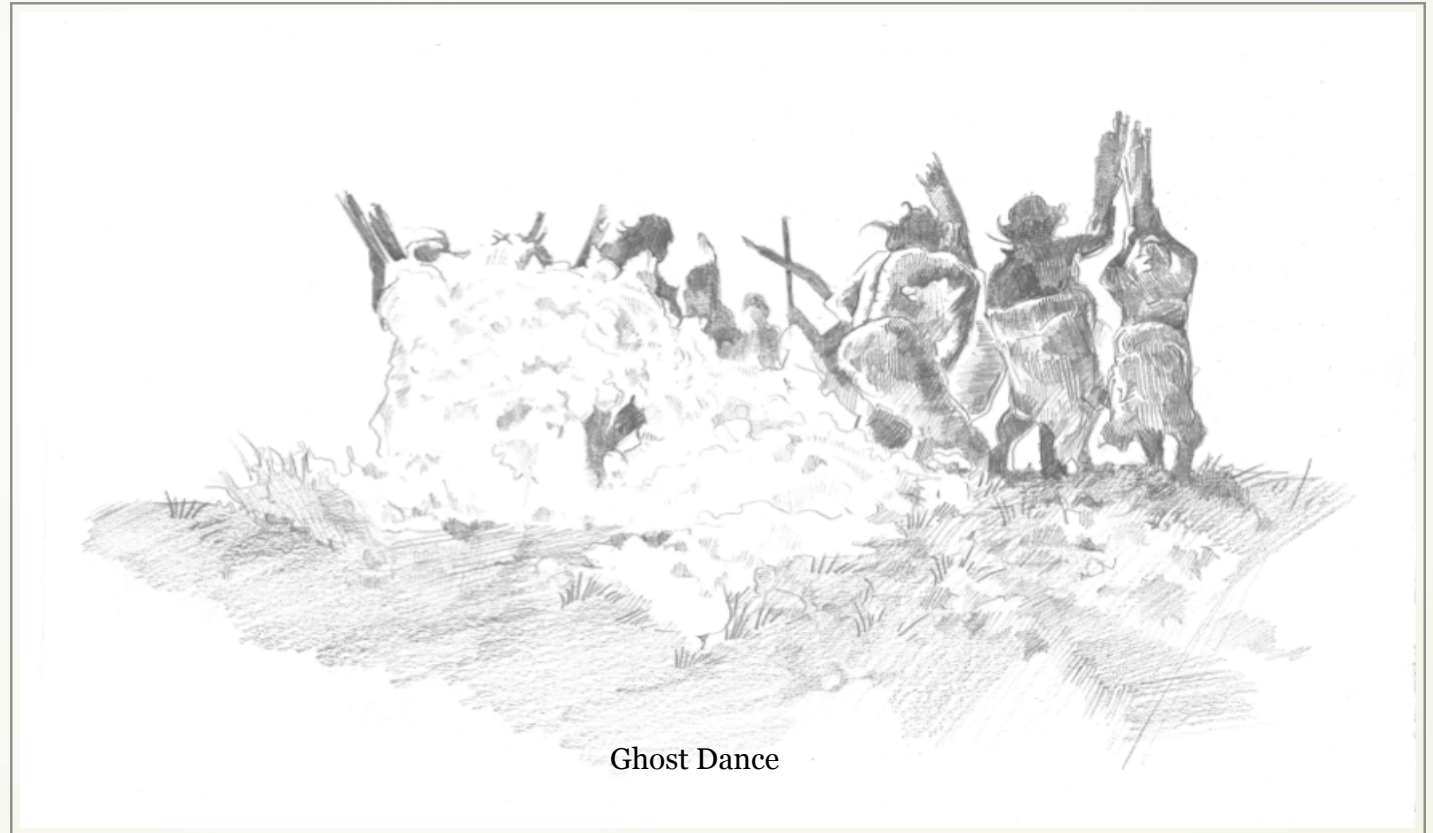
9th Cav Camp at Wounded Knee, S.D.
Western History/Genealogy
Department, Denver Public Library



Pine Ridge Agency, S.D. Trooper,
Buffalo Soldier Corporal
Western History/Genealogy
Department, Denver Public Library



Pine Ridge Agency S.D., Indian Dance
Western History/Genealogy
Department, Denver Public Library



Ghost Dance

Life on and off the post was difficult. In the winter of 1890, starving Teton Sioux on the Pine Ridge reservation began to practice an **apocalyptic** religious ritual, the Ghost Dance, in the hopes that the settlers would

disappear and Native land and buffalo would return. 1,400 US soldiers were sent to surround them, with the Ninth arriving first. A soldier said, “It was so cold the spit froze when it left your mouth.”

On December 29th, the Ninth were just settling down to sleep when word came of the massacre at Wounded Knee, north of Pine Ridge. They left behind a small group to escort their wagons, and Major Guy Henry led the rest of the Ninth on a forced overnight march 44 miles to Pine Ridge, reaching it at six in the morning on a bitterly cold day.

As they prepared to sleep after the long march, Corporal William Wilson galloped into camp. Two miles north a large band of Lakotas had killed a trooper and sieged the circled wagons. Henry's weary troops rode to the battle, where they drove off the attackers.

Meanwhile, Lakotas had set fire to a cabin at Drexel Mission, a Catholic sanctuary four miles north of Pine Ridge. The Seventh Cavalry, sent to investigate, became trapped in a box canyon by gunmen on the bluffs. At noon Henry's troops reached the mission and routed the Lakotas. The march of the buffalo soldiers on December 29th

and 30th has gone down in history as "Henry's Ride"—it covered 102 miles in 30 hours and saved the Seventh Cavalry from certain disaster. The toughness it took to ride and fight in rough

country during extreme winter weather speaks to the bravery of the buffalo soldiers.



Chief Red Cloud
Western History/Genealogy
Department,
Denver Public Library

As the conflict ebbed the Ninth was ordered to stay in Pine Ridge to keep the fragile peace. Buffalo soldiers remained in their tents for six months during one of the

hardest winters ever encountered, with the thermometer ranging anywhere from 10 to 40 degrees below zero...and Sioux Indians on the **war path**. One soldier wrote, "Horses do not complain, for they can't, and men do not, for it would make no difference."

Did You Know...

...Prince Jerger Okoudek, a Zulu Prince, enlisted in the American Army in 1899 for three years. He was a part of the buffalo soldiers that marched up San Juan Hill and then was stationed at Fort Alcatraz. He was known as Private Thomas W. Taylor of Company H, 24th Regiment.

Buffalo soldiers after the Indian Wars



Lt. John H. Alexander. 2nd black grad, West point, 1887. Served at Ft. Robinson c. 1890. Died in 1894. Courtesy of History Nebraska.

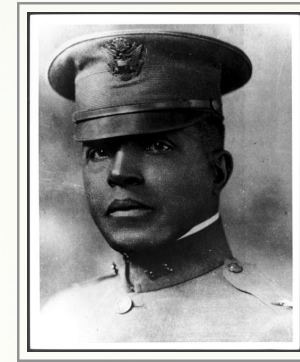
Corporal Wilson, who had made the dangerous ride to warn Major Henry, was awarded a Congressional Medal of Honor. Overall, ten buffalo soldier Medal of Honor winners served at Fort Robinson, as well as John Alexander, the second black

graduate of the US Military Academy, and Henry Plummer, the first African American Army Chaplain. After they left Nebraska, buffalo soldiers distinguished themselves in Cuba and the Philippines, fighting in the Spanish-

American War, and in Mexico, where they chased and defeated the revolutionary Pancho Villa.

Many buffalo soldiers remained in northwestern Nebraska at the end of their service. For example, trooper Caleb Benson lived in Crawford until 1937. Retired soldiers also found work at the O-4 ranch outside Fort Robinson. Though housing and some businesses were **segregated**, they found ways to live among the white settlers. Others moved to Omaha. In 1898, six veterans lived in one neighborhood.

In 1951 the last buffalo soldier units were disbanded as the army finally **integrated**. They had left Nebraska long before, but the effort, courage, and nobility they exhibited there prepared them well for the trials they were to face. They also helped teach a troubled nation the value and dignity of its African American citizens. For these and many other reasons, the buffalo soldiers will always be remembered and **revered**.



2nd Lt. Charles Young. 3rd black grad, West point, 1887.
Served at Ft. Robinson c. 1890. Courtesy of History Nebraska.



Chaplain Henry V. Plummer. Courtesy of History Nebraska.

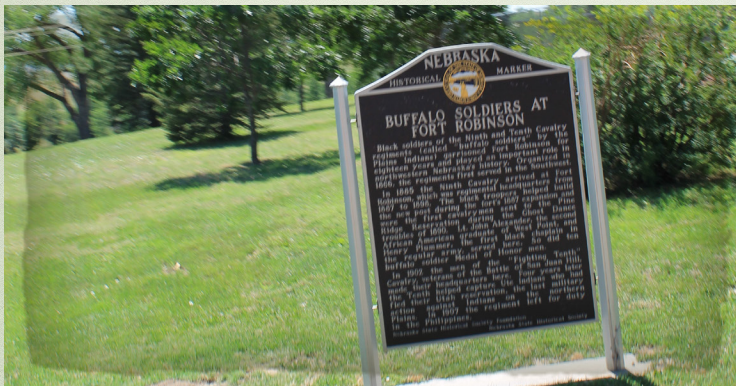
• CHAPTER 2 •

NOW WHAT CAN I DO?

The next several pages will provide you with activities to use your critical thinking skills. Private W.H. Prather wrote a poem about his experience being a buffalo soldier. Can you help him with a title to give his audience a feel for what he felt? The second activity will provide you with an actual letter an officer wrote about unfair actions toward him. Finally, you will have an opportunity to observe and analyze two photographs and try to put yourself in a soldier's shoes. Enjoy working with the primary documents about buffalo soldiers!



Pine Ridge Agency, S.D. Trooper, Buffalo Soldier Corporal
Western History/Genealogy Department,
Denver Public Library



Buffalo Soldiers Marker located at Fort Robinson today.
Photo by H. Payne



Courtesy of the Great Plains Black History Museum

Activity

1. Read the poem.
2. Read the poem again thinking about each stanza.
3. In the poem, the poet talks about how the 9th is treated differently from the white soldiers that have left the fort. Discuss why they were they treated differently.
4. Give the poem a title. Explain the reasoning for the title.
5. Rewrite the poem and create an illustration to accompany the poem.

Poetry

Untitled

**The rest have gone home,
To meet the blizzard's wintry blast.
The Ninth, the willing Ninth,
Is camped here till the last.**

**We were the first to come,
Will be the last to leave
Why are we compelled to stay,
Why this reward receive?**

**In warm barracks
Our recent comrades take their ease,
While we poor devils,
And the Sioux are left to freeze**

**And cuss our luck,
And wait till some one pulls the string,
And starts Short Bull
With another ghost dance in the spring.**

Written by Private W. H. Prather

1891 issue of Army and Navy Journal.
Before 1923 : public domain due to copyright expiration.

A Picture is Worth A Thousand Words

Activity

Take a close look at the photo with your partner. Discuss your answers to the questions below.

Be ready to discuss your findings with the rest of the class.

1. Who created this document?
2. Where does your eye go first?
3. What do you see that you didn't expect?
4. Put yourself in his boots. What might this soldier be thinking as this picture is being taken?



5. What does his facial expression say? What does the way he is standing say?

6. What information is there and what additional information do you need to figure out when this photo was taken?

7. What was the purpose in making this primary source?

8. Who is the audience?

9. How could you find out more information about this man without his name?

Photograph of a Buffalo Soldier.
Courtesy of History Nebraska.



Photograph of a Buffalo soldier and his family.
Courtesy of History Nebraska.

Activity

Take a close at the photo with your partner and discuss your answers to the questions below.

Be ready to discuss your findings with the rest of the class.

1. Where does your eye go first?
2. What do you see that you didn't expect?
3. Put yourself in the shoes of the young girl in the center of the photograph. What does her facial expression say? What might she be thinking?
4. What was the purpose in making this primary source?
5. Who is the audience?
6. Find similarities and differences between the photo on this page and the photo on the previous page.

What Happened to Lt. Henry O. Flipper?

Letter to U.S. House of Representatives

HENRY O. FLIPPER,
MEMBER "ASSOCIATION OF CIVIL ENGINEERS OF ARIZONA,"
DEPUTY U. S. MINERAL SUPERVISOR,
CONSULTATIONS ON MEXICAN LAND AND MINING LAWS
MEXICAN JURISDICTION.

Santa Fe, New Mexico,
October 23, 1898.

Hon. John A. T. Hull,
Des Moines, Iowa.

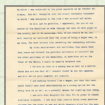
Dear Sir:

I send you, in this mail and under separate cover, a printed copy of the Brief I have prepared in my case under Bill, H. R. 9649, which was so kindly introduced in the House for me by the Hon. Michael Griffin, at the last session of Congress.

In May last I submitted to you and to the members of the Sub-Committee a type-written copy of a Brief I had hastily prepared in Washington. I have carefully rewritten and revised that Brief and now send you a copy for your perusal and consideration.

In coming to Congress with my case, I do so because there is no individual or other tribunal to which I can go, no official or other official body with power to review the case and grant or refuse my petition. In coming to you, to the Committee and to Congress, I do not ask that aught be done for me from motives of mere sympathy and yet I cannot help feeling that all of us can and do sympathize with those who have been wronged. I am sure that, after reading my Brief through, you will understand and appreciate the struggle I made to rise above the station to which I was born, how I won my way through West Point and how I made an honorable record in the Army as any officer in it, in spite of

Lt. Flipper wrote a letter to a Congressman asking that his name be cleared by Congress



Lt. Henry O. Flipper's Quest for Justice:

Henry Flipper served at Fort Davis in 1881 and serious charges were filed against him. He was court-martialed from the United States Army after his commanding officer accused him of embezzling about \$3,000 from the commissary funds. "Not Guilty" was the decision but he was convicted of "Conduct unbecoming an officer" which ordered that he be dismissed from the Army. Henry fought the charge and worked very hard to prove the charges were wrong and to clear

his name. He did this as he pursued a career as an expert on Mexican and Spanish land law in addition to being an engineer.

A bill (1898) to reinstate Henry Flipper back into the Army with the rank he had when he was originally discharged was introduced by Congress. He sent a letter to Congressman John A. T. Hull, who was the chairman of the House Committee on Military Affairs, stating that every American citizen has a right to justice.



Letter from Lt. Henry O. Flipper to Representative John A. T. Hull, October 23, 1898
Center for Legislative Archives, Records of the U.S. House of Representatives National Archives and Records Administration
Reproduced with the permission of the U.S. House of Representatives

[Look on the next page for directions for the activity.](#)

Directions

1. With a partner, read the information on the previous page about Lt. Henry O. Flipper.
2. Below, read the excerpt from the letter he wrote to the House of Representatives.
3. Review the information on the “Written Document Analysis Worksheet.”
4. On another sheet of paper, write your answers to the questions.
5. Be ready to present this information to the class.

Excerpt from Lt. Flipper’s 1898 letter

I believe my case is a strong one as well as a meritorious one and one that will commend itself to you for approval and will enlist your sympathy and support.

I ask nothing because I am a Negro, yet that fact must press itself upon your consideration as a strong motive for the wrong done me as well as a powerful reason for righting that wrong.

I ask only what Congress has seen fit to grant to others similarly situated. I ask only that justice which every American citizen has the right to ask and which Congress alone has the power to grant.

Written Document Analysis Worksheet

Type of document

Newspaper	Map	Advertisement
Letter	Telegram	Press Release

What unique physical qualities do you notice about this document?

Who created the document?

What is their position or title?

For what audience was the document written?

List three things the author said that you think are important.

Why was the document written?

List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written.

Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document.

CHAPTER 3

Meet...



Tegwin



Todd



Watie

Todd Robinson



Author

A fifth-generation Nebraskan, Todd Robinson teaches in the Writer's Workshop at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. His first book of poetry, *Note at Heart Rock*, was published by Main Street Rag Press in 2012. He holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and his writing has appeared in *The Prairie Schooner*, *Sugar House Review*, *The Lincoln Journal-Star*, *The Southeast Review*, *Midwest Quarterly*, *Natural Bridge*, and *Hospital Drive*.

Watie White



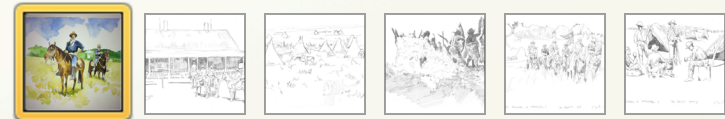
Artist

Watie White was born in 1971 of itinerant cultural anthropologists in Palo Alto, CA. Eventually, settling in rural Southern Illinois, he worked at the family business, Ancient Lifeways Institute, until attending Carleton College (BA, 1993). Degrees followed at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (BFA, 1999) and American University (MFA, 2003).

He currently works as a painter and printmaker based in Omaha, Nebraska. Before moving to Omaha in 2006, he was integrally involved in the Chicago Printmakers Collaborative, as well as an adjunct faculty member of DePaul University in Chicago, IL.

Watie's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including the Schopf Gallery in Chicago, IL, 5+5 in Brooklyn, NY and the DokHouse Gallery in Amsterdam. His work has also been featured in several publications, including New American Paintings, Almagre,

Check out Watie's work from this book!



OYEZ Review, Omaha Magazine and the Omaha World-Herald. He is a 2002 recipient of the Stanley G. Wolpoff Award from American University, a 2013 Nebraska Arts Council Merit Award winner and a recent recipient of a Mid-America Arts Alliance "Artistic Innovations" grant.

Tegwin Turner



Producer

For 25 1/2 years, I have been teaching elementary students in the Omaha Public Schools and Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, KY. I know you are thinking, "Wow! that's a loooong time!" The years have gone by quickly, but I have learned much from my first-fifth grade students! I earned my B.S. in Elementary Education from UNL, my Masters of Science in Curriculum Instruction/Instructional Technology from Peru State College and just finished my Masters of Art in Historical Studies from Nebraska Wesleyan. "Whoo Hoooo!!!" It is my belief that each day is an opportunity for learning especially when you pay attention to the events around you.

Education is so extremely important to me. Because of my love for learning, I try to share that love with my students. I want my students to be analytical thinkers, better problem solvers, thirsting for knowledge and being responsible citizens prepared for what is ahead of them. Together we can accomplish these goals through hard work and having fun at the same time. I am enthusiastic for another outstanding year educating young minds.

Glossary of Terms

Apocalyptic

a p o c a l y p t i c

Adj.

Resembling the end of the world.

Origin: Greek

Synonyms: mass destruction,
Armageddon, annihilation

Cattle rustlers

cat tle rust lers

n.

A person that steels livestock

Synonym: horse thief

Cavalry

cav al ry

n.

Soldiers who fought on horseback
in the past; Soldiers who fought in
armored vehicles.

Origin:Latin

Corps

corps (kor)

n.

A branch of a military organization
assigned to a particular kind of
work. (Army Medical Corps)

Origin:Latin

Integrated

in te grat ed

verb

Bring people or groups with particular characteristics or needs into equal participation in or membership of a social group or institution

Origin: Latin

Synonym: combine

Migration

mi gra tion

n.

Movement of people to a new area or country in order to find work or better living conditions.

Prejudiced

prej u diced

Adj.

An unfair feeling of dislike for a person or group because of race, gender, religion, etc.

Origin: Latin

Synonym: disfavor

Regiments

reg i ments

n.

A group of soldiers.

Origin: Latin

Revered

re vered

verb

Felt deep respect or admiration for

Origin: Latin

Synonym: esteem, value, prize

Segregated

seg re gat ed

verb

Separates or divided (people, activities, or institutions) along racial lines

Origin: Latin

Synonym: single out, divide, isolate

War path

Adj.

Angry and ready to fight with, criticize, or punish someone

Synonym: furious, bent out of shape, violent

Notes

• Special Acknowledgements •

This book created in partnership with



Directed by: Emily Brush

Edited by: Dr. Jared Leighton

Historical Consultant: Dr. Patrick Jones

Special thanks to Harris Payne and Barry Thomas

Making Invisible Histories Visible is an initiative of the Omaha Public Schools

All rights reserved by their respective owners. Any use of these materials without permission is prohibited.

Photographs Courtesy of:

History Nebraska

National Archives, Western History/Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library

Great Plains Black History Museum

Harris Payne