

# Buffalo Soldiers

**Buffalo Soldiers** originally were members of the U.S. 10th Cavalry Regiment of the United States Army, formed on September 21, 1866 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. This nickname was given to the "Negro Cavalry" by the Native American tribes they fought in the Indian Wars. The term eventually became synonymous with all of the African American regiments formed in 1866:

- 9th Cavalry Regiment
- 10th Cavalry Regiment
- 24th Infantry Regiment
- 25th Infantry Regiment

Although several African American regiments were raised during the Civil War as part of the Union Army (including the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry and the many United States Colored Troops Regiments), the "Buffalo Soldiers" were established by Congress as the first peacetime all-black regiments in the regular U.S. Army. On September 6, 2005, Mark Matthews, who was the oldest living Buffalo Soldier, died at the age of 111. He was buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Originally part of the U.S. 10th Cavalry Regiment, the Buffalo Soldiers became a separate group on September 21, 1866. This occasion took place at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Native American tribes nicknamed the African American soldiers of the 10th Cavalry Regiment "Buffalo Soldiers." In time all U.S. regiments formed of African American soldiers during that time became known as Buffalo Soldiers, which included the 9th and 10th Cavalry, and the 24th and 25th Infantry, Regiments. The Buffalo Soldiers were active between 1866 and 1951.

The United States Congress declared the Buffalo Soldiers as peacetime regiments consisting of African Americans only and being part of the regular U.S. Army. Six regiments were authorized to be manned by black soldiers but by 1869, there was a downsizing of all troops and the black regiments were cut down to two Infantry regiments and two cavalry regiments.

## Buffalo Soldiers in The Civil War

Buffalo Soldiers were instrumental in the American Civil War. They were mostly stationed at posts within the Great Plains as well as the Southwestern regions of the

nation. These soldiers fought bravely against the Indians and a total of nineteen Medals of Honor were earned by them. Some of the battles of the buffalo Soldiers and their predecessors included the fight at Cabin Creek and at Honey Springs in the summer of 1863/64 and the Red River War in 1875.

The first black soldier to graduate from West Point, in 1877, was Henry O. Flipper. He became the commander of the 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment at Fort Sill, which lay in Indian Territory.

Part of the duties of Buffalo soldiers, aside from engaging in battle, was protecting the civilized Indian tribes on the reservations. They also were keepers of law and order in general and they were active in building roads and military structures.

The oldest Buffalo Soldier, Mark Matthews, died on September 6, 2005. He is interred at Arlington National Cemetery. He was 111 years old.