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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.

LEGENDS OF THE NAME:
BUFFALO SOLDIERS IN NEBRASKA

WRITTEN BY TODD ROBINSON
ILLUSTRATED BY WATIE WHITE
PRODUCED BY TEGWIN TURNER
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Put your thinking caps on!

Always try to “Think Like a Historian”.

- 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!
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.
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.
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.

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?

The Cavalry Has Arrived!

The Fighting Ninth

Photograph of a Buffalo Soldier. Courtesy of History Nebraska.
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!
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.
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
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 cavalrymen 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.
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.

**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?
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.

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.”
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-

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.
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.
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!
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 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

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.

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.
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.
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 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.
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 command 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.
CHAPTER 3

Meet...

Tegwin

Todd

Watie
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 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, 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.
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 poc a lyp tic
Adj.
Resembling the end of the world.
Origin: Greek
Synonyms: mass destruction, Armageddon, annihilation

**Cattle rustlers**
cat tle rust lers
n.
A person that steals 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

**Prejudiced**
prej u dic ed
Adj.
An unfair feeling of dislike for a person or group because of race, gender, religion, etc.
Origin: Latin
Synonym: disfavor

**Migration**
mi gra tion
n.
Movement of people to a new area or country in order to find work or better living conditions.

**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
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