

THE FIGHTING TENTH CAVALRY:
BLACK SOLDIERS IN THE
UNITED STATES ARMY
1892-1918

By

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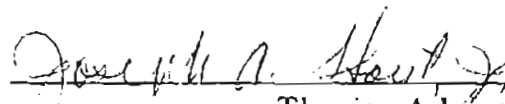
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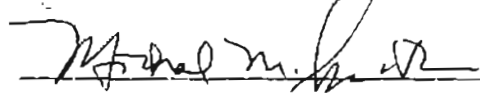
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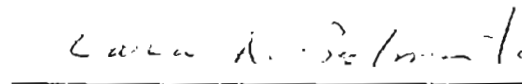
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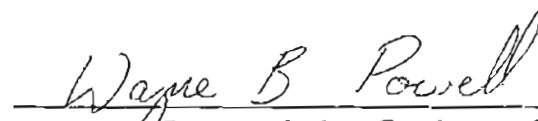
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PREFACE

On August 4, 1891, Colonel J. K. Mizner, the commanding officer of the Tenth United States Cavalry Regiment, asked the Adjutant General of the army to transfer the Tenth Cavalry from Arizona "to a northern climate." For over twenty years, the Colonel complained, the Tenth had served in the Southwest, performing the most difficult field service of any regiment in the army and living in the worst forts in the country. No other cavalry regiment had "been subject to so great an amount of hard, fatigueing and continueing [sic]" service as the Tenth, service that entitled it "to as good stations as can be assigned." Mizner challenged the Adjutant General to make his decision based on "just consideration" and not to discriminate against the Tenth "on account of the color of the enlisted men."

As one of four regiments in the post-Civil War Army composed entirely of black enlisted men, discrimination was a problem the Tenth Cavalry constantly faced. Whether it was poor horses and equipment, inferior posts and assignments, or the hostility of the white communities the regiment protected, racial prejudice was an inescapable part of the regiment's daily life. Despite this racism, the regiment compiled an enviable record of service and played a major role in the final conquest of the American West. The excellent performance of the black men who served in the regiment, and in the other three black regiments, was beyond the

expectations of even their most ardent supporters and earned from the Indians against whom they fought the nickname "buffalo soldiers."

The general public is aware of the service of the black regiments between 1866-1891, as this period has most often received the scrutiny of historians. But the Tenth Cavalry continued to serve the army beyond the end of the Old West. In 1892, the regiment was finally transferred out of the Southwest, as Colonel Mizner requested, and it was sent to Montana. This marked a definite break with the past, for this ended the regiment's effective isolation from the rest of the nation, and its service began to receive some recognition from the American public. From 1892 to 1918, the Tenth Cavalry was a visible part of the United States army; it participated in some of the army's most publicized events and proved its worth in combat. However, despite its success the regiment faced increasing racism and hostility from many white Americans. The years between 1892 and 1918 proved to be the Tenth Cavalry's most interesting period of service.

By 1898, the Tenth Cavalry had spent six relatively peaceful years in Montana. That year the Spanish American War began. The Tenth played a prominent role in this conflict--participating in the invasion of Cuba and charging up San Juan Hill--and performed brilliantly. Its performance won the praise and the respect of the American public and also earned the regiment another nickname: "the fighting Tenth Cavalry." Wherever the regiment went over the next twenty years, white and black Americans would know it by this name.²

During this period, the Tenth served in Cuba, the Philippines (twice), Nebraska, Vermont, and, finally, back in Arizona. The regiment fought in the Philippine Insurrection, the Mexican Punitive Expedition, and the Battle of Nogales in 1918, its last combat action. In all of these wars, insurrections, expeditions, and battles, the Tenth's performance was excellent, and it became one of the army's most experienced and capable regiments. The black enlisted men demonstrated that they were proficient soldiers and had the ability to serve as commissioned officers.

Despite this record, the Tenth could not escape the racial prejudice that was so prominent during this era. Many white Americans praised the regiment, but just as many continued to discriminate against it because of the color of the enlisted men's skin. Wherever the Tenth was stationed, it met with some form of racism, whether it was suspicion, poor barracks, or Jim Crow. The army refused to commission deserving black enlisted men, believing they lacked the intelligence and character necessary. Success in combat would not bring equal treatment.

The men of the Tenth Cavalry persevered. The recruits who joined the regiment were first-rate soldiers, but after the 1890's their education was superior to that of the men who first formed its ranks. These soldiers continued to have pride in their unit and to perform "the arduous duties" the army assigned. They still hoped, as Sergeant Major Eugene P. Frierson wrote in 1914, that "the day is not far distant when the colored soldiers of America will receive their just recompense for the noble part they have played" in the United States army.³

Over the last thirty years, historians have published many studies on the black army regiments that served in the post-Civil War army, but few have focused on the years from 1892 to 1918. William Leckie's book on the two black cavalry regiments, *The Buffalo Soldiers*, covered only the period between 1866 and 1891. He argues that the black regiments made a significant contribution to the settlement of the West despite the prejudice and discrimination they faced.⁴ Arlen Fowler advances the same argument and covers roughly the same time period in his study of the two black infantry regiments, *The Black Infantry in the West*.⁵ John Carroll's *The Black Military Experience in the West*, a collection of essays and journal articles, also focuses on the pre-1892 period, but this work contains a few articles on the service of black soldiers along the United States-Mexican border from 1916 to 1918.⁶

Among the authors who have examined the period between 1892 and 1918 is Marvin Fletcher in *The Black Soldier and Officer in the United States Army*. Fletcher generally surveys the experiences of all four black regiments in the regular army and the black volunteer regiments that served in the army during the Spanish American War and Philippine Insurrection. He argues that, despite the excellent performance of blacks in combat, black soldiers faced increasing racism that eventually limited their use in future conflicts.⁷ Garna L. Christian's *Black Soldiers in Jim Crow Texas* examined the relationship between black soldiers and the white towns where they were stationed. He argues that the growing assertiveness of black soldiers, who still hoped to achieve full

citizenship, collided with the growing discrimination and Jim Crow laws of Texas to create violent, racial clashes.⁸

The present study builds upon these previous works by examining specifically the Tenth Cavalry during the period from 1892 to 1918. A closer study of the Tenth Cavalry shows how the daily activities of the regiment affected the public's perception and treatment of that one regiment. Such a study also allows some insights into the experiences and attitudes of the men who served in this regiment. Finally, this thesis demonstrates how racism in the army affected the careers of the black enlisted men and officers, helps explain the role that black soldiers played in the history of the United States army, and shows how that segment of the American public that had any dealings with these black troopers viewed them and their contributions.

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Chapter 1

The Friendless Tenth

Black Americans fought in both the American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, serving with distinction and proving their courage and ability in battle. During the Revolution, black soldiers fought the British at the Battles of Bunker Hill, Monmouth, and other engagements and were described as "able-bodied, strong and brave fellows." They fought with Andrew Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812 and received praise for their "courage and perseverance."¹

At the end of each conflict, however, the government forgot about their service and denied them a place in the regular army; in February 1820, the War Department issued a general order specifically forbidding the recruitment of blacks. Thus, from the end of the War of 1812 until the Civil War, no black Americans served as soldiers in the army. When the army used them at all it was as "mechanics, laborers, or servants."²

The Civil War changed this attitude toward black soldiers, though this was not immediately apparent. President Abraham Lincoln began the conflict with the intention of ending the rebellion in the southern states. Initially, he was not dedicated to freeing or using slaves in the Union army. The war was not about slavery, as a correspondent of *The New York Times* wrote, but was a conflict

between "the authority of the Constitution and the reckless will of those who seek its destruction."³ Many Union supporters feared that if the North used black soldiers against the South, once this oppressed group had arms, a widespread black rebellion might occur. Thus, despite the fact that thousands of blacks flooded the United States government with "offers to serve in the Union Army," they were not allowed to enlist.⁴

As the war progressed, it became increasingly apparent that the defeat of the South would demand a considerable sacrifice of lives. Some Union officers suggested using black troops. In April 1862, General David Hunter, commanding the Department of the South, organized a black regiment composed of escaped slaves. The Lincoln administration did not approve of this action and ordered Hunter to disband his regiment. Congress took a position on this issue, and on July 17, 1862, passed the Militia Act giving the president the authority to use blacks "for any military or naval service for which they may be found competent." Lincoln did not immediately act on this authorization, but several states, such as Kansas and Louisiana, did enlist black regiments. In October, the 1st Kansas Colored became the first black regiment to see combat in the Civil War when it engaged a band of guerrillas near Butler, Missouri.⁵

By the time of the Butler confrontation, the Lincoln administration had taken its first steps towards the general enlistment of blacks into the Union army. In August 1862, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton ordered Brigadier General Rufus Saxton to begin recruiting black troops in the Sea Islands of South Carolina. A month later, Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation

Proclamation. One of his motives was "to furnish a prelude to the enlistment of black troops," which began in earnest after the proclamation was issued on January 1, 1863.⁶ Among the Proclamation's revolutionary provisions was the authorization "for the induction of blacks into the armed forces."⁷

The use of black soldiers--even in the non-slave holding North--did not meet with universal approval, and the black troops faced many problems. Many white officers refused to serve in black regiments, and in one Ohio division "the men threatened to stack their arms and return home " rather than fight with blacks.⁸ In the Union army, the black regiments faced other forms of discrimination, such as lower pay and the issuance of poorer equipment and provisions than those white soldiers received. Black soldiers had no opportunity to become officers and were often assigned to such tasks as building bridges, digging trenches, and other manual labor rather than fighting. When blacks were sent into combat, they had little training and few doctors.⁹

Despite these disadvantages, blacks enlisted and fought valiantly. By 1865, the Union army had organized sixteen all-black regiments totaling over 180,000 men. The black soldiers saw combat in thirty-nine major battles, and more than 33,000 died.¹⁰ At such places as Miliken's Bend, Louisiana; Fort Wagner, South Carolina; and Petersburg, Virginia; they showed their bravery, ability, and determination, and proved that they belonged in the army. "Let no one speak against the colored soldiers," said one white soldier who fought with blacks at Port Hudson. "They have done some of the best fighting of the campaign."

By the war's end, many white Americans in the North agreed with the statement of one white officer, who said of black soldiers, "They have proven themselves good soldiers, as well as ardent fighters."¹¹ In January 1866, as a consequence of their service during the war, Senator Henry Wilson introduced a bill to "increase and fix the military peace establishment" that included a provision for ten regiments composed entirely of black enlisted men. A majority of the members of Congress favored the idea of using black troops in the regular army, believing that they had earned the right to serve by their performance in the Civil War. Statistics also showed that they were less likely to desert.¹²

Some members of Congress still opposed the use of black troops in the regular army. These congressmen did not want to employ "men of an inferior race" in the army. One such congressman believed the presence of black soldiers "in a community would be a stench in the nostrils of the people." Finally, several congressmen argued that blacks would be taking jobs away from white men.¹³

Despite these arguments, on August 1, 1866, Congress passed a providing bill for the creation of two regiments of cavalry (the 9th and 10th) and four regiments of infantry (the 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st--later all of these were consolidated into the 24th and 25th) composed entirely of black enlisted men. The bill further ordered that the officers of these regiments be white with at least two years' service in either the volunteers or regular army and "have been distinguished for capacity and good conduct in the field."¹⁴

The new black regiments joined a greatly reduced army. In 1865, at the end of the Civil War, more than one million men were

serving in the United States Army, the vast majority of whom were volunteers.¹⁵ These men now wanted to return home. Congress was happy to oblige them because it wanted to cut expenses by reducing the size of the army. In 1867, Congress reduced the army's strength to 56,815. Further troop reductions in 1869 and 1874 set the army's authorized strength at 27,000, though the army never mustered more than 19,000. The army collected this meager force into twelve regiments each of cavalry and artillery and forty-five regiments of infantry. These units were severely depleted due to the undersized strength of the army, and the company, not the regiment, "was the basic tactical unit" the army relied upon in the post-Civil War era.¹⁶

This slender force faced an immense task. It had to garrison the vast American West, guard the United States-Mexican border, protect settlers, fight bandits, and wage war against the remaining American Indians. These duties had to be performed in the desert wastes of the Southwest, the rugged terrain of the Rocky Mountains, and the endless sweep of the Great Plains, terrain which posed unique problems of geography and weather.

The tediousness and nearly constant boredom of frontier duty at isolated posts posed their own problems, which could be even more deadly than combat. The majority of the enlisted men's time was spent on fatigue duty--manual labor. They built quarters, stables, telegraph lines, and wagons and performed such duties as blacksmithing, wood chopping, and hay-making. Discipline was severe, with the smallest infraction bringing such punishments as spread-eagling, confinement in a sweat box, or reduction in rank. Far

more men died of disease than of wounds sustained in combat, with venereal disease, malaria, and respiratory and digestive diseases being the leading causes of death.¹⁷ As compensation for these dangers, enlisted men received only thirteen dollars a month; most of this pay they spent on alcohol and gambling, both of which were chronic problems.¹⁸ Many soldiers gave up entirely on the army, either refusing to re-enlist or deserting. Between 1867 and 1891 one-third of the enlisted men in the army deserted.¹⁹

The most dangerous aspect of a soldier's life was combat, which, when it occurred at all, most often was waged against the remaining native tribes. Over 270,000 Indians, broken into 125 distinct groups, remained in the West, though not all of them were potential opponents. The army had subdued many of them before and during the Civil War, but the most formidable groups still "retained the power and will to contest the westward movement." These tribes included the Sioux, Cheyenne, Commanche, and Kiowa on the Great Plains, the Nez Perce, Ute, and Bannock in the Rocky Mountains, and the Apache in the Southwest. These tribes constituted the army's main opponent in the post-Civil War era.²⁰

These tribes were always formidable in their opposition, a fact recognized by many soldiers. Nelson A. Miles said they had "courage, skill, sagacity, endurance, fortitude, and self-sacrifice of a high order."²¹ The tribes usually fought using guerrilla tactics, such as hit-and-run raids, but they could also employ conventional tactics, as the Sioux did at the Battle of the Rosebud. They were elusive and avoided combat, constantly frustrating pursuing army columns. One officer reported that chasing Apaches "was like a stag-chase in the

hills without hounds."²² The Indians were fierce and ruthless in combat and exalted war. Their societies "rewarded the successful warrior," who fought for the honors of war and defense of home and family.²³ Thus, the Indians continued to fight for traditional reasons and rarely attempted to combine their forces in opposition to white expansion.

In order to fight native tribes as successfully as possible, the army adopted both an offensive and a defensive strategy. The offensive strategy emphasized large-scale campaigns during which columns converged from three or four different directions into the same region. These campaigns usually occurred during the winter months, when the tribes were less mobile as a consequence of severe weather, and frequently resulted in fewer major battles. This approach succeeded in the Southern Plains campaign of 1868-1869, during which George A. Custer wiped out a Cheyenne village on the Washita, and in the Red River War of 1874-1875 that ended Comanche, Kiowa, and Southern Cheyenne resistance to white settlement. This strategy was less successful during the Great Sioux War of 1876-77, when the Sioux annihilated Custer and much of the Seventh Cavalry regiment at the battle of the Little Big Horn.²⁴

Most combat against Indians did not involve large forces, and the army usually adhered to a defensive strategy. The army placed most of its small force in several posts located throughout the West. At posts along the Platte River and Bozeman Trail and across Texas and Kansas, troops were ready to react to any Indian activities. When army troops found and fought Indians, the actions were almost always minor skirmishes involving only a few soldiers or Indians.

but these skirmishes could be intense and dangerous. More often than not, army detachments arrived too late and spent their time fruitlessly tracking an enemy that had vanished. This style of warfare, not the strategy of converging columns, was what most soldiers on the frontier experienced, including the men of the Tenth Cavalry.²⁵

In August 1866, the army organized the Tenth Cavalry at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Its new commanding officer, Colonel Benjamin Grierson, was a former musician who disliked horses but had served heroically as a cavalry officer in the Civil War. His most noted exploit was a six hundred-mile, sixteen-day cavalry raid through Mississippi that played a large role in helping General U. S. Grant capture Vicksburg. During the next twenty-four years as the commander of the Tenth Cavalry, Grierson "insisted on impartial treatment for his men" and ordered his company commanders "not to use the word 'colored' in their reports--the regiment is simply the Tenth Regiment of Cavalry, United States Army."²⁶

Finding other officers to serve in the regiment proved to be difficult. Most white officers avoided service with black regiments, feeling "that blacks were inferior mentally and could not make good soldiers."²⁷ Even though assignment to a black regiment could bring faster promotion, white officers such as Custer and Eugene Carr refused to serve with them.²⁸ Those who did join the regiment did so reluctantly. Assignment to a black regiment was viewed as "a blot on. . . [an officer's] record and an impairment to his standing with his fellow officers," and often meant permanent service at "isolated and disagreeable posts."²⁹ This problem continued to plague the

regiment into the 1870's and 1880's. The highest ranking West Point graduates, who were allowed to choose their assignments based on class standing, regularly avoided service with black regiments, and, as a result, the black regiments received the lowest-ranking cadets.³⁰

Those officers who volunteered for the Tenth Cavalry did so for two reasons. The vast majority hoped to gain faster promotion. In an era when promotion from first lieutenant to major could take twenty-six years, joining a black regiment was the only way for an officer to rise in rank.³¹ Some officers, though, joined out of a sincere desire to promote the social betterment of blacks.³² For whatever reason, officers often remained with the regiment for years or decades. This unusual continuity resulted in a high efficiency and competency in the black regiments officer corps.

All of the officers, with one exception, were white. Second Lieutenant Henry O. Flipper, the first black graduate of West Point in 1877, joined the Tenth Cavalry on New Year's Day, 1878, and was assigned to troop A. His career with the Tenth was short and marred by controversy, and it demonstrated that the army was not ready to accept black officers. In 1880, Flipper was transferred to Fort Davis, Texas, and appointed acting commissary of subsistence. In July, he discovered that commissary funds were missing and tried to conceal this fact until the money could be found. The post commander, Colonel William Shafter, discovered the loss, ordered Flipper's arrest, and confined him "in a windowless six-and-one-half by four-and-one-half-foot cell" in sweltering heat for four days.³³

Flipper's friends raised the necessary funds to pay the total deficit and were surprised when Shafter still brought court-martial

charges against the Lieutenant. The court found Flipper not guilty of embezzlement, but it did find him "guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman" and sentenced him to be dismissed from the army.³⁴ President Chester A. Arthur confirmed the sentence and "tacitly voiced" the "opinion that no . . . [black man] was fit to bear the responsibility and prestige" of an officer in the United States Army.³⁵

Finding enlisted men to serve in the regiment was not a problem, as blacks tried to enlist in considerable numbers. Grierson insisted on taking only "the best material, as the quality is more important than numbers." He especially wanted to find men who could read and write--rare abilities among the men joining the regiment, as most of them were illiterate former slaves. Soldiers needed to be literate so that the positions of non-commissioned officers, clerks, and mechanics could be filled. To find men, recruiting agents were sent into the North, focusing on such cities as Philadelphia, Boston, New York, and Pittsburgh³⁶

Blacks enlisted for a variety of reasons. Many of them were veterans of the colored regiments that fought in the Civil War and had enjoyed the army.³⁷ Madison Bruin "got tired" of going to school in Indiana, so he ran off and joined the army.³⁸ Some men, like Mazique Sanco, joined because they were not "learning enough" and hoped to gain an education from the army.³⁹ Finally, many men joined "because the army afforded an opportunity for social and economic betterment" they could not find in the civilian world.⁴⁰

Despite Grierson's insistence on quality, the men who first joined the Tenth Cavalry brought certain disadvantages that were

the result of the heritage of slavery. Almost all were illiterate, did not have the necessary mechanical skills needed to perform the daily tasks of the regiment, and lacked resourcefulness, initiative, and a sense of responsibility.⁴¹ Officers had to be "fathers and mothers" to the enlisted men and act as "bankers, secretaries, advisers, and judges." The lack of education forced the officers to perform most of the duties of the non-commissioned officers, including writing most reports.⁴² These problems disappeared with time as the enlisted men gained experience, and new better educated recruits joined the regiment.

Despite these problems, the black enlisted men often offered certain advantages over their white peers. They were sometimes more eager to learn, and they were almost always loyal.⁴³ Alcoholism, a problem in most regiments, rarely affected the black troops. They had the lowest desertion rate in the army--one percent in 1868--and the highest re-enlistment rate.⁴⁴ As a result, the professionalism within the regiment was high, with strong unit pride and esprit de corps. Two reasons lay behind this attitude. One, as Secretary of War Redfield Proctor said in 1889, was that "To the colored man the service offers a career."⁴⁵ Second, it provided the opportunity to show what black people could do when given the chance. The black enlisted men believed that blacks throughout the country were "more or less affected by their conduct in the Army."⁴⁶ Thus, they had far more to gain, or lose, by their conduct than did their white counter-parts.

The army was not ready to accept black troops, and Tenth Cavalry troopers faced constant racial discrimination as a result. In

one instance, the commander at Fort Leavenworth, General William Hoffman, who obviously did not respect black soldiers, quartered the regiment on low ground that eventually became a swamp, resulting in many cases of pneumonia among the enlisted men. He also refused to allow them to move. He constantly complained about petty concerns, such as untidy quarters. During inspection, he ordered the Tenth to keep "at least fifteen yards from white troops," and he did not allow them to march in review.⁴⁷

One officer remembered being told "to take my 'Damned hokes,' and camp outside the post." He also recalled that whenever his regiment fought in campaigns with white soldiers, the white regiments received all of the commendations.⁴⁸ The men complained that they performed more than their fair share of fatigue duty. The regiment was constantly assigned to some of the most desolate posts in the country, in places such as West Texas and Southern Arizona, and the army denied its requests for transfer. Officers and men continually complained that they received only "broken down horses and repaired equipment."⁴⁹ This neglect led one officer to label his regiment "the friendless Tenth."⁵⁰

In the 1870's, the army made an attempt to eliminate the black regiments. General William T. Sherman, the Commanding General of the army, wanted to end segregation in the army by enlisting white and black men equally and distributing them among integrated units. He admitted that he preferred white men, but said he would take blacks.⁵¹ In 1877, Senator Ambrose Burnside introduced a bill to end the color distinction made in recruiting enlisted men and assigning them to regiments. White soldiers would be allowed to enlist in the

four regiments currently composed entirely of black troops. Despite Sherman's protest that the army would continue to enlist black men, everyone understood that passage of this bill would end black participation in the army because recruiters would not continue to recruit blacks. The bill died in the Senate, and blacks retained their tenuous position in the army.⁵²

The Tenth Cavalry also faced racism from the civilian populations it was assigned to protect. Racism often manifested itself in violent clashes between black soldiers and white civilians. Several incidents occurred in 1877 while the regiment was stationed at Fort Concho, outside of present-day Saint Angelo, Texas. In one incident, several Texas Rangers pistol-whipped a group of black soldiers in a saloon. The soldiers retaliated by returning to the saloon and shooting up the place, killing an innocent bystander in the process. A few months later, a group of cowboys and hunters cut the chevrons off a sergeant's sleeves and the stripes off his pants. The sergeant returned to Fort Concho, gathered some friends and carbines, and went back into the saloon where he had been humiliated. A gun battle ensued in which one hunter was killed and two others wounded and one soldier was killed and another wounded.⁵³ The violent results of these incidents demonstrated that the black soldiers would not accept racism, and they would retaliate when given the chance. These clashes were rare and, more often than not, an "uneasy truce" existed between white civilians and black soldiers. The civilian population realized it needed the black troops for defense and that black soldiers held purchasing power that could not be ignored in the isolated towns of the frontier.⁵⁴

The Tenth Cavalry's first assignment was in West Kansas, where it protected the railroad construction crews of the Union Pacific Railroad, escorted stages, and scouted up and down the various rivers in the area.⁵⁵ On August 2, 1867, the regiment's first combat action occurred near the Saline River. The day before, a party of Cheyenne Indians had attacked a construction party on the Union Pacific Railroad, killing seven men. Company F proceeded to the scene and followed the Cheyenne trail to the Saline River, where the company was attacked and encircled by a large group of Indians. It took six hours of hard fighting before the company gained control of the situation, and the Cheyenne broke off the battle. The company lost one man killed and one wounded.⁵⁶

From 1867 to 1875, the skirmishes in which the Tenth engaged were usually short, vicious fights that involved few men and resulted in even fewer casualties. The fighting occurred throughout western Kansas, the Indian Territory, and the Panhandle of Texas. In these engagements, the black troopers performed with "remarkable coolness and bravery."⁵⁷ This warfare taught the troopers to "accept danger and death as constant companions," and molded them into a regiment of "fighting men."⁵⁸

The regiment participated in several memorable events during this period. In September 1868, company H rode to the relief of Major George A. Forsyth's force of fifty scouts, then besieged on the Arikaree Fork of the Republican River by Cheyenne Indians. The company marched more than one hundred miles in twenty-four hours, and, although they marched a greater distance than other units, they arrived a full day ahead of the other relieving columns.⁵⁹

In May 1871, troops of the Tenth Cavalry participated in the capture of three prominent Kiowa chiefs--Satanta, Satank, and Big Tree--at Fort Sill, Indian Territory.⁶⁰ During the Red River War of 1874-1875, the regiment played an active role, capturing a Commanche camp on Elk Creek, Indian Territory, with sixty-nine warriors and two hundred and fifty women and children, a band of forty-five Kiowas on Pond Creek, Indian Territory, and a group of fifty-two Cheyenne on the North Fork of the Canadian River. These successful expeditions constituted a devastating blow to the Indians, destroying or capturing hundreds of lodges, tons of supplies, camp equipment, and horses.⁶¹

In 1875, the regiment was transferred to West Texas, where it would remain for the next ten years, with the regimental headquarters located at Fort Concho, near San Angelo, Texas. The regiment, however, was scattered throughout the region. Much of their time was spent scouting the Staked Plains or along the United States-Mexican border searching for Indians, border bandits, or natives who lived in Mexico. This duty was extremely arduous because much of the region was unknown, guides were unavailable, the land was arid and rough, and water and grass were scarce. In 1877, one company was lost on the Staked Plains for fifty-eight hours without water.⁶²

In order to prevent Indian raiding, the Tenth Cavalry troops attempted to find and destroy Indian villages. In May 1877, Troop G entered the Staked Plains searching for a Commanche village whose men were responsible for raids in Northwestern Texas. After several days of tireless scouting, the Tenth found the village on Lake

Quemado, two miles from the troops location. Deeming it impossible to approach the village quietly without being discovered, the command charged at full speed. The troop killed four Comanches and captured six others; it destroyed the village and its supplies of powder, lead, shells, blankets, meat, and other equipment.⁶³

On several occasions, companies of the regiment crossed into Mexico in pursuit of Lipan and Kickapoo raiders. These Indians used Mexico as a refuge, raiding across the border into the United States and then retreating across the international border, where United States troops could not legally follow. In 1876, this tactic ended when the army gave the department commander permission to send troops across the border in pursuit of raiders. In July of that year, Tenth Cavalry Troop B destroyed a village and all of its supplies near Saragosa, Mexico, and in August Troops B, E, and K destroyed another village in the Santa Rosa Mountains, Mexico. In 1877, Troop C crossed the border and destroyed one village and its equipment near Saragosa and another in the Carmen Mountains.⁶⁴

These counter-raids of the Tenth helped to alleviate border violence but could not stop it. In 1878, Grierson changed strategies, keeping his troops continually in the field and setting up camps and sub-posts from which it was possible to reach the scene of a raid and perhaps catch the raiders. He followed this policy throughout 1879, and it proved to be a great success. The regiment virtually cleared the region of raiders by the end of the year.⁶⁵

The new policy also gave Grierson and his men an intimate knowledge of the region that they were able to put to excellent use during the Victorio campaign of 1880. In 1879, Victorio and his Ojo

Caliente Apaches fled the Fort Stanton Reservation in New Mexico to avoid being sent to the San Carlos Reservation in Arizona. The tribe, needing food and horses, attacked ranches, stagecoaches, and isolated army detachments. These Apaches avoided large army columns and crossed into Mexico and back into the United States at will.⁶⁶ In May 1880, General Philip Sheridan ordered the Tenth Cavalry to New Mexico to provide more troops to protect against Victorio's raids, but Grierson protested. He was convinced that Victoria would next strike into West Texas and persuaded Sheridan to allow the Tenth to remain.⁶⁷

This is exactly what Victorio did, and Grierson was waiting for him. He employed a strategy similar to the one adopted in 1878, only this time Grierson sent detachments to guard the mountain passes and water holes--the very places where Victorio would have to go in order to pass through West Texas. On July 30, at Tinaja de las Palmas, Grierson, commanding a detachment of company G, located and fought the Victorio band. The fight lasted four hours, at the end of which Victorio fled back into Mexico.⁶⁸

On August 3, Victorio once again crossed into the United States. A detachment of Troops C, G, and H Tenth cavalry caught up with him and in a running fight pursued the tribe for fifteen miles before the Apaches escaped.⁶⁹ The climax of the campaign came on August 6, when Victorio attempted to reach Rattlesnake Springs. Grierson guessed that this would be the Apaches' next destination and covered sixty-five miles in twenty-one hours to reach the Springs ahead of Victorio. When the Apaches arrived, a sharp skirmish broke out, but Victorio again fled to Mexico, pursued by troops of the

Tenth Cavalry. This defeat was decisive, for Mexican volunteer militia from Chihuahua trapped the Ojo Caliente band at Tres Castillas, sixty miles south of the border. Most of the Indian men died in the fight, and the women and children made captives. The Tenth Cavalry received precious little recognition for this victory, but it was "a masterpiece of guerrilla warfare" that proved to be the regiment's best moment during the period 1866 to 1891.⁷⁰

After the defeat of Victorio, West Texas was relatively peaceful, and the Tenth Cavalry settled into a short period of garrison duty. In 1885, the regiment was transferred to Arizona to participate in the final campaigns against Geronimo and his band of Apaches. Companies of the Tenth Cavalry were kept in the field in order to pursue Geronimo constantly. In May 1886, Troop A attacked Geronimo's band in the Pineto Mountains, Mexico. The troops forced the Apaches from their positions and then pursued them for four days until relieved by units of the Fourth Cavalry.⁷¹ The Tenth played no role in the final capture of Geronimo, but it did close out the Apache Wars in Arizona. On October 18, Troop H encountered the final Apache chief, Mangus, and his band in the Black River Mountains of Arizona. A running fight ensued for fifteen miles, at the end of which the troop captured this entire party.⁷²

After this small engagement, the Indian Wars in the Southwest came to end for all practical purposes, and the Tenth Cavalry once again settled into the routine of garrison duty. The regiment was scattered across Southern Arizona at such forts as Apache, Grant, and Huachuca. For the next seven years, the Tenth continued to scout and watch the Apaches at the San Carlos Reservation, but no trouble

of any consequence occurred. In 1890, Benjamin H. Grierson was promoted to Brigadier General, and he relinquished command of the regiment after twenty-four years of service. He wished the regiment well and hoped that the "valuable service" they had performed "cannot fail, sooner or later to meet with due recognition and reward."⁷³

Some recognition had already been received. In 1889, the Tenth Cavalry received its first national attention when the artist Frederick Remington wrote about his visit with the regiment in *The Century Magazine*. Remington accompanied a troop on a scouting expedition across the Gila Valley. His portrayal of the enlisted men was not altogether flattering and was tinged with the racist sentiment common to the era. According to Remington, the black soldiers were more interested in "joking and merriment" than in the mission at hand and amused themselves with "clever absurdities." He quoted them as speaking in a very thick dialect: "Leouk out, sah. Dat ole hoss shore kick youh head off, sah."⁷⁴

Despite these comments, Remington obviously respected the men of the Tenth Cavalry. He eloquently described the troop sergeant as "grown old in the service, scarred on battlefields, hardened by long marches." More importantly, he answered the question, "Will they fight?:"

They have fought many, many times. The old sergeant sitting near me . . . once deliberately walked over a Cheyenne rifle-pit and killed his man. One little fellow near him once took charge of a lot of stampeded cavalry-horses when Apache bullets were flying loose and no one knew from what point to expect him. These little episodes

prove the sometimes doubted self-reliance of the Negro.⁷⁵

By the end of the scouting expedition, Remington was exhausted and "floundering." He had learned, as he told the American public, "not to trifle again with the 10th Nubian Horse if I expected any mercy."⁷⁶

Chapter 2

We Used To Have Soldiers

On May 5, 1892, the Tenth United States Cavalry Regiment completed its transfer from Arizona to Montana, where it relieved the First Cavalry and took over that regiment's horses.¹ This change in station was the result of Colonel Mizner's irate letter of the previous year to the Adjutant General requesting a transfer for the Tenth Cavalry. The men were not appreciative. Having left the warm deserts of Arizona only a week earlier, they arrived in Montana in the middle of a blizzard.²

The army distributed the Tenth Cavalry at various posts throughout Montana, with regimental headquarters located at Fort Custer until November 1894, when it moved to Fort Assiniboine, a mere thirty-eight miles from the Canadian border. By 1898, nine of the Tenth's troops were stationed at Assiniboine, with the remaining three at Custer. They remained there until April 1898, at which time the regiment left to fight in the Spanish American War.³

Racial incidents between the Tenth and white soldiers or local whites were rare. The regiment was stationed with white soldiers at most of the posts in Montana, but no racial incidents occurred between the troops, or at least no one reported any. One historian noted that there was "a studied avoidance of references to racial

problems" in post records and official correspondence.⁴ The citizens of Montana apparently respected the regiment, for one newspaper editor wrote that the black trooper "is willing and a fighter. . . . [we] always had a good word for" them.⁵ However, racial incidents occurred. In 1897, a railroad employee attempted to remove a Tenth Cavalry soldier who was a passenger in a train. The soldier refused to leave and retaliated by stabbing the official.⁶ Such incidents were rare, and the regiment and local citizens coexisted peacefully during the Tenth's six-year tour in Montana.

The years the regiment spent in Montana were pleasant and offered the relaxation needed after twenty years of continual service in the Southwest. The men spent time hunting and planting gardens, and at Fort Assiniboine they had a gymnasium and library.⁷ Each year the Tenth attempted to hold its annual "Re-union," a time when the entire regiment assembled at one post and allotted three or four days to sports and horse races, ending with a banquet.⁸ In October 1897, the regiment also had time to participate in the opening ceremonies of the fifth annual fair of Fergus County, Montana.⁹

Montana's extreme weather made life difficult at times. The winters were severe, with blinding blizzards and temperatures that often dropped thirty degrees below zero.¹⁰ During the summer, it was insufferably hot, mosquitoes became a nuisance, and the rivers were swollen by melting snow.¹¹ The extreme weather took its toll on the regiment. In July 1893, First Lieutenant Powhatan H. Clark, a Medal of Honor recipient, drowned while swimming in the Little Big Horn River, and Private James Dilliard drowned while crossing the Missouri River.¹² Two years later, First Sergeant James Brown was

returning from Harve, Montana, when he was caught in a blizzard and froze to death.¹³

Not all encounters with the severe weather ended so tragically. On November 17, 1897, Troop K left Fort Custer for Fort Assiniboine, where the troop was being transferred. The next day, the temperatures dropped below zero and a blinding snowstorm raged across Montana. For twenty-two days, the troop marched in temperatures between thirty and forty degrees below zero and snow two to three feet deep. The weather was so severe that army headquarters gave up on Troop K and believed it had perished on the Montana prairie. However, after marching two hundred miles, the troop arrived at Fort Assiniboine on December 8, with only two cases of frostbite.¹⁴

The regiment spent most of its time training. In the winter, the enlisted men received thorough instruction in gymnastics and performed three drills a week "in the individual duties of the soldier," which included the manual of arms, saber exercises, and outpost duties.¹⁵ During the summer, the regiment conducted practice marches, held rifle and pistol marksman courses, established courier lines, patrolled the Indian reservations, and mapped the countryside.¹⁶ In September 1893, companies of the regiment participated in exercises at Fort Assiniboine, operating as an offensive column attacking the post.¹⁷

The most important training activity of the regiment was the practice march, because, as Colonel Mizner wrote, these marches were "the most valuable school in which to promote efficiency [sic]."¹⁸ They gave recruits a chance to experience field service and

gain knowledge they would need in time of war, and older soldiers gained more practice and experience in their duties.¹⁹ While on these marches, the men would practice pitching and breaking camp, marching and camping in enemy country, attacking and defending, and building entrenchments.²⁰ Each troop went on at least one practice march a year, but the regiment always attempted to concentrate in one place as many troops as possible in order to gain experience in performing these activities as large units.

The marksman courses gave the enlisted men of the Tenth Cavalry a chance to earn distinction throughout the army. Each year, the best shots in the regiment were sent to the Department of Dakota's annual marksmanship competition. Tenth Cavalry soldiers competed against white soldiers at this event and frequently excelled, winning nineteen medals.²¹ The best shot in the regiment was Sergeant Horace Bivins. At the departmental competition, he placed first in 1892, 1893, and 1894, and, at the army competition at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, in 1894, competing against the finest marksmen in the army, he won the gold medal. Bivins was named the best shot in the army, and he was announced in general orders as a "distinguished marksman." His fame extended beyond the army. In 1896, William "Buffalo Bill" Cody asked Bivins to join his wild west show, where Bivins would compete against Annie Oakley. Bivins declined, saying he preferred "the army routine to circus life."²²

The years the Tenth Cavalry spent in Montana were relatively peaceful, and the regiment was rarely involved in military operations. When the regiment did embark on military operations they were not dangerous and served merely to break the monotony

of daily training and garrison life. Unlike the regiment's early years, in which military operations were almost always combat operations with the objective of destroying or inflicting damage upon an enemy, the operations of the Tenth in Montana did not involve combat. The officers and men avoided the use of violence and attempted to use peaceful means to complete their missions. Their operations included recovering stolen property, guarding railroad equipment, deporting Cree Indians to Canada, and preventing hostilities between the Cheyenne Indians and white settlers. In the 1890's, the Tenth functioned as a large, well armed, and disciplined constabulary force.

The first of this type of operation occurred in April of 1894, when Lieutenant Colonel D. Perry led troops B, E, G, and K in an attempt to intercept a contingent of Coxey's army that had stolen a Northern Pacific Railroad train at Butte City, Montana.²³ These men were followers of Jacob Sechler Coxey, a Populist reformer from Ohio who drafted several bills to provide work for the unemployed during the Panic of 1893. When Congress failed to pass these bills, Coxey called on his followers to march on Washington and demand action. Congress refused to help anyone, Coxey became militant, and he was arrested when he arrived in Washington. In Montana, Coxey's followers could not afford to pay for transportation that would take them to the nation's capital, so they stole a Northern Pacific railroad car in the early morning hours of April 24.²⁴

On April 25, Troops B, E, G, and K left Fort Custer at about 9:00 P. M. for Custer Station, thirty-five miles away, where they hoped to intercept the stolen railroad car. The command successfully forded the Big Horn River, a treacherous night crossing because the river

was full from melting snow, and arrived at Custer Station at one in the morning.²⁵ The Tenth arrived too late to catch the stolen train, but on April 26 elements of the Twenty-Second Infantry did detain it at Forsyth, where most of Coxe's army in Montana was arrested.²⁶

In the summer of 1894, the Tenth was ordered to guard the property of the Northern Pacific Railroad during the Pullman strike of 1894. This strike began in May, when the factory employees who lived in George Pullman's company town outside of Chicago and who suffered from low wages and high rents, went on strike. The American Railway Union (ARU) supported them and called for a general strike that eventually affected railroad transportation in twenty-seven states. Not until late June, however, did the strike spread into Montana, when the local chapter of the ARU, angered when the Northern Pacific fired several men for supporting the boycott, walked off the job.²⁷

President Grover Cleveland ordered Federal troops to protect property and insure that the mail went through on the Northern Pacific.²⁸ As a result, the Tenth Cavalry occupied various points along the railroad, including the Powder River Bridge and the Big Horn Tunnel and Bridge, guarded Northern Pacific property in Glendive, and escorted trains.²⁹ No violence occurred against these positions while the Tenth was on duty. Nevertheless race was always a factor when the Tenth cavalry was dealing with the general populace. Strikers, however, did not protest against the use of black troopers, and their presence did not stimulate any racial conflict. Only the editor of the *Helena Independent* voiced concern, when he said that if troops had to be used, they should be white.³⁰ The

Pullman strike in Montana was over by the end of July, and in the first week of August the troops of the Tenth returned to their respective posts.

In the summer of 1896, the Tenth Cavalry attempted to round up and return to Canada fugitive Cree Indians then residing in Montana. In 1885, the Crees rebelled against the Canadian government. The rebellion was suppressed, and six hundred Crees fled to north-central Montana seeking political asylum. For the next ten years, they led a semi-nomadic existence and caused little trouble, but by 1895 the white population was demanding the Crees removal; Congress appropriated \$5000 to finance the operation.³¹

The round-up proved to be the regiment's longest and most difficult military operation while in Montana. Starting in June 1896, the Tenth Cavalry began locating, arresting, and returning the Crees to Canada. It was a difficult task because, as soon as the Cree Indians learned that the troops were coming, they divided into small bands and sought refuge in coulees and dry gullies. This game of "hide and seek" went on throughout the summer.³² Troop I spent a month searching in the vicinity of Malta before escorting a band north to Couth's Station, Canada.³³ In July, Troop F arrested a group of Indians near Harve and escorted them across the border.³⁴

Troop D, commanded by Lieutenant John J. Pershing, spent the most time in the field. The troop left Fort Assiniboine on June 13 and did not return until August 14. They scouted western Montana from Great Falls to Fort Missoula, crossed the Continental Divide, and marched 1050 miles.³⁵ As each band of Crees was apprehended, Pershing sent it to Great Falls to await deportation to Canada.³⁶ In

the end, Troop D was responsible for the deportation of nearly 400 of the some 525 Crees the Tenth Cavalry returned to Canada.³⁷

Pershing's black troops also faced the most difficulties. During the roundup, a measles outbreak occurred among the Cree, a flash flood swept through one camp of soldiers and Indians, and one Cree refused to surrender, preferring to shoot himself. Finally, Pershing escorted the last group of Indians to Coutts, Canada, where the Canadian government refused to accept them because of the measles outbreak. After a day of arguing between the United States and Canadian governments, Pershing was able to turn the Crees over to Canada. This ended the Cree round-up.³⁸

The Tenth Cavalry's last military operation had the potential to be the most explosive, but it ended peacefully. This operation was the so-called Cheyenne outbreak of 1897. The Cheyenne Indians resided on the Tongue River Indian Reservation at Lane Deer, in Southeastern Montana, where tension over the ownership of reservation land existed between them and white settlers. In May, the murder of a white sheepherder by a Cheyenne exacerbated these tensions, especially after the Custer County Sheriff arrived with twenty-five well-armed deputies to arrest the murderer. Whites fled the area, fearing an Indian uprising, and many Cheyenne took to the hills, fearing a massacre. To prevent hostilities from breaking out, the U. S. Indian Agent requested that Tenth Cavalry troops be sent from Fort Custer.³⁹

Troops A and K, commanded by Captain Robert Read arrived on the May 27, followed by Troop E, commanded by Major Steven Norvell, on May 31, to provide "confidence and protection to all

concerned."⁴⁰ Troop presence allowed the U. S. Indian Agent to conduct his investigation of the murder without fear of interference from local law authorities, which could have led to shooting, and calmed the Cheyenne, now armed and excited. By June 9, the situation was under control, and the murderer had been identified by the U. S. Indian Agent and turned over to local authorities for trial.⁴¹

These arrests did not calm all local whites. In July, the Tenth investigated a false report of an Indian attack against the Waters Ranch on Otter Creek.⁴² Because of false reports like this, the regiment kept troops on the reservation for another five months, helping to suppress "disorder" and to enforce the "usual police regulations" before the last troops returned to Fort Custer in November.⁴³

As these minor military operations demonstrate, the 1890's were a time of relatively little activity for the Tenth Cavalry, but the decade the regiment spent in Montana had been one of significant change that would continue to affect it well into the twentieth century. In both the ranks of the enlisted men and the officers, the old veterans gave way to new soldiers who, though similar in many ways to the older members of the regiment, were also very different. The enlisted men were better educated and held different attitudes towards their social position and their officers. The younger officers, after initially improving, would be less qualified and not as accepting of the black troopers. Just as important, the attitude white Americans held toward black Americans changed, a change that would directly affect the enlisted men in the Tenth Cavalry.

By the 1897, the Tenth Cavalry was a veteran organization with thirty years of continual service in the field. The regiment was composed of seasoned soldiers, half of whom had re-enlisted at least once, and had earned one Medal of Honor and two Certificates of Merit. The company sergeants had an average of seventeen years of service, and some of them had been in the army for more than thirty years.⁴⁴ These men felt a strong sense of pride and esprit de corps towards their regiment and themselves.

Sergeant Shelvin Shropshire personified the professional soldier that had emerged in the Tenth Cavalry by the 1890's. Shropshire, a former slave from Alabama, enlisted in the Fifteenth U. S. Colored Infantry in January of 1864. After his discharge, he joined the Tenth Cavalry in March 1867 as a charter member of Troop H. He fought in most of the regiment's campaigns throughout the Indian wars, and in August 1874 his commanding officer reported officially on his bravery.⁴⁵ He took great pride in what he and his fellow veterans accomplished during their service and felt that the Tenth's new recruits would "nevah [sic] make soldiers in God's world." He looked back on the regiment's early years with nostalgia, often talking of how "[w]e used to have a fight every day down on the Washita," and saying, with a sigh, "we used to have soldiers in them days."⁴⁶

Many veterans of the Tenth felt a mixture of pride and nostalgia for the Tenth Cavalry, and some enlisted men began to write about their experiences and thereby preserve their accomplishments. In 1897, the first such publications appeared. An unknown member of the regiment wrote both, but he demonstrated

the pride the troopers felt. The first of these was *Roster of the Non-Commissioned Officers of the Tenth U. S. Cavalry*, a collection of reminiscences and appendixes that describes the exploits of the regiment. The author said that this book focused on the enlisted men "who have borne conspicuous part in the actions, toils, and sufferings of the regiment."⁴⁷ The second publication, originally a chapter in *Roster of Non-commissioned Officers*, "A List of Actions, etc., with Indians and other Marauders, Participated in by the Tenth U. S. Cavalry," was published in the *Cavalry Journal*. This article chronologically describes in an unadorned style the various engagements the regiment fought in during its thirty years of service.

These publications preserved the memory of past glory for future members of the regiment, for, as the 1890's ended, the old professionals who created that record were retiring, and the regiment received a new breed of soldier. Yet, in many ways, the men who served with the Tenth Cavalry between 1892 and 1918 were not much different from the original members of the regiment. They continued to have, as one officer said, "tremendous unit pride," as well as one of the lowest desertion rates in the army.⁴⁸ From 1910 to 1913, the Tenth Cavalry was one of two regiments with the lowest percentage of desertions in the army.⁴⁹

Between 1892 and 1918, black Americans continued to enlist in the army for many of the same reasons as their predecessors: economic opportunities, adventure, and social advancement.⁵⁰ Most of them were former laborers or farmers from the South who hoped to serve for many years.⁵¹ Thus, the regiments re-enlistment rate

continued to be high, a fact reflected in the enlisted men's language. In a soldier's first enlistment, he was considered a "recruit" and, in his second enlistment, a "young soldier."⁵² Becoming a non-commissioned officer required at least two enlistments and usually more to receive promotion to sergeant.⁵³ The enlisted men who served in the Tenth cavalry became proficient and made the regiment a very professional one. Many of them believed that they were better than white troops because, as John Lewis wrote, black soldiers could "stand more hardships . . . under any condition."⁵⁴

The career of Thomas Jordan illustrates the high professionalism of the soldiers that served in the Tenth. Jordan was from Tennessee and enlisted in Troop F on the eve of the Spanish American War. He saw combat in both Cuba and the Philippines. In 1905, during his third enlistment, he was promoted to corporal, and, in 1906, he was appointed sergeant. He remained with Troop F for another fifteen years, participating in the Mexican Punitive Expedition and the Battle of Nogales, for which he was mentioned in the report of the commanding general of the Department of Arizona. Captain H. C. Carey, Troop F's commander in 1918, referred to Troop F as "Jordan's troop . . . because he has practically made it what it is, thru [sic] unrelenting endeavors."⁵⁵ In 1921, Jordan transferred to the service troop and, as his commanding officer wrote, in a short time transformed that troop from "a poorly disciplined and unruly mob" into "one of the best troops in the Regiment."⁵⁶ He retired in 1924 after twenty-six years with the Tenth Cavalry.

Despite the many similarities between the men who served in the Tenth between 1892 and 1918 and those of the previous era, the

soldiers who joined the Tenth Cavalry after 1892 were significantly different in several respects. For one, they had a better education, being able to read and write on at least a rudimentary level. This was the result of the opportunities blacks now had to attend school, something not allowed them before the Civil War, and the regiment's requirement, beginning in the late 1890's, that recruiters recruit "only intelligent men capable of reading and writing."⁵⁷

The higher education level of the enlisted men was reflected in the number of letters and articles they published in black newspapers and magazines. Black soldiers contributed letters to such papers as the *Baltimore Afro-American*, *Cleveland Gazette*, *Illinois Record*, *New York Age*, and *Wisconsin Weekly Advocate*, and they wrote articles for *The Colored American Magazine* and *The Voice of the Negro*. Their letters often described the Tenth's military operations, the locales where they were stationed, their perceptions of the treatment they received from whites, and their hopes and concerns. The articles described many topics. One soldier wrote about the athletic events in which the regiment participated, while another wrote a history of Troop K, and a third writer described a Thanksgiving dinner his troop held.

One of the most important reasons the enlisted men published these letters and articles was their desire to describe for blacks the experiences of the Tenth U. S. Cavalry. The accomplishments of the black regiments were rarely publicized in white publications, and the daily activities of the regiments never received coverage. Black papers and magazines could not afford to pay correspondents to visit and write about the black troopers, and, therefore, the enlisted men

realized that only they could adequately describe their experiences. They understood that the accomplishments of the Tenth, and the other three black regiments, were a source of pride for black Americans who had precious little else to believe in at the turn of the century.

Another difference among black soldiers serving after 1892 was that they were no longer passively willing to accept discrimination. During the Indian Wars, black soldiers had on occasion used force to uphold their rights, but these incidents were rare, and, more often than not, they merely accepted the discrimination society imposed. By the 1890's, however, black soldiers believed they had earned full citizenship and expected to be treated accordingly. "We are men," John Lewis wrote, "and demand to have that treatment."⁵⁸ They understood that society considered them to be inferiors, but their new "cockiness," as the *New York Times* called it, would lead many Tenth Cavalry soldiers to uphold their rights with force if necessary.⁵⁹

Another difference was the relationship between black soldiers and white officers. There was still a great deal of respect and loyalty between the two, and there were no reports of insubordination or misconduct by black soldiers towards white officers. Many black soldiers, however, resented their white officers. They especially resented what blacks considered to be their officers' unwillingness to defend them from racial attacks. The enlisted men of the Tenth Cavalry were well aware that many of their officers disliked serving with them, and these men could not understand why the officers remained in the regiment. Blacks also wanted to be led by capable

black officers, and they did not like having to serve under inferior white officers. One such incompetent was Lieutenant Carter P. Johnson, who during the Spanish American War, became drunk after capturing a Spanish fort and then nearly got his company massacred.⁶⁰

During this period, two black officers did serve with the Tenth Cavalry, Lieutenant Benjamin O. Davis, 1901 to 1911, and Lieutenant Colonel Charles Young, 1916 to 1917. In 1901, Davis, an enlisted man in the Ninth Cavalry, passed the qualifying examination to become an officer and was appointed to the Tenth. In 1889, Young became the third and last black graduate from United States Military Academy until the 1930's. The enlisted men respected both of these black officers, and they were a source of great pride for all black Americans.

Davis and Young also encountered racism within the army. The most obvious was social ostracism from white officers. White officers did not want "to eat with, live near," or associate with black officers while off duty.⁶¹ Both Davis and Young met the basic requirements of army etiquette by making the required visit to new officers at a post when they were not at home or by inviting fellow officers to a dinner party and then not attending, or canceling, the party because they were sick or called away.⁶²

They also faced racism when the army kept them on detached service and away from command positions for long periods of time. Davis's career with the Tenth was broken by a four-year tour at Wilberforce University as Professor of Military Science and Tactics and two years as military attaché to Liberia. Young spent half of his

military career either at Wilberforce or as a military attaché to both Haiti and Liberia. The army kept them away from command positions because white officers did not want to take orders from black officers. When this could not be avoided, it was understood that it was the uniform and not the men that white officers respected.

The white officers who served with the Tenth Cavalry between 1892 and 1918 also changed. At first, this change was beneficial for the regiment. In the 1890's, for a short period West Pointers of higher class rank began to choose service in the two black cavalry regiments.⁶³ The excellent combat reputation of these regiments was the motivating factor behind this decision. Many officers also respected the black troopers, realizing that their long service made them excellent soldiers. After 1900, however, the quality of the officers joining the regiment declined. The Tenth once again received West Point graduates ranked in the last quarter of their class.⁶⁴ Officers did not want to serve with blacks, fearing the effects such service would have on their social life, and they no longer wanted to serve with people they considered inferior.⁶⁵ Many of those officers who did serve in the regiment held a low opinion of black soldiers. One officer considered blacks to be inferior soldiers because they lacked "stability and resistance powers under great adversity."⁶⁶ Some officers believed blacks would not take orders from other blacks and preferred taking orders from white officers.⁶⁷ The most common belief among white officers was that only they could lead and control black soldiers.

The changing attitude of white officers toward black soldiers was merely a reflection of white society changing its view of black Americans. In the years immediately after the Civil War, the attitude of most white Americans toward blacks was paternalistic, and whites treated blacks as wards who needed to be protected from false friends and "Negrophobe fanatics."⁶⁸ This perception gave blacks a tenuous position in society, but they were able to attend school, vote, hold office, and freely enter and use many public accommodations.

In the 1890's, racism increased throughout the entire country. The most extreme form of this was in the South, where Jim Crow laws enforcing segregation and disfranchisement effectively barred blacks from all aspects of mainstream life. The Supreme Court approved these measures in several court cases, including *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which established the "separate but equal rule" justifying segregation, and *Williams v. Mississippi*, which approved the disenfranchisement of blacks.⁶⁹ Blacks also faced increasing violence from whites. Between 1893 and 1904, there were an average of more than one hundred extralegal black lynchings per year in the South.⁷⁰ The North did not provide blacks with a refuge from violence, as race riots occurred in both New York City and Springfield, Illinois.

There were many reasons for this increased racism. In order to bring a reconciliation between the North and South, Northerners stopped agitating for black rights and began defending the less extreme Southern views of blacks.⁷¹ Southern conservatives, who ruled the South after Reconstruction and restrained racism, fell into

disfavor over their economic policies and abandoned their racial moderation in order to retain power.⁷² There was also the growing belief among white Americans that blacks were not equal to whites, a belief that was lent respectability by scientists, anthropologists, and historians who supported the idea that races "were discrete entities" and that the Anglo-Saxon race was the superior race.⁷³

Black soldiers would be severely affected by the increasing hostility of whites toward blacks because many whites, especially Southerners, disliked seeing blacks in uniform. As one historian concluded, black soldiers "contradicted the stereotype of a subservient inferior," and whites did not want to see blacks exercising authority over whites.⁷⁴ This would lead, after 1898, to an increasing amount of racial violence between black soldiers and whites.

The decade of the 1890's provided the Tenth Cavalry with a period of calm before this racial violence began. As a result, 1898 would be a watershed year for the regiment. In just one year, the regiment would receive praise from white Americans for its spectacular success in the Spanish American War and also be subjected to racial violence and discrimination on a level it had never before experienced.

Chapter 3

Boys, We Are In For It

On the night of February 15, 1898, the United States battleship *Maine* exploded in Havana harbor. This event enflamed tensions that already existed between the United States and Spain. In 1895, Cubans wanting independence from Spain began an armed uprising against Spanish authorities. United States citizens sympathized with this movement. President William McKinley, operating in an age of expansionism, urged Spain to adopt a policy of semi-autonomy for Cuba, but the Cuban dissidents refused to accept anything short of full independence.¹ In January 1898, Cubans demonstrated in Havana. In response to this violence, the United States sent the U. S. S. *Maine*, a battleship in the United States navy, to Cuba to show the United States flag. The explosion of the *Maine* and the resulting public clamor for American intervention in Cuba forced McKinley, who for two months had sought to avoid war, to ask Congress for a declaration of war on April 25, 1898.

The United States army was poorly prepared for war. It numbered approximately 25,000 men and was so small, the editor of the *New York Times* wrote, "as scarcely to be able to perform the functions of a National police."² This number was not sufficient to keep the army's forty regiments at full strength, and these regiments

had no experience maneuvering or fighting as larger units.³ To augment the regular army, on April 23 President McKinley called for 125,000 volunteers and on May 25, requested another 75,000. The army, however, had only enough supplies to furnish its small peacetime force, let alone an army of 200,000 men, and it lacked the material resources for any "important military operations."⁴

Congress made an appropriation of \$50,000,000 to buy the necessary supplies, but the efforts to purchase and then move this material to the troops proved to be a disaster.

Even before the declaration of war, the army began to assemble its regiments in the South and on April 15 ordered the Tenth Cavalry to proceed to Chickamauga Park, Georgia. The regiment left Fort Assiniboine on April 19 and proceeded by rail through Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois. Here, large crowds, handing out flowers and flags, greeted the black troopers and treated them like royalty.⁵ Sergeant Edward Baker wrote that the men "were heartily greeted," and he compared the journey to "Caesar's march of triumph."⁶

Once the regiment entered Kentucky, however, these demonstrations largely disappeared, and the men encountered Jim Crow. On one side of the track, wrote John Lewis, "stood the whites and . . . on the other colored."⁷ This segregation shocked the men, and they were not prepared for signs that read "White waiting room" or "Niggers are not allowed inside."⁸ The men showed their disdain for these laws by continuing to ride in palace railroad cars instead of the Jim Crow cars reserved for blacks.

On April 25, the regiment arrived at Camp Thomas, which was located on the old Civil War battlefield of Chickamauga. The fifteen-mile park of beautiful meadows, wooded hills, shaded brooks, and haunting monuments, which recalled the previous conflict, were now inundated with the thousands of white tents housing the twelve regiments of cavalry and infantry assembled there. This was the largest force gathered at the sight since the Civil War, and thousands of curious tourists swarmed through the camps viewing the vast assemblage. Blacks were particularly eager to visit the encampment as for the majority of them this was the first opportunity they had to see the four black regular army regiments.⁹

Blacks viewed the war with ambiguity. The increasing racism in the United States and the decreasing fortunes of these black Americans led many to oppose the war. Many of them agreed with the editor of the *Washington Bee*, who wrote, "The Negro has no reason to fight for Cuba's independence. He is opposed at home. He is as much in need of independence as Cuba is."¹⁰ The majority of blacks sympathized with the plight of Cuba and supported the efforts to liberate the island. They also believed, as the editor of the *Washington Colored American* wrote, that black support and participation in the war would allow them to prove their worth and entitle them "to all the privileges of citizenship."¹¹

Despite their plight in American society, the enlisted men of the Tenth Cavalry were eager to fight.¹² The men wanted to prove themselves in combat and show that they were the equal of white soldiers. Some black soldiers, such as James Murrell, wanted, he said, to fight "for the cause of humanity."¹³ Horace Bivens wrote that he

wanted to end Spanish tyranny and "to defend that emblem of eternal liberty and justice," the United States flag.¹⁴ He hoped, like many Tenth Cavalry soldiers, that their success would result in greater freedom at home. Others believed that if they fought well blacks could finally begin to gain positions as commissioned officers. Many black soldiers wanted to fight out of a sense of military professionalism. Edward L. Baker wrote that the regiment was only "maintained" for this kind of "serious work."¹⁵

At Chickamagua, the regiment spent the next several weeks organizing and training. All of the regiment's officers on detached duty rejoined the unit, and Colonel Guy Henry, the regiment's commander, was promoted to brigadier general of volunteers. He soon left the regiment and was replaced by Lieutenant Colonel T. A. Baldwin. The Tenth, numbering only 640 officers and men during April, received a massive influx of recruits that swelled its ranks by June to 1012.¹⁶ The officers did not like this rapid increase in numbers, for they believed it did not allow enough time to train the recruits, and they feared, as Captain John Bigelow wrote, that the new recruits would "prove a weakness rather than a strength."¹⁷

The requisition of supplies also proved to be a major problem. The congregation of large numbers of troops created supply problems the army could not overcome. The Tenth Cavalry lacked such basic items as soap, wash basins, toilet paper, groceries, and arms for recruits.¹⁸ The men were still wearing winter clothing and eating winter rations.¹⁹ The regiment eventually received many of these supplies, but never obtained others, such as the khaki clothing necessary for service in the tropics.

Racism was an even larger problem for the Tenth Cavalry. Southern newspapers such as the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* warned black soldiers "not to forget" their "place" and believe that their social condition changed because they were wearing a blue uniform.²⁰ This attitude led to several confrontations between black troopers and white Southerners. In Chattanooga, one black soldier tried to buy a drink at a bar and was refused because of his color. As he was leaving, the bartender yelled at him, "I don't see what they put you damned niggers in the army for, anyhow--you won't fight!"²¹ The soldier quickly turned around and hit the bartender between the eyes. In an another incident, a black trooper was jailed for disorderly conduct. His comrades felt he was jailed unjustly and were about to storm the jail when a detachment of the provost guard arrived and stopped them.²² At Camp Thomas a rumor spread about a colonel in a white regiment who believed that the black soldiers should be removed to another camp because "their presence was degrading or humiliating."²³

The relations between white and black soldiers, however, did not cause any serious problems. In fact, throughout the war with Spain, the races coexisted relatively peacefully; the only disturbances were several "rough and tumble" fights, which were also common among white troops.²⁴ The patriotism and unifying spirit of the war temporarily eased the racial tensions that existed between the black and white enlisted men. On several occasions, white soldiers attacked Southerners who attempted to cause problems between black and white enlisted men, and white soldiers generally "resented any insult" cast at the black troopers.²⁵ Sergeant Carter Smith, Tenth

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Cavalry, said that generally "they got along nicely" with white soldiers and regretted that it could not always be this way.²⁶

On May 14 the regiments at Camp Thomas were sent to Florida to prepare for embarkation to Cuba. Most of the regiments went to Tampa Bay, but because of a lack of water at Tampa the Tenth was sent to Lakeland. The new camp was located at Wire Lake in a pine-woods area that did not provide much shade from the sun. Across the railroad tracks, the First Cavalry was encamped in a similar locale. While in Lakeland the regiment continued to train and assimilate new recruits.

Racial problems were often a problem in, as one black soldier describe it, "the hotbed of the rebels."²⁷ Another black soldier, Sergeant Horace Bivens, suggested that white Floridians did not treat the black soldiers "with much courtesy."²⁸ One white supposedly told another that, if any black soldiers gave him trouble, he could yell and "[we] will come a'runin' an' take keer o' *him* [sic]."²⁹ The troopers of the Tenth were not allowed to bathe in the local lake during the day to avoid hurting the "chaste sensibilities" of local whites.³⁰ The local community also refused to sell liquor to black soldiers, but as one white soldier put it had "plenty of bourbon for" the white soldiers.³¹

The worst racial incident occurred on May 16. Several Tenth Cavalry soldiers refused to abide by the local Jim Crow laws and entered a segregated drug store, asking for a glass of soda water. The white clerk refused to serve them and began to argue with the black soldiers. Abe Collins, a white bully and the owner of a barber shop located next door, came into the store and yelled, "You d--- niggers better get out of here . . . or I will kick you B--- S--- B---

out."³² The black soldiers refused and went into Collins barbershop. Collins followed them, continued to yell at the soldiers, and then told them to get out. The troopers went outside, pulled their pistols, and began firing indiscriminately, killing Collins with a stray bullet.³³ Two soldiers were eventually arrested for the incident, but it changed the attitude of the local people toward the Tenth Cavalry. They no longer refused service to the troopers, and one black soldier remarked that the locals began to "intimate that they are glad" to serve the black soldiers.³⁴

This incident, and similar ones that occurred with the other three black regiments, gave the Tenth Cavalry a bad reputation. The *Tampa Morning Tribune*, which ignored similar altercations by white soldiers, characterized the black soldiers as "ruffians in uniform" and demanded more police protection from their "criminal proclivities."³⁵ Whites began to question the use of black soldiers and claimed that making blacks soldiers made them forget their place. Moreover, whites charged that discipline seemed to have no effect on them. No effort was made to remove the black regiments because of racial fears and attitudes. Whites feared that with all of the white soldiers in Cuba blacks would stage an uprising in the United States. Whites also wanted to use blacks in the invasion of Cuba because of the false belief that blacks were immune to such tropical diseases as yellow fever.³⁶

At the end of May, the War Department decided on its plan of operation for the invasion of Cuba. Major General William Shafter, an enormously overweight officer who suffered from gout and a veteran of combat in both the Civil War and the Indian Wars, was put in

command of the invasion. He was ordered to embark his troops, designated the Fifth Corps, on transports, sail to the vicinity of Santiago, Cuba, and land his men at a point of his choosing. Once ashore the Fifth Corps was to capture the hills overlooking the city, destroy the city's garrison, and assist the navy in capturing or destroying the Spanish fleet in Santiago Harbor.³⁷

Shafter requested that the majority of his force consist of regular army regiments because, in his opinion, in the army's first battle "the best troops should bear the brunt."³⁸ As a result, twenty-three of Shafter's twenty-six regiments were regular army regiments, including all four black regiments. The entire invasion force amounted to 815 officers and 16,072 enlisted men divided into two infantry and one cavalry division. The cavalry division was commanded by Major General Joseph Wheeler, a former Confederate general who earned the nickname "Fighting Joe" for his aggressiveness in the Civil War. The Tenth Cavalry was assigned to the Second Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Samuel Young, along with the First U. S. Cavalry and the First U. S. Volunteer Cavalry (the Rough Riders).

On June 6 the invasion force began to board the transports at Tampa, but the loading facilities at the pier were at best inadequate, and the boarding became a nightmare. Wagons were able to drive only within one mile of the port and, with only one railroad track running to the docks, one train had to run down the line, unload, and then back out before another train could go down the line.³⁹ This situation was made even more chaotic as the army rushed large amounts of supplies into the area, failed to label the contents of each

railroad car, and lost the invoices listing the contents, forcing quartermasters to break open the cars and search them one by one to determine what they contained.⁴⁰ As a result, hundreds of cars full of equipment and food sat unloaded along every available sidetrack for ten miles around Tampa.⁴¹ Crews feverishly worked day and night to bring order to this confusion.

The poor transports which the army was to travel on made matters worse. The navy provided thirty-six transports, which were built to carry freight and not designed to handle men.⁴² The transports did not have enough space to carry the large force required (Shafter originally intended to transport twenty thousand men to Cuba) and their ventilation was terrible.⁴³ The shortage of space forced the army to leave the cavalry's animals behind, and each cavalry regiment had to leave one of its three squadrons in Florida to tend to the animals. Many regiments were given no prior arrangements for how to get to Tampa or what transport to take, forcing regiments to find transportation to the docks and then locate a troop ship. Theodore Roosevelt wrote that each regiment was forced to "shove and hustle for" themselves in the scramble to find a ride to Cuba.⁴⁴

The Tenth Cavalry's First and Second Squadrons (the Third Squadron was left in Florida) did not board until June 7 and avoided some of these problems, but they discovered new ones and met others head on. The regiment, along with the First Cavalry, was assigned to the *Leona* and provided with rail transportation to the dock, but they were not given any food. On the pier at Tampa, one of the regiment's officers went to a local restaurant to buy food for his

troop and was refused because, as the owner told him, to serve black men "would ruin her business."⁴⁵ The men were able to buy food from peddlers on the pier. The loading process was a disaster. No one knew where to put their luggage, the two regiment's equipment became entangled, sacks of flour, rice, beans, and coffee burst open, and no one seemed to be in charge.⁴⁶ The regiment overcame these problems, and by the end of the day, the Tenth Cavalry was aboard the *Leona*.

Shafter's command then sat in Tampa's harbor for a week. On June 8, the fleet put to sea, but had barely left the harbor when it was recalled because the navy reported a Spanish war vessel off the Florida coast. As the fleet waited, the men discovered just how uncomfortable the transports were. The heat on board was suffocating, and to escape it the officers allowed the men to sleep on deck and take frequent sea baths. The regiment was supposed to engage in exercises, but after two men fainted from the heat the regiment canceled the exercises. It did not matter as there was little room to exercise or sleep, and the water on board was poor. Finally, on June 14, the fleet put to sea. As the *Leona* left the harbor and headed for Cuba, the black troopers of the Tenth Cavalry sang "The Battleship Maine" and "A Hot Time in Cuba," and there was a general feeling of excitement and a longing, as Sergeant William Payne remembered, "for the opportunity to meet the enemy."⁴⁷

The Tenth Cavalry's voyage to Cuba was not as "smooth and uneventful" as General Shafter later described the Fifth Corps's voyage.⁴⁸ On June 17, the *Leona* stopped for some unknown reason and became separated from the fleet. For over twelve hours the ship

remained stranded. General Samuel Young took the precaution of having each troop arm themselves with carbines and stand half hour watches with orders to fire at any passing Spanish ship. These "ludicrous precautions," as Lieutenant John Pershing called them, were unnecessary as a United States warship eventually appeared and escorted the *Leona* to the rest of the fleet.⁴⁹ Other than this event, there was little for the men to do except eat, sleep, and listen to the regimental bands when the band members were not sea sick.

On June 20, the American fleet reached Santiago, but Shafter decided against landing his army and instead chose to land at Daiquiri. Located eighteen miles east of Santiago, Daiquiri, the site of an American mining company, consisted of a rocky beach backed by a spur of high hills that led up to the mountains. At the site, a ruined wooden dock and a metal pier stretched out into the sea, a railroad track passed along the shore to Santiago, and the Camino Real Road, the only road in the region, extended along the coast to Siboney and then inland through the Aguadores Valley and over the San Juan Hills to Santiago. The terrain in the region from Daiquiri to Santiago consisted of rugged hills covered in thick, almost impassable vegetation that obscured the view of the countryside in many places and was crisscrossed by five streams that could become a serious obstacle after heavy rains.⁵⁰ Shafter intended to land part of his force at Daiquiri, march along the road and capture Siboney, put the rest of the army ashore, and then march inland and assault and capture Santiago from the rear.

The operation began on June 22 and was unopposed because the Spanish garrison at Daiquiri set the town on fire and then

withdrew several hours before the landing began. Nevertheless, the navy bombarded the town, destroying the blockhouses and whatever else the Spanish did not set on fire, as the troops on board the transports cheered. "It was war," the correspondent for the *New York Times* wrote, "and it was magnificent."⁵¹

The impatient troops, each carrying three days' rations and one hundred rounds of ammunition, soon began to go ashore. The men had to drop ten to fifteen feet into the small boats the navy provided and were then towed by launches through a rough sea and high surf to the beach or ruined dock. The horses and mules were not so lucky as they were simply dropped into the ocean and forced to swim to shore. The first unit to land was the First U. S. Infantry, Shafter's old regiment, and it was followed by the rest of the Second Infantry Division. The landing soon "took on the aspects of a beach holiday" as the men laughed at the sight of comrades being drenched by big waves.⁵² Despite this atmosphere, by the end of the day six thousand men were ashore.

The Tenth Cavalry landed in the afternoon. Their boats took them up to the ruined dock where they had to jump from their vessel onto the faltering structure.⁵³ The rough sea made this tricky, and two black troopers fell into the water while trying the maneuver. Their heavy equipment pulled them under the waves, and they drowned, the only casualties suffered during the landing.⁵⁴ Once ashore, the regiment moved onto the road, where it remained for half an hour as the adjutant looked for a place to camp. There was no one on the beach directing the incoming regiments.⁵⁵ The

Tenth Cavalry was soon ordered to camp in a knoll three miles from town.

The next day, June 23, the landing continued, and the Second Infantry Division occupied Siboney, allowing the Americans to begin disembarking troops at this point. The division encountered no opposition and established a defensive position as ordered by Shafter. General Wheeler was to place the Cavalry Division slightly to the rear of the Second Infantry Division on the El Camino Real Road. Shafter's intention was to hold his army here until the entire Fifth Corps and its supplies were put ashore.⁵⁶

General Wheeler, however, learned from Cuban insurgents that the Spanish had left a rearguard at Las Guasimas on the Camino Real Road three miles from Siboney. The Spanish occupied a position on a series of rocky hills, upon which they constructed blockhouses and trenches, at the end of a long, narrow valley. Their line formed a "V," with the salient toward Siboney. "Fighting Joe," itching to be the first to engage the Spaniards, decided to attack this position, and he ordered General Samuel Young to bring the Second Cavalry Brigade forward from Daiquiri. On the evening of June 23, General Young marched this brigade, consisting of four squadrons of the Rough Riders (500 men) and one squadron of both the First Cavalry (244 men) and Tenth Cavalry (240 men), eleven miles in a drenching rain to a point just beyond Siboney. The men, cold from the rain, did not go into camp until 11 o'clock.

Young's plan of battle for the next day was simple. Two roads led out from Siboney and into the valley, one to the east, that was really just a trail, and the other to the west. The roads united at Las

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Guasimas and were never more than one and one-half miles apart, though dense and virtually impassable jungle lay between them. Young divided his force of 960 men and officers into two columns. He ordered the Rough Riders to proceed down the east road, while the regulars took the west road. The two columns were to attack any Spaniards they encountered, attempt to connect in the valley, and then strike the Spanish flanks on Las Guasimas.⁵⁷

On the morning of June 24, the regulars were awake by 3:30 A. M., after only four and half hours of sleep. They were on the march by 5:45, with the First Cavalry in the lead and the Tenth Cavalry's First Squadron immediately behind. The column proceeded down the Camino Real Road, the men joking among themselves. At 7:20 A. M., the four troops of the Tenth Cavalry were near a clearing twenty yards from a small creek when the Spaniards opened fire on the column, firing volley after volley into the exposed troops. Every trooper dove for cover in the thick underbrush that lined the road except for Sergeant Samuel Douglas, who calmly stood his ground and searched for the Spanish position. As bullets fell among them, Sergeant Presly Holliday realized "what an awful thing it is to be in actual battle."⁵⁸ Shortly thereafter, on the east road, the Rough Riders engaged the Spaniards and a general skirmish broke out along the entire line.

The First Cavalry went forward to engage the Spaniards, spreading out into the jungle on both sides of the road, and the Hotchkiss mountain guns, manned by a squad of Troop B, Tenth Cavalry, opened fire on the Spanish trenches. The guns had a limited effect because of the smoke that soon enveloped the battlefield.⁵⁹

Troop E, Tenth Cavalry, was placed in support of the guns, which put the troop in an open space in plain view of the Spaniards. The men held this position for an hour and a half without firing a shot, so as not to fire on their own men, and suffered only one casualty, Corporal William White, who was killed.⁶⁰

The Tenth Cavalry's three uncommitted troops (A, B, and I) remained under cover for another fifteen minutes before General Young ordered B and I to support the First Cavalry's right flank. Troop B dashed across the road, where four men were wounded, and then moved into the jungle. The men were unable to pass through a wire fence in their immediate front, and drifted further to the right before finding a place to penetrate the fence. The troop then moved up the hill, forming the extreme right of the American line, and lost their captain, who wandered into the lines of Troop K, First Cavalry.⁶¹ The incessant Spanish fire and the sight of wounded men demoralized many of the black troopers, but First Sergeant John Buck took command of the troop, rallied the soldiers, and coolly led the men up the hill by calling out individuals by name and telling them what to do.⁶²

Troop I advanced on the immediate left of Troop B and on the right of the First Cavalry. The troop moved steadily up the hill, cutting its way through the dense underbrush and using the vegetation for cover. The advance was quickened by Private Sherman Harris, who picked out cover for men in the rear. The troopers did not fire, for fear of hitting their own men, but Private John Boland provided cover fire by picking off Spanish marksmen.⁶³

A gap still existed in the American line between the Rough Riders and the First Cavalry, which the Tenth Cavalry's Troop A was ordered to fill. In doing so, it played the most important part in the battle. As shrapnel tore through the surrounding underbrush, the troop moved into the thick jungle on the left side of the road and soon linked up with the left flank of the First Cavalry. The troop continued to move into the center of the advancing American line and up the hill, hacking its way through the underbrush and eventually linking with the extreme right of the Rough Riders. Thus, the troop secured the exposed flanks of both the First Cavalry and the Rough Riders, allowing those units to move up the hill without fear of an enfilading fire.⁶⁴

Advancing up the hill, Troop A encountered what one observer called "the strongest point in the Spanish position."⁶⁵ To overcome this position, the men adopted the "method used in fighting Indians."⁶⁶ They did not waste time firing upon an enemy they could not see, as the Rough Riders were doing, but instead slowly worked their way up the hill, using the thick vegetation for cover, until they reached a point where they were able to fire directly into some exposed Spanish trenches. In doing so, the men of Troop A acted on their own initiative and without direct orders.

At this point, the entire American line moved irresistibly up the hill and entered the Spanish works. The advance resembled a race, as each unit attempted to be the first to penetrate the main Spanish defenses. The Spaniards made this easy, however, as their units quickly retreated. A detachment of Troop K, First Cavalry, entered the trenches first, followed immediately by the Tenth

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Cavalry's Troop I. The rest of the American battle line was soon atop the hill, but no pursuit was undertaken due to exhaustion from the heat, the long march of the night before, and the lack of sleep before the battle.

The skirmish at Las Guasimas was over by 10:30 A. M. The Americans suffered one officer and fifteen men killed and six officers and forty-six men wounded. The Tenth Cavalry lost one man killed and ten wounded. This sharp little battle, according to Shafter, "had an inspiring effect" upon the American troops.⁶⁷

In their first major engagement in this war, the black troopers had fought extremely well. The men did not panic, advanced straight up the hill without firing unnecessarily, and demonstrated initiative. The white soldiers of the First Cavalry and the Rough Riders both praised the conduct of the black troopers. "The Tenth Cavalry," wrote Private Arthur Cosby of the Rough Riders, "did very good work."⁶⁸ In the press, however, the Rough Riders won the lion's share of the glory, but the Tenth Cavalry received praise for its performance. One observer argued that the "honors of the engagement" went to the black regiment because it rendered "more valuable services than the other troops engaged."⁶⁹

At the war's conclusion, a myth developed that the Tenth Cavalry saved the Rough Riders from destruction after the First Volunteer Cavalry was ambushed, but there is no truth to this. The Spanish did not ambush the Rough Riders, as they expected to meet the enemy at some point along the trail, and the Spanish attack was no surprise. Troop A of the Tenth Cavalry provided important support to the Rough Riders exposed right flank, but this did not save

the Rough Riders from heavy losses as the black press would report for years to come.

As the Fifth Corps began its campaign in Cuba, a select group of the Tenth Cavalry's Third Squadron was embarking on a special operation in Cuba. Since the beginning of the war, the army had sent expeditions to Cuba to supply the Cuban insurgents with arms, munitions, and other supplies.⁷⁰ Lieutenant C. P. Johnson, Tenth Cavalry, prepared an expedition that included fifty especially selected soldiers of the Tenth Cavalry, a pack train of sixty-five animals, a small group of American volunteers, and 375 Cubans under Brigadier General Emilio Nunez. On June 21, the party left Tampa on board two transports heavily loaded with supplies. The gunboat *Peoria* escorted them to Cuba.⁷¹

The little flotilla arrived off Cuba on June 29 and prepared for its assault. That night, the group made an unsuccessful attempt to land at the mouth of the San Juan River. Heavy Spanish gunfire and a coral reef that prevented the boats from reaching shore forced the landing party to retreat, and Johnson decided to find another spot to put his force ashore.⁷² On the night of June 30, Johnson attacked the blockhouse at Tayabacoa, located just west of Tunas. The *Peoria* shelled the Spanish position and provided cover fire for the landing boats as the men went ashore. Despite the *Peoria's* presence, the Spanish garrison of one hundred experienced regular soldiers easily beat off the American amphibious assault, inflicting eight casualties.⁷³ The assault force retreated but was unable to carry out the wounded because the Spaniards destroyed two of the American landing crafts and continued a heavy fire upon the shoreline, where

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the wounded tried to find shelter. Johnson asked for volunteers to rescue them. Five men were chosen: Lieutenant George P. Ahern, Sergeant William H. Thompkins, Corporal George Wanton, and Privates Dennis Bell and Fitz Lee.⁷⁴

Aboard a water-logged boat, the black soldiers made their way to shore as quietly as possible, the glow of the moon illuminating the way. The Spanish fire continued, but the small party arrived at the beach without incident, quickly put the wounded onboard, and then noiselessly rowed back to the waiting transports. Johnson commended the men for this "very gallant deed," and after the war he recommended that all four enlisted men receive the Medal of Honor. In June 1899, the War Department gave the four black cavalymen the nation's highest award for valor.⁷⁵

The mission, though, was not finished. One of Johnson's two transports ran aground and was completely stuck for over twenty-four hours. With Spanish reinforcements rushing into the area, Johnson contemplated leaving the ship, but the gunboat *Helena* unexpectedly came to the rescue and managed to haul the transport afloat. While this was occurring, Johnson learned that the Spaniards believed that the Americans were going to land in force at Tunas. He then decided to deceive the Spaniards by sending the *Helena* and *Peoria* to bombard the Spanish positions at Tunas, while he landed forty miles down the coast at Palo Alto. The plan worked perfectly, and Johnson executed his landing with no problems.⁷⁶

After unloading the supplies they had brought with them, the transports were sent back to the United States; Johnson and his cavalymen began operating with General Maximo Gomez and the

Cuban insurgents. The black troopers soon became disenchanted with their white officer. After capturing a Spanish fort and blockhouse, Johnson discovered a barrel of rum and proceeded to get drunk. He hauled down the Spanish flag and ran his own blouse up the flag pole. The Cubans, angry over his performance, asked him to leave. He refused and then ordered his men to fire upon the Cubans. The black soldiers, knowing a massacre would ensue if they complied, disobeyed the order; the explosive situation soon calmed down.⁷⁷

After the skirmish at Las Guasimas, the Fifth Corps advanced to Sevilla, eight miles west of Santiago, and established camp. The encampment was located on a beautiful, well-watered sight from which Santiago and the surrounding country was clearly visible.⁷⁸ The army's rapid advance caused supply problems, however, because it moved forward before an adequate amount of supplies were ashore, and a continuous rain turned the already poor roads into mud and swelled streams, making them difficult to cross.⁷⁹ Shafter kept the Fifth Corps at Sevilla for the rest of June, building up supplies and reconnoitering the Spanish positions outside of Santiago.⁸⁰

The two squadrons of the Tenth Cavalry, reunited after the skirmish, participated in these reconnaissance's. There was no contact with the Spanish because, after Las Guasimas, they retreated behind their defensive works outside of Santiago. These patrols were uneventful, serving merely to give the troopers something to do, and they acquitted themselves well. On one patrol, however, a new recruit sat down and did not go forward with the rest of his

squad. The First Sergeant brought the recruit to the troops commanding officer and indignity reported that, "Such a man isn't fit to be a soldier."⁸¹

On June 30, Shafter finalized his plan of battle for the attack against Santiago. He decided to assault the outer-works of the Spanish defenses at El Caney, six miles northeast of Santiago, and the San Juan Heights, two miles east of Santiago. The Second Infantry Division was to attack El Caney on the morning of July 1. Shafter expected the Second Infantry Division to take El Caney within two hours and then move against the right of the San Juan Heights. The First Infantry Division and General Wheeler's Cavalry Division were to wait at El Pozo, a hill located east of the San Juan Heights, until El Caney fell; then they were to assault the San Juan Heights.⁸²

The American position on El Pozo lay one and a quarter miles from the San Juan Heights, that included both San Juan Hill and the smaller Kettle Hill. Between El Pozo and the San Juan Heights was a basin through which the Camino Real Road passed, running directly from El Pozo to San Juan Hill. The basin was covered in thick wood and undergrowth and traversed by the San Juan River, which flowed south, parallel and three-quarters of mile from the Heights. Two hundred yards beyond the San Juan River, the jungle gave way to six hundred yards of open ground overgrown by waist high grass and strung with barbed wire.⁸³ This plain led directly to the base of San Juan Hill. Just to the north of San Juan Hill was Kettle Hill, a small protrusion with a farm house atop it. On both hills, the Spaniards constructed blockhouses and trenches, but they placed only 521 men in these positions.⁸⁴

The Cavalry Division marched to El Pozo in the early evening of June 30, arriving at the abandoned sugar plantation at about nine o'clock. The Tenth Cavalry bedded down about four hundred yards south of the sugar mill. The regiment awoke well before daybreak on July 1, ate breakfast, and by dawn, according to Sergeant Horace Bivens, was "ready for the perilous duty."⁸⁵ As the sun rose, Lieutenant John Pershing realized that the day would be "ideally beautiful" with a cloudless sky and mild breeze.⁸⁶

By six thirty, as the tropical heat became unbearable, artillery and small arms fire were heard coming from El Caney, and the American artillery on El Pozo began to fire upon the Spanish works on San Juan Hill. This fire was ineffective, and the Spaniards quickly sighted the American cannons and easily silenced them, thus ending the American artillery's role in the battle. As the artillery fire had begun, Sergeant William Payne turned to his platoon and remarked, "Boys, we are in for it."⁸⁷

Shafter's plan soon began to unravel. The Second Infantry Division was unable to take El Caney in two hours and did not occupy it until 4:30 P. M. As the First Infantry Division and the Cavalry Division moved toward San Juan Hill, marching side by side, they became congested along the narrow road, and their progress was torturously slow, putting them well behind schedule. Upon reaching the San Juan River, an American observation balloon discovered a trail just before the river that led to the left. The infantry division was sent down the path, while the cavalry continued along the road to the right.

Shortly thereafter, the Tenth Cavalry, bringing up the rear of the Second Cavalry Brigade, reached the river and prepared to cross. But the balloon, hovering above the ford, attracted Spanish fire from the blockhouses on San Juan Hill. Spanish artillery and small arms fire rained down upon the exposed troops of the Tenth Cavalry and the other American regiments. "The atmosphere," wrote Sergeant Edward L. Baker, "seemed perfectly alive with flying missiles from bursting shells over head, and rifle bullets."⁸⁸ The Seventy First New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment, positioned in a sunken lane next to the ford, nearly stampeded at the sound of the gunfire; they then threw themselves down on the ground and held up the advance of the rest of the regiments.⁸⁹ Only ineffective Spanish fire, aimed at the balloon and not the troops below, prevented heavy casualties.

The black troopers of the Tenth Cavalry threw down their bedrolls and packs, leaving behind everything except their arms and ammunition, and looked for cover along the side of the road. Captain John Bigelow, commanding Troop D, ordered his men into the woods, faced them to the right, and then advanced through the undergrowth, thus separating his troop from the regiment for the remainder of the battle.⁹⁰

The rest of the regiment waded into the river until it reached the opposite bank, where it deployed under cover on the left flank of the Second Cavalry Brigade, and waited for orders.⁹¹ In this crossing the Tenth Cavalry suffered severe casualties, including Private Lewis Marshall, who was wounded in waist-deep water. Sergeant Edward L. Baker heard Marshall groan and ignoring the pleas of other soldiers to remain under cover immediately rushed to Marshall's

assistance. With Spanish shrapnel and shells flying, Baker pulled Marshall out of the river and went for the surgeon.⁹² After the war, Baker was awarded the Medal of Honor.

The regiment remained next to the river bank for a half hour as Generals Joseph Wheeler and Jacob Kent, who commanded the First Infantry Division, decided what to do. At the moment, they continued to take fire from the Spanish positions on San Juan and Kettle Hill. It was obvious that El Caney had not fallen and that they could not link up with the Second Infantry Division. Since their divisions were now positioned for their attack, the infantry division to the left of the road and the cavalry to the right, it was decided to assault the enemy positions.⁹³

Shortly after one in the afternoon, the regiments were ordered to form a line of battle on the edge of the creek and advance toward the Spanish entrenchment's. The Cavalry Division headed toward Kettle Hill, the First Brigade in the lead with the Second Brigade in support, but this formation soon broke apart. As the troops moved forward, the dense vegetation and barbed wire fences slowed their progress and caused troops to intermingle with troops and regiments to intermingle with regiments. Individual soldiers from one troop joined other troops, and confused troops entered the ranks of other regiments.⁹⁴ The mixed up commands emerged from the jungle and entered the open plain of waist high grass that stretched six hundred yards before them; Spanish shot and shell rained down upon the long line from the heights above; and then the American battle line of white and black soldiers charged the hill.

Most of the troops of the Tenth Cavalry participated in the charge on Kettle Hill. As the black troopers emerged from the jungle, a foreign officer yelled out, "Men, for heaven's sake, don't go up that hill. It will be impossible for human beings to take that position."⁹⁵ Ignoring his pleas, the black soldiers advanced at double time, hopping over or crawling under barbed wire fences and firing, yelling, and charging, according to Corporal Walter Board, "with the ferocity of lions."⁹⁶ Several officers were killed and wounded, but the enlisted men never wavered and continued up the hill. Sergeant George Berry, the regimental color-bearer, picked up the fallen colors of the Third Cavalry and carried both flags, shouting, "Dress on the colors, boys, dress on the colors!"⁹⁷ At last, the top of the hill was reached, but the Spaniards were already retreating toward San Juan Hill.

The cavalry regiments remained atop Kettle Hill for several minutes, exchanging fire with the Spaniards atop San Juan Hill, and then began moving against this Spanish position. The Tenth Cavalry and the rest of the Cavalry Division advanced off Kettle Hill, crossed the small valley, and then charged San Juan Hill. In many places, all semblance of organization and discipline were lost, and soldiers began firing in the air or even into the ranks of cavalymen ahead of them. A platoon of Rough Riders was about to fire on a group of soldiers near the top of the hill when Sergeant Presly Holliday ran at them, yelling and warning them that those were American soldiers. The platoon did not fire.⁹⁸ The Spaniards continued to pour small arms and artillery fire down on the advancing troops, but to no avail. The white and black cavalymen soon reached the top of the hill, and

the Spaniards retreated toward Santiago. Upon reaching the crest, Sergeant Horace Bivens planted a small United States flag given to him by a little girl in Illinois. "I hardly knew," First Sergeant Peter McCown later said, "how I reached the top of the hill."⁹⁹

As the Cavalry Division began to move up San Juan Hill, the Tenth Cavalry's Troop D, which the regiment believed was lost, joined the infantry assault against the Spanish position several hundred yards to the left. After leaving the regiment at the river, the troop hacked its way through the dense jungle until it reached the open plain just as the infantry were beginning to charge San Juan Hill. The troop was temporarily delayed by a barbed wire fence, and Sergeant George Elliott calmly stood before the fence and fired upon the Spanish position as the men tried to find a way to cut the wire. Finally, Captain John Bigelow jumped over the fence and called for his men to follow. The troopers then swarmed up the hill, moving at double time, firing over the heads of comrades, and cheering. Bigelow was wounded halfway up the hill, but several enlisted men, including Sergeant Elliott and First Sergeant William Givens, took effective command of the troop and led it to the top of the hill.¹⁰⁰

Once on top of San Juan Hill, the American soldiers had little time to celebrate. The men were in an exposed position, and the Spaniards, firmly entrenched in their main works before Santiago, continued their deadly fire upon the American line. The Spaniards also made "repeated and fierce attempts" to regain the hill, but the cavalry held its positions.¹⁰¹ Firing ceased around 7:30 P. M., and the troopers spent the night digging entrenchments.

Early in the morning of July 2, the battle resumed and continued throughout the day. The men, exhausted from the previous day's fighting, exposed to the burning sun, and without water, suffered, but they maintained their positions. Sergeant Holliday said it was "the most disagreeable [day] I have ever spent. With bullets whizzing past one's head for hours at a time, now and then taking off a man . . . [it] gives the nerves one of the most severe strains I believe to which they can be subjected."¹⁰² That night the Spaniards launched a determined attack with heavy artillery and rifle fire, but the American soldiers once again beat off the assault. The rest of the night the men spent digging and strengthening entrenchments and reorganizing the line. The Tenth Cavalry, its troops reunited, took position on the right of the First Cavalry and on the left of the Rough Riders.

The firing continued on July 3, but on the Fourth of July a truce was called that lasted for the next six days. The Tenth Cavalry spent the time improving its trenches, digging latrines, and building a drainage system.¹⁰³ The men also located and buried their dead, some of whom vultures had already begun to devour.¹⁰⁴ The regiment lost two officers and five men killed and eight officers and sixty-one men wounded in the engagement on July 1.¹⁰⁵ The suffering did not end during the truce. It rained nearly everyday, and the trenches became flooded with water that eventually turned them into mud. Men collapsed from exposure to the hot sun, and tropical diseases, such as malaria and yellow fever, began to appear. First Sergeant J. C. Pendergrass summed up the situation:

I had no coat; hardly any shirt, it being torn off by wire fences; no blanket; eat before day; not half rations; no coffee; wringing wet from wading streams, sweat and rain. Did not take my shoes off for twenty days. I hope to see no more of war.¹⁰⁶

On July 10, the truce ended and firing was resumed, but it stopped the next afternoon, and negotiations resumed between Shafter and the Spaniards on the terms of surrender. The formal surrender occurred on July 17. The Tenth Cavalry assembled in the trenches to witness the ceremony, but, due to the jungle and its similarity to the color of the Spanish uniforms, the black troopers could see little.¹⁰⁷ As the army raised the United States flag over Santiago, every soldier shouted and expressed, as Sergeant S. W. Douglas said, "great joy."¹⁰⁸

The joy was soon overshadowed by an epidemic of yellow fever that swept through the entire Fifth Corps, and it was decided to send the army to Montauk Point, New York, to recuperate. On August 12, the Tenth Cavalry left Cuba. The men were proud of their accomplishments and believed, as Sergeant Peter McCown wrote, that the war "clearly demonstrated . . . that the Negro soldier performed his duty as a true and loyal American, and did not hesitate, but went into the very thickest of the fight."¹⁰⁹

Black Americans were especially proud of the accomplishments of the Tenth Cavalry and the other three black regiments. The editor of the *Iowa State Bystander* wrote that "we are proud of the colored troops, the heroes of the day."¹¹⁰ The *Cleveland Gazette* argued that "the troopers of the Tenth Cavalry were the bravest of the brave."¹¹¹ Blacks hung pictures in their homes of the black soldiers charging up

San Juan Hill, wrote poetry describing their accomplishments, and published several books on their service in the war, including *Under Fire with the 10th Cavalry*, which was a collection of reminiscences from members of the regiment. John Bigelow believed that the success of the black regiments "increased the self-respect and stimulated the aspirations of the colored race."¹¹²

For a brief moment in the late summer of 1898, white Americans also praised the service of the Tenth Cavalry, especially the white soldiers who fought with them. Captain William Beck, Tenth Cavalry, said they were "magnificent . . . exhibiting an intrepidity which marks the first-class soldier."¹¹³ One Rough Rider, who admitted he was a Southerner who did not like blacks, said, "Now I know what they are made of. I respect them. . . . [F]or all of the men that I saw fighting, there was none to beat the Tenth Cavalry."¹¹⁴ A soldier from the Seventy-First New York Volunteer Infantry admitted that "I never saw such fighting as those Tenth Cavalry men did."¹¹⁵ Theodore Roosevelt wrote that he wished "no better men beside me in battle than these colored troops," and he promised to say much about them in his coming book on the campaign.¹¹⁶ The army gave the men of the Tenth Cavalry official praise when it awarded them five Medals of Honor and eleven Certificates of Merit and commissioned six enlisted men in the black volunteer regiments.

White newspapers also praised the Tenth Cavalry, and the regiment was well-received in such cities as Philadelphia and Washington. The editor of the *New York Mail and Express* wrote, "All honors to the black troopers of the gallant Tenth! No more

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striking example of bravery and coolness has been shown . . . than by the colored veterans of the Tenth Cavalry."¹¹⁷ The editor of the *New York Journal* believed that the Rough Riders and the Tenth Cavalry were the "epitome of almost our whole national character."¹¹⁸ In October, the regiment participated in parades in both Philadelphia and Washington, receiving an enthusiastic reception in both places. In Washington, President William McKinley reviewed the Tenth, and people eager to see the black troopers filled the cities streets.¹¹⁹

Much of this praise, however, was tainted with racist assumptions that often portrayed the black soldiers as ignorant or subservient. Newspapers quoted black soldiers as speaking in a racially stereotypical dialogue. A writer in the *Philadelphia Record* quoted one Tenth Cavalry soldier as saying, "Well, ef yo' b'longs to the Tenth . . . 'you'se jest de gemmen Ise lookin' fur."¹²⁰ One book, *Thrilling Stories of the War by Returned Heroes*, included several stories about the black soldiers that portrayed them as children who loved to laugh, play musical instruments, and eat fruit. When describing why the black soldiers did not duck when bullets flew by but did for shrapnel, the book implied that it was sexual, quoting one black soldier as saying it was because the shrapnel said, "Oo-oo oo-oo; I want yeh, I want yeh, I want yeh, mah honey!"¹²¹ Much of the praise whites gave blacks was condescending. General Joseph Wheeler said blacks made fine soldiers if their white officers were courageous and gave "them the moral influence of good leadership."¹²² One white soldier who praised the black troops also said they "keep in their place. I have no idea we will have any trouble with them."¹²³

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This racially motivated praise faded away by the end of 1898, and the Tenth Cavalry's moment of glory ended as whites began to minimize or forget the regiment's accomplishments. In December, Mason Mitchell, an actor who served in the Rough Riders and a white man, appeared in Richmond, Virginia, and asked the crowd to pay tribute "to the gallantry and bravery of the Tenth Cavalry."¹²⁴ The crowd hissed, yelled "put him out" and "stop him," and continued to heckle Marshall until the curtain was drawn and he was removed from the stage.¹²⁵

Theodore Roosevelt did the most damage to the reputation of the Tenth Cavalry in his classic account of the Santiago campaign, *The Rough Riders*. Roosevelt, as he promised, praised the conduct of the black troopers, but then wrote that their success was due to white officers, upon whom the black soldiers were "peculiarly dependent."¹²⁶ Only a few black non-commissioned officers, according to Roosevelt, could accept responsibility like whites, and he believed that whites could never expect the majority of blacks to be leaders. Roosevelt also implied that black soldiers were cowardly, writing that during the fighting atop San Juan Hill several black soldiers got a "little uneasy" and started for the rear, and he was forced to draw a pistol to stop them.¹²⁷ Because of Roosevelt's popularity and reputation, these comments reinforced white perceptions that black soldiers lacked leadership capabilities and were liable to flee a fight if not properly led by white officers. Roosevelt's comments seriously hurt the ability of black soldiers to become commissioned officers, and damaged their reputation in the army, which, in time, threatened the black soldiers very existence.

Roosevelt's book also clouded the historical record. His account of the charge upon the San Juan Heights, over-emphasizing the role of the Rough Riders while down-playing the performance of all the regular cavalry regiments, both white and black, became the one that Americans remembered. The Rough Riders entered American myth as the rugged cowboys and aristocrats who, by themselves, fearlessly charged up San Juan Hill, their glamorous Colonel leading the charge on horseback. The accomplishments of the other five cavalry regiments and the infantry division were erased from American memory, and the heroic performance of the Tenth Cavalry was forgotten by all but a few Americans.

The attempts by black soldiers of the Tenth Cavalry to counter Roosevelt's account proved unsuccessful; their inability to do so, combined with their failure to secure commissions in the regular army, frustrated the enlisted men. Sergeant Presly Holliday wrote a long letter to the *New York Age* refuting Roosevelt's charges of black cowardice on San Juan Hill and that blacks were not qualified for command. Holliday's efforts had little effect and did nothing to mitigate the "immeasurable harm" of Roosevelt's charges.¹²⁸ Black enlisted men were disillusioned by Roosevelt's comments and their failure to secure positions as commissioned officers. They felt the army was robbing them of "their laurels."¹²⁹ Not one Tenth Cavalry enlisted man received a commission in the regular army, and the six men commissioned in the volunteers lost their commissions when the army disbanded their regiments. These men either had to retire or re-enlist in the regulars as enlisted men. The Tenth Cavalry's enlisted men believed that the nation ignored their deeds.

The Tenth Cavalry did not immediately feel the effects of the backlash against their service and in mid-August arrived at Montauk Point hoping merely to recuperate from their service in Cuba. Montauk, however, was a disaster. The camp was not ready to receive large numbers of soldiers and lacked adequate hospital beds, wood for barracks or latrines, food, and water. Many doctors feared that there might be a typhoid epidemic if the regiments were not removed.¹³⁰ The Tenth Cavalry, many of its men exhausted, weak, and suffering from tropical diseases, was not given the wood necessary to construct latrines. As a result, the regiment was forced to dig holes, and many men, according to the acting regimental commander, "could not relieve themselves without a support" or get close enough without falling in.¹³¹ The regiments requests for lumber brought no results, and the camp became so filthy that Major J. L. Fowler raided the supply depot of the volunteer engineers to obtain the necessary lumber.¹³² The latrines were built the next day.

In late August, the Third Squadron, which had remained in Florida throughout the summer, arrived at Montauk. These men were happy to leave the Sunshine State as their stay had not been pleasant. On one occasion before they left some Tenth Cavalry soldiers were waiting at the railroad depot when a white sheriff took a prisoner onto a waiting train. Several white soldiers from the First Cavalry forced the sheriff to give them the prisoner, but the sheriff blamed the incident on the black troopers of the Tenth Cavalry. The entire Third Squadron was ordered to line up and allow the sheriff to inspect them, searching for the culprits. He did not recognize anyone and left, but he never searched the camp of the First Cavalry.¹³³

At Montauk, however, the regiment did not escape racism. In mid-September, the Tenth Cavalry was the only regiment required to furnish details for fatigue duty. From September 15-18, these details did a total of 650 days of fatigue duty; on September 21 they were again ordered to perform this duty, causing the regimental commander to complain and ask for an investigation. The important duty these details performed was caring for and shipping the Rough Riders horses.¹³⁴

In mid-October, the Tenth Cavalry was sent to Huntsville, Alabama, located in the one region of the country in which the black soldiers did not want to serve because they believed the South offered them little protection.¹³⁵ Their fears were soon borne out, and the next five months were the worst the regiment ever experienced. The army failed to protect the black soldiers and in many instances was the instigator of the racism.

On the day of their arrival, several troopers went to the red-light district and discovered it was closed to blacks. An altercation occurred, and the military police were summoned. These white soldiers arrested one black trooper, but some of his armed comrades refused to allow the military police to take him away. A gun battle erupted between the white and black soldiers, killing two whites and wounding three blacks. The military police arrested several black troopers for their involvement.¹³⁶

Another confrontation between the Tenth Cavalry and the military police soon occurred. Some members of the Tenth went to a circus in the city, where the police searched them for concealed weapons. Apparently, the police had orders to search any black

soldier because it was believed they were coming to the circus with carbines. Three Tenth Cavalry soldiers, one of whom did have a pistol, were arrested and detained over night. The authorities did not press charges and released the three men in the morning.¹³⁷

Captain S. L. Woodward, who understood and sympathized with the black soldiers' difficult position, complained to the Adjutant General. The Adjutant General, however, demanded that Woodward explain why "these men had authority to wear" pistols.¹³⁸ The commander of the military police, Captain S. W. Dunning, had reported that his men did not have orders to search just the Tenth Cavalry and that they found three pistols on the black soldiers.¹³⁹ Woodward answered that the men were not issued pistols and that no pistols were missing from the regiment. The one soldier on whom a pistol was found claimed he discovered it in the back of a wagon; his story was verified by several reliable non-commissioned officers. Woodward further accused the military police of singling out the Tenth Cavalry and argued that the rowdy conduct of white soldiers, some of whom had recently ridden through Huntsville drunk, then had fallen off their horses and vomited in the streets, did not bring the same scrutiny or punishment.¹⁴⁰

The Tenth Cavalry also faced problems with local white civilians. One soldier complained that whites were continually "making threats against us," and feared that the disarmed men "were at the mercy of any set of thugs."¹⁴¹ This soldier's fears were not misplaced. One night in mid-November two Tenth Cavalry soldiers were returning to camp from town when unknown assailants ambushed and killed them. Several nights later, a black man, "Horse"

Douglas, near camp with a pistol was arrested by the sentries. Apparently, he was waiting to shoot any black soldier who appeared. Douglas claimed that an unknown white man had put a reward out for every Tenth Cavalry soldier that was killed. This incident both angered and disillusioned the black troopers. They found it hard to believe, as one soldier said, that after their service in Cuba they would be subjected to "a more deadly enemy" in the United States: an assassin of their own race, paid by whites, who "lays and waits for you at night."¹⁴²

Even in its camp, the Tenth Cavalry was subjected to racism while in Huntsville. The regiment was stationed at Camp A. G. Forse, located just outside of the city. Unlike other regiments, the Tenth was assigned to an encampment that offered no protection from the wind.¹⁴³ The Quartermaster failed to provide the regiment with enough lumber for officers' quarters, kitchens, and, most importantly, latrines. Other regiments, however, did have enough lumber. For nearly a month, the regiment's officers requested that lumber be supplied "for the health and comfort of the troops."¹⁴⁴ No lumber was provided, however, even after one of the regiment's latrines blew down in a gale, leaving the regiment with only two to service twelve hundred officers and men (proper sanitation required one for every one hundred men).¹⁴⁵

At first, the requests for lumber were polite, but as no lumber was provided they became more insistent and sarcastic. In mid-November, the Adjutant General sent an inspector to investigate the regiment's complaints, but the sole purpose of his visit was to determine whether the camps tents had floors, which they did. This

led Captain Woodward, acting regimental commander, to complain sarcastically that the regiment "supposed that the Quartermaster's Department was sufficiently skilled in the knowledge of what material was required to construct" latrines.¹⁴⁶ "I believe," Woodward concluded, "the Quartermaster Department have some duties in this regard."¹⁴⁷ The regiment still did not receive the necessary lumber, forcing the regiment's new commanding officer, Colonel S. M. Whiteside, to send yet another request. He feared that typhoid fever might break out if proper latrines were not built.¹⁴⁸ This stirred the Quartermaster Department out of its lethargy, and it provided the requested lumber at the end of November. The lumber supplied, according to Colonel Whiteside, was "the most unsatisfactory I have ever seen issued."¹⁴⁹ Despite this complaint, the regiment received no more lumber and was forced to make do.

The last two months the Tenth Cavalry spent in Huntsville were mercifully uneventful, and at the end of January 1899 the regiment left for duty in Texas. The black soldiers were more than happy to leave Alabama, but their journey to Texas did not bring any relief from racial attacks. The regiment left Huntsville in two contingents. The smaller one passed through Meridian, Mississippi, on the night of January 30. Before the train left the city, unknown snipers fired upon the cars, shattering windows, breaking door locks, and punching holes in the sides of the cars. The only injuries were cuts and scratches caused by falling glass.¹⁵⁰

The regiment continued on its journey and passed through Houston, where unknown assailants again fired upon the darkened cars in which the troopers were sleeping. This time, the black

troopers returned the fire; the crack of their .30 caliber carbines was clearly audible in the night, before an officer managed to stop them. The men once again only suffered cuts and scratches. This incident was widely reported in Houston, where residents accused the black troopers of indiscriminately shooting up houses along the railroad track. Lieutenant Colonel T. A. Baldwin was shocked by these incidents, and he complained to the War Department that his troops were not able "to pass through the country they are sworn to protect without danger from hidden assassins."¹⁵¹

The larger contingent of the Tenth Cavalry also met racial hostility when it arrived at Texarkana, Texas. This incident was similar to the one that occurred when the regiment arrived at Huntsville. The regiment stopped at Texarkana for a three-hour rest, and several black troopers used the break to patronize the Belmont House in the red light district. The house was for whites only, and the troopers were ordered to leave as soon as they arrived. The black soldiers refused, and a distraught woman ran out and rushed to the courthouse, where she claimed the house had been taken over by the soldiers.¹⁵² The black troopers soon gave up their excursion and returned to the waiting train. A police officer overtook one black soldier as he approached the train and attempted to arrest him. Other soldiers released him, and he boarded one of the cars, but a hostile crowd, supposedly carrying dynamite, gathered around the train. In response, the black soldiers on board brandished their carbines out of the windows, threatening the crowd.¹⁵³ At this point, order was brought to the scene, and the regiment's officers allowed civilian officials to board and search the train for the culprits. They

were not able to identify anyone, and the train was allowed to continue on to its destination.¹⁵⁴

The Texarkana affair quickly became a political issue. Newspapers reported that the Tenth Cavalry had committed "depredations" from Little Rock to Texarkana. Horace W. Vaughan, an attorney in Texarkana, wrote to Texas Governor Joseph D. Sayers and told him that the black troopers "were very insulting" and nearly started a riot.¹⁵⁵ He asked the governor to demand that the War Department conduct an investigation. Sayers did this, sending telegrams to both of Texas's senators and to Secretary of War Russell A. Alger. Alger responded by complaining to the governor about the sniper incidents and asked both Sayers and the Governor of Mississippi to investigate them. He also sent an army officer to investigate the Texarkana affair.¹⁵⁶ In the end, the investigator was unable to discover which soldiers had caused the problems in Texarkana, as both the officers and the enlisted men of the regiment denied any knowledge, and the investigations of the sniper incidents turned up nothing.¹⁵⁷

Ironically, in March, Sayers was forced to ask for the Tenth Cavalry's assistance after a smallpox epidemic occurred in Laredo. A quarantine was imposed on the city, but infected residents refused to leave their homes and go to a pesthouse, and an angry crowd gathered to protect the ill. The Texas Rangers were unable to disperse the crowd, so Sayers asked for help from the Tenth Cavalry. Thirty-five men from Fort McIntosh, armed with a gatling gun, were sent, and they helped to disperse the crowd and enforce the quarantine. The city's mayor praised them for their success.¹⁵⁸

Nevertheless, the enlisted men of the Tenth Cavalry were eager to leave Texas and the South. On May 1, the regiment embarked on transports for Cuba, where they were sent as an occupation force. After their experiences in Alabama and Texas, Cuba seemed like a paradise, and many black soldiers would remember their service in Cuba as they finest they ever had.¹⁵⁹

Chapter 4

A Credit To Their Flag

In the years immediately following the Spanish American War, the regular army expanded, but black Americans were not included in this expansion. By 1902, the army contained 59,806 enlisted men.¹ The army did not add any new black regiments and the number of blacks in the army remained at its pre-war level of roughly 4000. The army refused to allow blacks to serve in the artillery, believing blacks lacked the intelligence necessary, and the army only allowed a few blacks to serve in both the Signal Corps and the Hospital Corps.² Two black enlisted men did pass the examination for commissions in the regular army and became second lieutenants; a third, an officer in a volunteer regiment, was appointed as a captain in the Paymaster Department. These were token gestures, however, and the army made no real effort to commission more blacks.³ White Americans continued to believe that black soldiers lacked the ability to handle responsibilities and needed white officers. The excellent performance of the Tenth Cavalry and the other three black regiments in the Spanish American War brought no rewards for blacks in the military.

The enlisted men of the Tenth Cavalry confronted these problems as best they could and also dealt with the racism that was an every day factor in their lives. In the various campaigns in which

the regiment participated, the non-commissioned officers demonstrated once again that they were capable of providing leadership and handling responsibilities. Dealing with racism was particularly difficult because it most often manifested itself not in violent confrontations but as a fear that the black soldiers were a dangerous element. The enlisted men had to be on their best behavior at all times in order to win acceptance, as the slightest hint of impropriety often brought criticism.

On May 7, 1899, the Tenth Cavalry returned to the scene of its recent exploits in Cuba. The regiment was assigned to the District of Santiago de Cuba. Manzanillo was the site of the regimental headquarters, but, because of the mountainous character of much of the province, most of the regiment was scattered throughout a number of small garrisons.⁴

The regiment's first few months were spent chasing bandits that continued to raid in the province. Small patrols and parties of scouts scoured the countryside to acquaint themselves with local roads and trails and to prevent crimes.⁵ The regiment also placed guards along the coast to prevent bandits from purchasing large quantities of arms and to stop vessels suspected of having armed men aboard from sailing.⁶ Enlisted men commanded many of these detachments and handled their assignments with professionalism and competence.

Little combat occurred in these operations. In July, a party of three Cuban bandits fired upon Troop K. The troop returned fire and then charged the bandits, killing one. The other two escaped.⁷ In an another encounter, a small detachment under the command of

Lieutenant Walter C. Short chased and captured eleven bandits. Included in the captured was a Cuban named Troncon, a famous bandit who had eluded authorities for several months before his apprehension.⁸

By the end of 1899, most of the bandits were either captured or driven out of the province, and the regiment spent the remainder of its three years in Cuba performing the usual garrison duties. This included regular practice marches, target practice, and construction of stables, corrals, barracks, and other buildings. Nothing out of the ordinary occurred during this time; this three-year period was the most peaceful the regiment had yet to experience.

The greatest threat to life came from disease and accidents. The most serious outbreak of disease occurred in July 1899, when yellow fever struck Troop H, forcing the troop to evacuate its barracks in Manzanillo and encamp four miles from the city.⁹ Six men eventually died. Accidents also plagued the Tenth. Many troopers drowned while crossing rivers during the rainy season, and there were several strange accidental deaths. One soldier was struck and killed by lightning while watering his horse, and another fell out of a tower in Canto.¹⁰ Whether he was committing suicide or walking in his sleep remained a mystery.¹¹

This assignment was the regiment's first peace time duty outside the United States, and the Tenth Cavalry handled itself well. The black troopers got along with the Cubans, and several marriages occurred between the black soldiers and Cuban women.¹² There were only a few altercations. In June 1899, the residents of Canto accused a black soldier of murdering a Cuban woman; the regiment

arrested two soldiers and handed them over to civil authorities. Incidents such as this one were rare, however, and as the commanding officer wrote, the troopers generally conducted themselves in an "orderly manner."¹³

After the suppression of the bandits, there was no need for the entire regiment to remain in Cuba, and in January 1900 the Second Squadron returned to Texas. The squadron spent sixteen uneventful months in the Lone Star State. On April 15, 1901, it embarked on the transport *Logan* in San Francisco, California, for the Philippines. The journey across the Pacific was unpleasant. The enlisted men were not served enough food, and their berths were hot, uncomfortable, and unhealthy.¹⁴ The men endured these conditions for nearly a month before arriving in Manila on May 13. The Philippine Insurrection was slowly winding down, and a week after their arrival the squadron was sent to the island of Samar, the site of some of the last resistance to American authority.

At the conclusion of the Spanish American War, the United States had acquired the Philippines from Spain. This was a great disappointment to many Filipinos, who had hoped to achieve full independence. Under the leadership of Emilio Aguinaldo, the Filipinos resisted American occupation of the archipelago, and the United States was forced to send large numbers of troops to pacify the Philippines. In the ensuing struggle, known as the Philippine Insurrection, the Filipinos at first used conventional tactics, but in 1899 they switched to guerrilla warfare. The fighting was bitter, with atrocities on both sides. The key event in the war occurred early in 1901, when American forces captured Aguinaldo, who

pledged allegiance to the United States. Other prominent Filipino leaders soon surrendered.

Aguinaldo's surrender, however, did not end all Filipino resistance, and the United States continued to fight the remaining guerrillas. The army distributed its forces among 502 stations throughout the islands, where they engaged in seek and destroy missions, attempted to protect local inhabitants, and tried to establish local governments.¹⁵ The Filipino insurgents continued to receive support from local inhabitants, who supplied them with food, water, and shelter. Early in 1901, the American forces began efforts to end this. The army was given the authority to declare martial law in any town or district in which military operations were occurring, subject insurgents or anyone aiding insurgents to trial by military tribunals, and begin deporting to Guam anyone aiding the resistance movement. One of the key provisions of the new policy was that the army encourage inhabitants to concentrate in towns for protection.¹⁶ This policy was vigorously enforced, and by April the insurrection appeared to be on the point of collapse in all but a few of the islands.

On May 22 the Second Squadron arrived on Samar and began operations against local insurgent forces. The Filipinos controlled the interior of the island, a virtually inaccessible region filled with many small, beautiful valleys. They also raided the coastal towns, forcing the natives to flee into the jungle. The interior provided many of their necessities, for they acquired such things as rice from local farmers on the north end of Samar. There were no roads leading into the interior, but several rivers did provide access. General R. P. Hughes, commanding the United States forces, adopted a policy of

sending search and destroy missions into the interior. He hoped to eliminate insurgent shelter and supplies and drive them to the coast, where they could be destroyed or captured and then forced to concentrate in villages.¹⁷

The Second Squadron was immediately sent into action and discovered the difficulties of fighting in the Philippines. The squadrons horses were left in Manila, and the men had to march hundreds of miles through jungle, across streams, and over mountains, always remaining prepared to encounter guerrillas. As there were no roads, the men had to hack their way through endless miles of hot and always wet jungle. One black soldier expressed every one's feelings when he said, "but I wish I was a cavalry horse in these war times."¹⁸

The four troops did their best to overcome these problems and carry out their orders. Troop H landed at Mao on May 26 and occupied the town, which was located on the west coast of Samar at the mouth of the Mao River. Small detachments scouted up and down the coast and the river, destroying both insurgent supplies, such as rice, cattle, and hemp, and houses. Troop G took station on the Gandara River, where it also scouted the country and destroyed supplies.¹⁹ Neither Troop H or G had contact with the insurgents. The Samaritans, as one officer said, fled "like frightened rabbits on the approach of soldiers."²⁰

On May 27, Troop F, scouting along the Calbayog River, engaged a small group of Filipinos twelve miles north of the town of Calbayog. The Filipinos ambushed the troop as it stumbled through the dense underbrush, but their fire was high and no soldiers were hit.²⁰ The

black soldiers charged the Filipino entrenchments, killed two insurgents, and captured the enemy works, five bamboo cannons, and cannon and rifle ammunition.²¹ The troop suffered no casualties in what was the largest engagement the Tenth Cavalry fought while in the Philippines.

June saw more of the same activity. Troop H vigorously pressed its campaign against the insurgents along the Mao river; troopers killed cattle, destroyed rice, and cleared the country of resistance. The troop captured seventy-five ponies, which greatly increased the troop's mobility and range, and twenty-eight insurgents, who were compelled to serve as laborers, carry rations, build bridges and shelter for the soldiers, and repair boats. Troop G continued to scout along the Gandara River, where it destroyed supplies and shelter and also engaged small parties of insurgents. The other two troops of the Squadron, E and F, engaged in the same activities at Oquendo and Calbayog.²²

Throughout these operations, the troops were broken into small detachments of eight to fifteen men and stationed at isolated posts in the interior. Non-commissioned officers often commanded these detachments. From June through August, Sergeant Major Horace Bivens was in charge of a detachment of fifteen men at La Granja, and in July Sergeant Robert Lang commanded detachments at Calagundian and then Philanit.²³ These enlisted men handled their assignments well, and their capable leadership played a major role in the Tenth's success against the insurgents.

The enlisted men enjoyed this service and especially preferred to serve under the black non-commissioned officers, but their white

officers felt this system did not work. It gave capable non-commissioned officers the only chance many of them would ever have to command troops, and the enlisted men were finally led by members of their own race and escaped the often patronizing supervision of their white superiors. Predictably, white officers did not approve of detached service. One officer believed that it "has not been productive of the best results among the men."²⁴ He gave no reasons for why detached service was not working, but he was undoubtedly influenced by the belief that black soldiers needed the leadership of white officers in order to succeed.

By July the Second Squadron's search and destroy missions were beginning to take affect. The area around Mao was completely cleared of insurgent supplies and shelter, and the natives of the district began to submit to American authority. They renounced the insurrection, brought their families back to the coast, and began to rebuild their homes. By the end of the month, Troop H reported that the district seemed pacified and ready for municipal organization.²⁵ The other three troops continued to send out scouting parties throughout July and August. The most damage was done by a small detachment of Troop H operating in Weyler. The detachment annihilated everything in the countryside that could possibly provide shelter and food. It burned over two hundred houses, killed cattle, destroyed rice, and killed two insurgents. This severe treatment alienated the natives in the area, and they refused to live in towns where the troops were stationed until their food supplies dwindled and they had no choice.²⁶

These tactics, however, destroyed the insurgent's support among the natives of Samar. By the end of August resistance was weakening, and the Second Squadron was no longer needed on the island. Thoroughly exhausted by its three month campaign, the squadron was transferred to the island of Panay, where Filipino resistance was practically non-existent. The squadron performed the usual garrison duties and guarded public property; it served mainly as an auxiliary force to the local police. In this role, there was little to do, and the rest of the squadron's tour of duty in the Philippines passed uneventfully.²⁷

In the spring of 1902, the three squadrons of the Tenth Cavalry finished their overseas tours of duty, and the army transferred them back to the United States. The First and Third Squadrons took station at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, located outside of Crawford. The Second Squadron remained in the Philippines, undergoing standard quarantine procedures, until July, when it sailed to the United States. The troops of this squadron were sent to Wyoming, where the army assigned them to forts D. A. Russell, Washakie, and Mackenzie.

The four years the Tenth Cavalry spent in Nebraska and Wyoming witnessed virtually no military operations, and the regiment spent most of its time training. These activities included practice marches, field maneuvers, and pistol and rifle target practice. One troop at Fort Robinson was usually kept at a local logging camp, providing fire wood and building material. To suppress trespassing, troops patrolled the Uintah and Ouray Indian agency in Utah in August 1903, and in the summer of 1906 the Shoshone Indian Reservation in Wyoming.²⁸ On one occasion, troops

spent several weeks testing the army's new "all purpose field carts."²⁹

The only military operation that the Tenth engaged in occurred late in October 1906, when the regiment participated in the efforts to stop and detain a band of Ute Indians traveling through Wyoming. The Utes were dissatisfied on their reservation in Utah. Whites were illegally entering the reservation and taking the best land, and unscrupulous traders were selling alcohol to many of the Indian men. After suffering a harsh winter in 1905-06, a band of Utes decided leave; in the spring of 1906, they slowly made their way across Wyoming, hoping to gain refuge with the Sioux in South Dakota. The Indians committed no aggressive acts, except trespassing and killing game for food, but the Governor of Wyoming and local newspapers demanded military help. At first the federal government resisted efforts to involve the military, but after the Interior Department failed to stop the Utes, President Theodore Roosevelt turned the matter over to the War Department.³⁰

The Tenth Cavalry's First Squadron, commanded by Major Charles Grierson, arrived at Gillette, Wyoming, on October 21. His orders were to convince the Utes to return to Utah without using force, unless the Utes continued to defy United States authority.³¹ Grierson sent Captains Robert Paxton and Carter Johnson to talk with the Indians, but they were unable to persuade the Utes to stop, and the Indians continued moving north toward Montana.

The army brought more troops into the area. Colonel Alex Rodgers and six troops of the Sixth Cavalry were given the assignment of compelling the Utes to surrender. Grierson was told to

follow the Utes, delaying their progress if possible, but he was ordered to avoid battle.³² The Tenth Cavalry's Third Squadron took position in Montana, where it was to block the Utes' escape to the north.

Several confrontations then occurred between the Tenth Cavalry and the Utes, but none resulted in any fighting. One of the regiment's patrols captured fifty Ute ponies, but the Indians surrounded the patrol as it was returning to camp, stampeded the horses, and fired several shots in the air. The black troopers remained calm, did not return fire, and allowed the Utes to take the horses, thus preventing the incident from escalating.³³ In another incident, a Ute warrior tried to take a weapon away from a sentry near the Tenth's camp. Other black troopers intervened and prevented the incident from becoming more serious.³⁴

In early November the Utes agreed to proceed to Fort Meade, where they were to live while a delegation of their chiefs went to Washington D. C. to talk with the president. The two squadrons of the Tenth Cavalry remained on duty until mid-November, scouting and preparing for the journey home. Their performance in Wyoming was admirable. They kept their tempers in check and did not allow the tense situation from expanding into a dangerous and possibly deadly encounter.

The lack of military operations gave the Tenth Cavalry troopers a chance, as Corporal Steven Barrow said, "to enjoy the diversions of life."³⁵ Athletics were the regiment's most popular activities. During the summer, the men played baseball. They had their own inter-regimental league, and a team made up of the best players in the

regiment competed against teams from other posts, Crawford, and neighboring towns. Throughout the year, field days were set aside, during which the men competed in track and field events such as the hundred yard dash and high jump, and also such events as horse racing, tug-of-wars, and tent pitching. Football and boxing were also popular activities.³⁶

Another leisure activity for the black enlisted men were social organizations. The men established such clubs as the "Young Men's Social Club," "Dog Robbers," and "Syndicate," but the most popular club was the regimental branch of the Y. M. C. A.³⁷ This club was first established in Cuba by Chaplain William T. Anderson, and it flourished at Fort Robinson, where 450 of the garrison's 544 enlisted men were members. The Y. M. C. A. met every Wednesday, and its programs included such events as literary discussions, recitations, musical presentations, essays, and debates. Guest speakers were often invited to speak, but the soldiers themselves participated in many debates that often focused on the problems that black Americans faced.³⁸ Cook Beverly F. Thornton gave an address on the need for black Americans to save money. "Economy should be your watchword," Thornton lectured his fellow soldiers. "If we will put the idea into actual practice, ours will be a respected people."³⁹ Corporal Joseph W. Wheelock told the men to support black newspapers and magazines. By doing so, Wheelock said, "we not only keep in touch with our best people, but aid in giving employment to 'our own.'"⁴⁰

For most of the Tenth Cavalry's stay in Nebraska and Wyoming, the black troopers and white civilians coexisted peacefully. The town

of Crawford welcomed the arrival of the regiment. Black soldiers had served at Fort Robinson in the late 1880's, so the town was used to the sight of black troops. More important Crawford, located just three miles from the fort, was a post town that depended on the presence of a large garrison to ensure economic prosperity.⁴¹ Tenth Cavalry soldiers frequented the town's restaurants, bars, brothels, and other businesses. The town allowed local teams to compete against the Tenth's baseball team, and every Fourth of July several thousand people attended the regiment's Independence Day celebrations.⁴²

People in Wyoming were more apprehensive, but the black troopers soon won their approval. When Troop E arrived at Fort D. A. Russell, the editor of the *Cheyenne Daily Leader* observed that, "The men seemed to be an intelligent class of negroes, and will probably make a good record."⁴³ The troop won the town's approval at the annual Cheyenne Frontier Days Celebration in 1902, where the troop entertained the crowd by rescuing a stagecoach being attacked by Indians.⁴⁴ The Second Squadron made an even better impression at the Wyoming State Fair and Industrial Convention in September 1904. The troop marched in the street parade, was reviewed by the Governor of the state, and performed a series of maneuvers to the great delight of the crowd.⁴⁵ The Governor commended the squadron for its performance and conduct, commenting that, "The Tenth Cavalry is a credit to the country."⁴⁶

The Tenth Cavalry eventually wore out its welcome. In early 1907, after a few fights and an alleged rape, the *Cheyenne Daily Leader* withdrew its approval with the terse comment, "the good

record is ruined."⁴⁷ No white units that served at Fort D. A. Russell were ever judged by such exacting standards. At Crawford, the regiment continued its good relations with the town until the spring of 1906. In May, Crawford Marshal Arthur Moss broke up a soldiers beer party in town. A fight occurred, and two soldiers fled, pursued by a mob. One of the soldiers was killed by an unidentified assailant, and the other was caught and jailed. Upset by the incident, a group of black soldiers threatened to storm the jail and release the imprisoned trooper.⁴⁸ Officers calmed down the men and no further violence occurred, but the incident soured relations between the Tenth Cavalry and the residents of Crawford.

In 1906 an even worse racial incident between black soldiers and white civilians occurred that, while it did not involve the Tenth Cavalry, affected the regiment's survival. The black Twenty-Fifth Infantry was stationed at Fort Brown outside of the Texas community of Brownsville. Relations between the black soldiers and white civilians were tense. The soldiers resented the Jim Crow laws that prohibited them from entering many bars and even the town's public park. They also received abuse from residents for speaking disrespectfully to whites. In August a rumor spread that a black soldier had attempted to rape a white woman. On the night of August 13, a party of twenty armed men randomly shot up the town, killing one person and wounding another. The black soldiers were immediately blamed for the incident. Even though there were no black troopers involved, President Theodore Roosevelt dismissed 167 of them for failing to identify the soldiers who supposedly committed the crime.⁴⁹

The Brownsville Affair led many white Americans to seek the elimination of the four black army regiments. These attempts were motivated by the belief, as the editor of the New Orleans *Picayune* wrote, that black soldiers "are a curse to the country in time of peace."⁵⁰ A bill was soon introduced in the House of Representatives that called for the discharge of all black soldiers by the middle of 1907. Another proposal sought to eliminate the federal statuettes that authorized the black regiments. Between 1906 and 1916, at least one such bill was introduced in each Congress.⁵¹ None of these bills ever reached the floor because the War Department opposed the elimination of the black regiments. The army was motivated by the excellent service of the black regiments in the Spanish American War and other conflicts, and the existence of these four regiments appeased the black public and gave the army an excuse not to form more black regiments.

Following the Brownsville Affair, many communities did not want black soldiers serving near them. For years to come, whites remained suspicious of the black regiments, always fearing that another Brownsville would occur. It did not matter what the regiment's previous history was. This attitude forced the Tenth Cavalry, already in a difficult position, to be on its best behavior and try to prove that it could behave with decorum.

The Tenth Cavalry did not have to deal with this problem immediately because in 1907 it was scheduled to rotate back to the Philippines. The regiment arrived in Manila in April 1907 and took station at Camp Wallace Union and Fort McKinley. The two years the regiment spent in the Philippines were unremarkable. Most of its

stay was spent in training or participating in athletic events. The only significant duty in which the regiment engaged was guarding the Manila water supply in the Mariquina River Valley from cholera infection in January and again in the fall of 1908.⁵² In April 1909, the regiment's commander, Colonel J. A. Augur, died suddenly, and his death broke a regimental tradition. Every other Tenth Cavalry colonel left the regiment only upon being promoted to brigadier general.⁵³ Colonel Thaddeus W. Jones eventually assumed command of the regiment.

In May 1909, the Tenth Cavalry was transferred out of the Philippines and embarked for the United States on the transport *Kirkpatrick*. It did not return to the United States by crossing the Pacific but instead became the first black regiment to pass through the Suez Canal, a fact of which the black troopers were proud.⁵⁴ They were on their best behavior as they passed through Singapore, Ceylon, Arabia, the Suez Canal, Malta, and Gibraltar. The only trouble occurred when the transport encountered a monsoon, but the *Kirkpatrick* survived and arrived in New York City on July 25.⁵⁵

Upon their arrival in New York, the Tenth Cavalry was greeted by the greatest public demonstrations it ever received. A large crowd of cheering blacks awaited their arrival at the pier, hoping to catch a glimpse of the black troopers as the *Kirkpatrick* arrived. The regimental band played "Home Sweet Home" and "There Will be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-Night" as the troopers rushed ashore for reunions with friends and family.⁵⁶ The next day, the fighting Tenth paraded through the city. New York's streets were alive with cheering crowds, both white and black, and the entire black

population of the city seemed to have turned out to see the famous regiment. General Leonard Wood led the procession, followed by the black troopers, carriages carrying the reception committee, and several bands. Ticker tape and streamers showered upon them as they marched down Wall Street, where trading stopped as they passed by, then Broadway, and on to City Hall Park, where the city's mayor, surveying the long line of marching men, remarked, "They are a fine lot of fighters . . . [and] a credit to their flag."⁵⁷ At the end of the parade, the men were escorted to the Sixty-Ninth Regimental Armory, where a large feast awaited them and various speakers praised their accomplishments. Afterwards, they proceeded to Sulzer's Harlem River Park and watched a vaudeville show held in their honor. The men were ecstatic and overwhelmed by the reception, and they returned to the *Kirkpatrick* exhausted and thrilled.⁵⁸

The next day, the black citizens of New York gave the Tenth Cavalry a rousing send-off. Bands played, people cheered, shouted, and tossed hats in the air, and the soldiers were given roast chicken and other delicacies. The regiment's train soon departed, and the Tenth Cavalry proceeded to its new post, Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont, located outside of the communities of Burlington and Winooski.⁵⁹

The assignment of the black cavalry regiment to the local fort did not please these communities. The editor of the Burlington *Free Press* protested the assignment, writing that if the Federal Government believed there would be "no objection to the presence of so large a body of negroes, they were in error."⁶⁰ The towns were "up in arms" over the decision, and several racial incidents occurred

as the first units of the regiment arrived in mid-July.⁶¹ One black sergeant attempted to cash a pay voucher in a local bank, but he was refused service even though his voucher was good.⁶² On several occasions, white residents left restaurants when black soldiers entered, and many white citizens of Burlington and Winooski demanded that Jim Crow trolley cars be instituted.⁶³ The attitude of the people in these communities was motivated by both racism and the lingering effects of the Brownsville Affair, which led many whites to view black soldiers with fear.

Some residents of Burlington and Winooski were disturbed by the reaction of their fellow citizens, and they managed to prevent Jim Crow cars or any form of public segregation from developing. Lucius Bigelow, a former mayor of Burlington, wrote the *Free Press* that there "will not be any Jim Crow cars" because no "manly Vermontor" wants them.⁶⁴ He argued that the soldiers of the Tenth Cavalry were "gallant, courteous and kindly men, who make no trouble and merit no insult or derision from their white fellow citizens."⁶⁵ These arguments, and Burlington's history as a center of abolition, ultimately kept the city and neighboring Winooski free from legal segregation.

The conduct of the black troopers of the Tenth Cavalry undoubtedly played a role in the communities acceptance of the regiment, as they quickly became active and beneficial members of the community. The regimental band performed for the public four times a week, and on one occasion the regiment's mandolin club and singers performed at the Congregational Church at a benefit for Burlington's public library.⁶⁶ The regiment allowed the public to

watch the daily mounted drills and weekly parades conducted on the post parade ground.⁶⁷ One enlisted man purchased a restaurant, which he refurbished and reopened as the Soldier's Home Restaurant.⁶⁸ The most popular activity in which the black troopers engaged was baseball. The Tenth Cavalry's regimental team frequently played local teams, and large crowds attended all of the games. The result of these activities was the local community's acceptance of the regiment. After a band concert, one resident wrote the regiment thanking them for the generous act and declaring that the sentiment of the people toward the regiment was "very kind."⁶⁹ In April 1910, a local club held a dinner and dance to honor the non-commissioned officers. More than one hundred prominent citizens, including the mayor of Burlington and an ex-governor of the state, attended the affair.⁷⁰ The town again honored the regiment, when, as the Tenth was leaving to participate in maneuvers in New York, homes and businesses displayed flags, and large crowds gathered to watch the regiment march out of town.⁷¹ The communities of Burlington and Winooski ultimately realized that the black troopers did not pose a threat and deserved to be treated with respect.

While in Vermont, the Tenth Cavalry also participated in a variety of fairs, parades, and celebrations. They regularly attended the Rutland Agricultural Fair, and they attended the dedication of the Saratoga Battle Monument.⁷² They served as escorts at the funeral of General O. O. Howard and in September 1913 sent representatives to the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation.⁷³ On this occasion, Sergeant Major Eugene P. Frierson addressed the delegates, praising the performance

of blacks in the military and arguing that it showed that blacks were "a fighting member of the government."⁷⁴

The regiment engaged in few military activities outside of training and maneuvers. It participated in maneuvers in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York. The longest and most important maneuvers in which the regiment engaged were held in Winchester, Virginia, in the late summer of 1913, when the Tenth and two other cavalry regiments tested new cavalry tactics. The Tenth marched seven hundred miles to Winchester; they arrived on July 19, and remained in camp until late September.⁷⁵

The residents of Winchester feared that there would be trouble with the black troopers, and their fears seemed to be realized as the regiment approached the town. While encamped outside of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, a white woman reported that she had been viciously attacked by a member of the regiment. Winchester's local paper, *The Evening Star*, printed in bold headlines "Negro Trooper Attacks A Girl" and ran a story describing the assault in detail.⁷⁶ The black troopers were themselves upset by the report, and they collected three hundred dollars to employ a detective to investigate the charge. They never hired the detective. The officers of the regiment discovered that the woman's escort that night was the assailant and that she blamed a black soldier to protect him.⁷⁷ *The Evening Star*, which closely followed the progress of the case, printed a short article entitled "Trooper Not Guilty Man," but the article only said "considerable doubt" exists.⁷⁸ The paper never published a full retraction of the charges.

Three days later, the Tenth Cavalry marched into Winchester and went into camp. Crowds watched silently as the regiment passed through the city's streets, and they made no demonstrations as the troopers filed by.⁷⁹ Once in camp, the black troopers were on their best behavior, and there were no altercations between them and the white troops or with the residents of Winchester. A Tenth Cavalry soldier said it "was the most remarkable camp I have ever witnessed. . . . [T]here has not been a cross word between the colored and white soldiers."⁸⁰

Nevertheless, many rumors spread charging the black soldiers with a variety of offenses. The editor of the *Baltimore Sun* reported that the troopers were parading through town, crowding white women off the streets, and annoying the white citizens, who declared they were not going to stand for it. The paper said "serious trouble" was expected.⁸¹ The editor of *The Evening Star* and many local white residents defended the black soldiers. The *Star* said the charges were regrettable because the Tenth Cavalry's behavior "had been excellent," and it was expected they would continue to behave as "men should who wear the uniform of the United States Army."⁸²

The only serious disturbance during the maneuvers did not even involve the Tenth Cavalry. A knife fight occurred between two troopers of the Eleventh Cavalry, and one of them was seriously wounded.⁸³ This incident, while it was reported on the front page, did not warrant enough attention to bring *The Evening Star* to defend the conduct of the white soldiers as it had the black soldiers. The white regiments, unlike the black troopers of the Tenth Cavalry, did not have to prove they could behave properly.

At the end of the maneuvers, whites went out of their way to praise the good conduct of the Tenth Cavalry. The editor of *The Evening Star* said their "excellent behavior . . . has been especially gratifying."⁸⁴ At a well-attended meeting of the Winchester Business Men's Association, resolutions were adopted praising the conduct of all the troops at the camp, but they singled out the Tenth Cavalry, commenting on the "excellent order and deportment maintained by . . . the famous fighting Tenth Cavalry."⁸⁵

The three cavalry regiments next marched to Washington D. C., where they demonstrated the new cavalry tactics for President Woodrow Wilson, the Chief of Staff, members of Congress, and other distinguished persons.⁸⁶ While in Washington, a reception was held for the Tenth Cavalry by the black citizens of the city at Convention Hall. General Leonard Wood appeared, and he commented that the regiment "has a great responsibility, as it represents the colored race, and the eyes of all are upon it."⁸⁷

The Tenth Cavalry returned to Fort Ethan Allen in mid-October, but their stay in Vermont was coming to an end. During November, the regiment began packing and preparing for its new station; in December the Tenth Cavalry left for service in Arizona. The *Burlington Free Press* praised the regiment for its "always courteous and gentlemanly" conduct.⁸⁸ This praise was given only after the Tenth Cavalry proved beyond any doubt that it could be trusted. No white regiments were ever subjected to the same standards.

Chapter 5

We Don't Care A Damn

In December 1913, the Tenth Cavalry returned to Arizona. Twenty years had passed since the regiment had left the Southwest for service in Montana, a transfer that eventually took the regiment around the world and resulted in a brief moment of glory. Now the Tenth was back in Arizona, where it would remain for the next eighteen years. The first few years in Arizona witnessed some of the regiment's best and hardest service.

Service in Arizona no longer involved the subjugation of Indians but rather the monotonous and dangerous duty of patrolling the United States-Mexican border and enforcing United States neutrality laws. The border was a hazardous area because of the Mexican Revolution. The opposing sides in this revolution, that began in 1910, sold guns across the border and used border towns, such as Naco and Nogales, as refuges. On many occasions Mexican revolutionaries fought battles on the Mexican side of these towns, while on the United States side citizens sought cover from the gunfire. The unstable border conditions also encouraged smuggling, cattle rustling, and other forms of thievery. During this period much of the United States army was stationed along the 2000-mile boundary protecting border towns, attempting to catch thieves, and preventing illegal Mexican incursions.

The Tenth Cavalry patrolled the border region from Naco to Yuma and found conditions in this area to be inhospitable. The terrain consisted of hot, parched desert and rugged mountains. Water was scarce, and towns and settlements were few and far between. The troops were assigned to several border stations and sub-stations that often consisted of little more than a few dilapidated shacks and adobe houses. Each day the troops patrolled the long border under trying conditions that called for patience, good judgment, and self-control.¹ When not on patrol, the troops at the border stations performed such duties as horse training, signaling, and platoon drilling.²

The officers relished this border assignment, a feeling the black troopers did not share. Younger officers viewed border duty as the good life, the veterans found the activity stimulating, and each, as one officer said, proclaimed it as "the best time of my life."³ The constant patrolling and occasional skirmishes with Mexicans and bandits provided these officers a chance to escape the routine of post life that had been the regiment's existence for over a decade. The black enlisted men were not so enchanted. The work was arduous, the most tiring they had performed in two decades, and they believed the army assigned them to this work because of their race. One black soldier complained that white soldiers "did nothing" while the black troopers were constantly patrolling or drilling.⁴

There was little opportunity for recreation. At times, nearly the entire regiment was on border duty, but this was rare. Troops usually rotated every few months between Fort Huachuca, the regiment's headquarters, and border stations. At Huachuca the men

drilled, went on practice marches, and occasionally fought fires in the Coronado Forrest Reserve.⁵ The fort was twenty miles from the border and isolated from any large urban center, but it provided a few forms of recreation, such as pool, bowling, athletics, and movies. The black soldiers also often journeyed to White City, five miles from the post, where they could find prostitutes and liquor.⁶

As the Tenth Cavalry was located at isolated posts and stations, the regiment had only limited contact with white civilians while in Arizona. This freed the black troopers from racial abuse. On the few occasions when they did encounter whites, relations between them were civil, which was a surprise to many whites. In September 1915, two troops of the Tenth on a practice march passed through Tucson, staying the night and leaving the next morning. There the black troopers caused no disturbances, which came as a welcome surprise to the town's mayor, who had expected trouble when the black troops arrived. The day the two troops left, he wrote a letter to the regiment in which he expressed his pleasure at their "excellent conduct" and remarked that "there was not a *single* complaint made against any of the men" (emphasis in original).⁷

No major events occurred on the border until the fall of 1914, when Mexican revolutionary forces began fighting for control of Naco. In mid-1914, Venustiano Carranza and Pancho Villa, from the beginning of the revolution only cooperating to overthrow Vicoriano Huerta's government, began contesting each other for control of the Mexican government. In October, Benjamin F. Hill and fifteen hundred men loyal to Carranza occupied the Mexican side of Naco, where they were soon attacked by a superior force of villistas under

the leadership of Jose Maytorena, Governor of Sonora. Both sides wanted to use Naco as a port of entry through which they could bring arms and supplies into Mexico. The American side of Naco was separated from the Mexican side only by a dirt street, and the Mexicans did little to prevent their rifle and artillery fire from falling into the United States.

Two troops of the Tenth Cavalry were on duty at Naco when the battle began, and they were soon reinforced with two squadrons of the Tenth and most of the Ninth Cavalry, also a black regiment. The Tenth secured position on the west side of town and dug in or took shelter behind U-shaped bales of hay over which they placed iron roofs.⁸ Colonel William C. Brown, the regiment's commanding officer, strung a row of flags along the border and told the Mexicans to fire only parallel to the line. This did not happen. With, as Brown described it, the Mexicans hurling "small arms, three-inch shell, shrapnel, Hotchkiss revolving cannon, rockets, land mines, bombs, bugle calls and epithets" at one another, some of it was going to land on the American side and did so often.⁹

As the siege went on, Mexican gunfire regularly fell into the American lines, and casualties mounted. On October 10, Maytorena attacked Hill's positions from the south, and Mexican shrapnel struck the American Customs House, a mercantile establishment, and several residences.¹⁰ The next day, a woman, one trooper, and an officer were shot or hit by shrapnel.¹¹ On the night of the October 17, Maytorena made another determined attack, and more than a dozen shots fell into the Tenth's camp, wounding four troopers. After this assault, the regiment usually abandoned its camp at night, leaving

only two troops behind the iron roofed barricades, while the majority slept one mile from the border.¹²

The Mexicans declared a brief truce on October 24, but it ended on November 9, as bitter fighting resumed. Shrapnel and small arms fire once again fell into the Tenth Cavalry's lines. In communications to the regiment's officers, Mexican officers always politely apologized for the dangerous random gunfire and promised it would not happen again.¹³ The Mexican battle of Naco was a frustrating experience for the black troopers. Officers ordered them not to return the fire, but the urge to shoot back at Mexicans across the border was often overpowering. Still, at least officially, the troopers refrained from doing so. Colonel Brown summed up the wishes of everyone when he wrote, "If they are going to fight to a finish I wish they would do it."¹⁴

In December, General Hugh Lenox Scott arrived in Naco to negotiate an end to the siege. The talks dragged on for over a month, but in mid-January Scott managed to convince both sides to sign a truce; on January 15, 1915, the siege of Naco ended. Eight Tenth Cavalry soldiers were wounded during the two months the regiment was near the battle. Soon thereafter, in honor of their service at Naco, President Woodrow Wilson commended the Tenth Cavalry for its "splendid conduct and efficient service."¹⁵

During 1915 more Mexican incursions into United States territory occurred, and the regiment's border patrols became directly involved in several skirmishes with Mexican forces. In August, a detachment of Troop K patrolling near Lochiel encountered a party of Mexican soldiers attempting to herd stolen cattle into Mexico.¹⁶ Only

a half mile from the border, the Mexicans were not about to give up their prize, and a sharp fire fight broke out with the black troopers. Lieutenant Jerome W. Howe quickly arrived with another detachment of Troop K, dismounted his men, placed them behind a small crest, and joined the long range duel with the Mexicans. The two sides were too far away to do any damage, but strong Mexican reinforcements soon began appearing, and the small engagement threatened to escalate into a very serious battle. Fortunately, Troop K's commanding officer, Lieutenant Albert Dockery, and the Mexican commander, both entered the area at roughly the same time and ordered the shooting stopped.¹⁷ The Mexicans retreated south across the border, leaving the cattle.

Bitter fighting among the Mexicans occurred all along the border in the fall of 1915 and kept the Tenth Cavalry constantly alert. In late October, rumors spread that the battle for Naco was to resume, and therefore Colonel Brown with six troops of the Tenth Cavalry arrived at the city to protect the American side. The Mexicans did not fight here, but instead engaged in a battle for Agua Prieta, opposite Douglas, Arizona. On November 2, Brown took four troops and marched twenty-five miles to Douglas, where they arrived dusty and tired late in the afternoon. The troops remained at Douglas for two days, but when Brown learned that Pancho Villa was heading towards Naco, Brown and his four troops also headed toward the town. After a grueling march the exhausted troops marched into Naco late in the evening of November 4. The next day Brown talked with Villa and told the Mexican leader to stay south of the border.¹⁸

During November Troop F engaged in several small skirmishes with Mexican forces along the Santa Cruz River near Nogales. The troop, along with the Twelfth Infantry, protected American property during the siege of Nogales. On November 22, a group of Mexicans rode into the camp of a detachment of Troop F and fired upon the black troopers. The Americans replied with pistol fire, killing two Mexicans but suffering no casualties themselves.¹⁹ Three days later, fifty-eight Mexicans crossed the border and attacked a detachment of six troopers on a hill outside of town. Twenty-eight more Tenth Cavalry soldiers reinforced the small detachment, and together they fought off the Mexicans with no casualties.²⁰ That same day, Mexican forces fired across the border at other soldiers of Troop F, who immediately returned the fire. No casualties occurred.²¹ The next day, Colonel Brown and six troops of the Tenth Cavalry arrived at Nogales to reinforce the American garrison. The siege of Nogales ended that day, and the Tenth Cavalry was relieved of duty at the city in early December, and all but two troops returned to Fort Huachuca.

The rest of 1915 and the first two months of 1916 passed uneventfully, and the Tenth Cavalry patrolled, rested, and prepared for additional assignments. The border was relatively peaceful, thus these patrols usually encountered no hostile forces. In late December, an army troop inspector evaluated the regiment and reported that, despite the hard campaigning, or maybe because of it, the regiment was "in excellent working condition."²²

The only significant event during these months was the assignment of Major Charles Young, the highest ranking black officer,

and one of only three at the time in the army, to the Tenth Cavalry. Young had just finished a four-year tour of duty as military attaché to Liberia. He was happy to be with troops again and eager to see combat. The black enlisted men, most of whom idolized Young, were ecstatic when he joined the regiment. The reaction of the white officers was mixed. Many of them respected Young for his efficiency and abilities, and one said, "were pleased to have" him.²³ None of them, however, had ever served under a black officer, and some feared that his presence would be a source of friction.

On the dark night of March 9, United States-Mexican relations exploded when Pancho Villa and five hundred followers attacked the small border town of Columbus, New Mexico. Columbus was located three miles north of the border, contained a population of only a few hundred people, and had a garrison of about five hundred men of the Thirteenth Cavalry. The raid lasted only two hours before the villistas fled back into Mexico, pursued by two troops of the Thirteenth Cavalry. The casualty list included nine United States soldiers and eight American civilians killed, five soldiers and two civilians wounded, and sixty-seven Mexicans killed and seven captured.²⁴

The Tenth Cavalry, still headquartered at Fort Huachuca, learned of the attack at 11:30 A. M. on March 9. Colonel Brown sent word that all troops should prepare for departure. About a half hour later the regiment was ordered to proceed immediately to Douglas, Arizona.²⁵ At four in the afternoon, the post band escorted the entire regiment, except for four troops on border duty, out of Fort Huachuca. The regiment, with two wagons per troop and the

regimental pack train, arrived at Douglas on March 11, where all unnecessary equipment was stored.²⁶

President Woodrow Wilson decided on March 10 to send an expedition into the Mexican state of Chihuahua with the sole purpose of capturing or eliminating Villa and his bandits. The army high command appointed General John J. Pershing to command the Punitive Expedition. He would employ two columns to pursue Villa. One was to enter Mexico from Columbus and consisted of one cavalry brigade, one infantry brigade, and a field artillery unit. The second column was to cross the border at Culberson's Ranch, New Mexico, and included one cavalry brigade (the Seventh and Tenth Cavalry regiments) and a battery of horse artillery.²⁷

Pershing's force faced several obstacles. The terrain in the state of Chihuahua featured barren plains, lush valleys, and the imposing Sierra Madre Mountains. The sun relentlessly shone down upon this area, and it contained a limited amount of water, nutrient-poor grass that made grazing a fruitless task, and few roads.²⁸ Pancho Villa was a hero to many of the inhabitants, and they had no intention of helping the United States army capture him. They resented the presence of American soldiers and felt that it would be a national disgrace if Villa were caught by them.²⁹ Finally, the Mexican government never approved of the expedition and had no intention of cooperating with Pershing.³⁰

The Tenth Cavalry hurried to Culberson's Ranch, marching seventy miles in three days, and arrived on March 14. While en-route, two more troops that had been on border duty at Naco joined the regiment. At Culberson's, the men learned that they were

definitely going into Mexico and that their wagons were to be left behind.³¹ They were allowed to take only what they could carry on their horses, for it was necessary for the Tenth Cavalry, as a prominent member of Pershing's "flying column," to move quickly if Villa were to be caught.³²

On the bitterly cold night of March 16, the Tenth Cavalry followed the Seventh Cavalry into Mexico. General Pershing accompanied the column. The two regiments passed quietly through a gate in the wire fence marking the border and began the march to Carrizo Springs. There was no moonlight, and the pack-train lost sight of the trail, drifted off into the darkness, and did not rejoin the column until it reached Carrizo Springs.³³ As the two regiments kicked up alkali dust, that settled like a white blanket upon the black troopers, Major Charles Young, wearing a bright smile, turned to Private James Patterson and yelled out, "Patterson, we are over in Mexico, and we don't care a damn."³⁴

Late in the evening of March 17, the column arrived at Colonia Dublan, a Mormon settlement located on the Mexican North Western Railroad. Camp was made in a field of five feet high grass, and the exhausted men made no effort to build fires, fearing that a brush fire might result and stampede the horses.³⁵ The men consumed the last of their rations here, and the food in the pack trains was given to the Seventh Cavalry, which had failed to bring extra rations. Upon leaving Colonia Dublan, the Tenth Cavalry received no government supplies for a month and was thus forced to live off the land.

Pershing had learned that Villa was rumored to be at San Miguel de Babicora, and he decided to send three separate columns

south in an attempt to prevent Villa from fleeing west into Sonora or east to the railroad. Hopefully, the three columns would surround and catch Villa. The Seventh Cavalry formed the first column and was ordered to proceed along the eastern edge of the San Miguel plateau. The Tenth Cavalry formed the next two columns, a sign of Pershing's faith in the black troopers ability, and would proceed by rail. The regiment needed the rest. It was exhausted after marching 252 miles in eight days. The Second Squadron was to detrain at Rucio and proceed to San Miguel; the First Squadron would detrain at Las Varas and scout the territory south of the Babicon plateau.³⁶

Charles Young was the Second Squadron's commanding officer, but he did not lead the squadron because Colonel Brown decided to lead it himself. Brown had the highest respect for Young's ability, energy, and good judgment, and he did not assume command from any racial belief that Young was not capable of commanding the squadron. The decision was based on Brown's understanding of Young's peculiar position as a black officer commanding white officers and his fear that this could handicap Young's ability to command the squadron.³⁷

A train arrived on the morning of March 19, but it was in terrible condition and proved to be more trouble than it was worth. The cars had no doors and were smashed in many places, forcing the troopers to spend the morning repairing the damage. The train also had no fuel, so the men spent the afternoon demolishing a corral, an action that eventually cost the government \$1900. There was not enough room in the cars for both men and horses, so the officers and black troopers road on top, sandwiched between bales of hay. The

conductor said that the train could not haul the heavy load the entire distance. Brown then decided to un-load the First Squadron at Pearson's, proceed to El Rucio with the Second Squadron, and afterwards return for the First Squadron.³⁸

At five o'clock, the train finally left, but it continued to have problems. The engine ran out of fuel five times in ten hours. Each time, the enlisted men disembarked and searched the countryside for any scrapes of wood they could find. The train frequently ran out of water, men often fell off the roof, and sparks from the engine set the hay on fire. What was supposed to be a quick trip turned into a prolonged misery, as the train took twenty-four hours to go twenty-five miles.³⁹ The First Squadron's journey had the added pleasure of a railroad wreck that sent two cars tumbling down a steep embankment and injured eleven men.⁴⁰

Despite these difficulties, the Second Squadron disembarked at El Rucio on the morning of March 20 and proceeded to San Miguel. The squadron followed a rough, rocky mountain trail to the ranch, where it arrived the next day. There was no sign of Villa, and he evidently had not been there. The command proceeded south on a fifty-five mile march, arriving at El Toro on March 24, where the First Squadron rejoined the command. Its search had been just as fruitless.⁴¹

The next day, the command proceeded to Namiquipa and then Oso Canyon, marching twenty miles. Here, Brown conferred with Colonel Cano, who had a detachment of Mexican soldiers near by, and the two officers agreed to cooperate. The Mexicans would send out scouting parties during the day, while the Tenth remained in camp

and patrolled at night.⁴² The regiment remained at Oso Canyon on March 26, but when Brown talked with Cano the next morning he became convinced that the Mexican had lied to him and had not sent out scouting parties.⁴³

Brown immediately ordered his regiment into the saddle, and the Tenth Cavalry marched twelve miles to Peloncillos, where it was learned that Villa was at the Santa Catarina Ranch, eight miles to the southwest. Brown planned to attack the next morning. At one in the morning, a prairie fire swept through the grassy plain where they were encamped, delaying their march to Santa Catarina. The troopers still surprised the inhabitants, and there was no resistance; but Villa was not at the ranch.⁴⁴

After breakfast, the two squadrons separated once again. The Second Squadron rode over a boulder-strewn desert to Quemado, where it encamped and shortly learned that Villa had passed through the region three days before.⁴⁵ The First Squadron marched to Tapehuanes and discovered that the telegraph lines were still operating. Major Ellwood Evans, commanding the squadron, was able to telegraph Colonel Brown at Quemado, who ordered him to proceed to El Rubio, where Villa was rumored to be hiding.⁴⁶ On March 29 Brown took twenty men and met Evans at El Rubio, but they found that Villa had left the village on March 25. The next day, the entire command reunited at San Diego del Monte. The regiment remained here in camp through March 31, awaiting orders from General Pershing. During their wait, they suffered through a severe snow storm that blew over the command as the men were bathing in a stream.⁴⁷

The farther south the regiment pushed into Mexico, the more difficult it became to obtain supplies. In northern Mexico, the regiment had no trouble paying for supplies using Quartermaster Department receipts, but farther south the Mexicans were reluctant to trade food for mere scraps of paper.⁴⁸ Officers began to pay for supplies with their own money, but few officers had brought any cash with them, and those that had soon spent it.⁴⁹ The lack of cash forced Colonel Brown to write personal checks that eventually totaled \$1680.⁵⁰ In many towns, the residents disappeared as the regiment approached or were unfriendly and refused to provide provisions. When the regiment did obtain food it was almost always beef and beans.⁵¹

The Tenth Cavalry was unable to contact General Pershing while it was at San Diego del Monte. Colonel Brown decided to leave the First Squadron here, while he led the Second Squadron through the mountains to Agua Caliente. At about noon on April 1, the advanced guard encountered a band of 150 villistas just outside Agua Caliente, and a sharp skirmish developed. Troop E exchanged several shots with the bandits; then the Mexicans quickly retreated to the left, scampering up a rough wooded ridge.⁵² Major Young took Troops G and H, rode up a steep hill, ordered his men to draw their pistols, and with the machine-gun platoon providing cover fire, charged the enemy's right flank. The black troopers started to yell as they ran toward the Mexican line, causing the Mexicans to flee the field. The regiment pursued the retreating Mexicans for seven miles, but the pursuit was abandoned at nightfall, and the exhausted men went into camp at El Mestina.⁵³

The pursuit was continued the next day, but it was difficult as the Mexicans had broken into two groups. To follow them, Colonel Brown split the squadron into two detachments. He took Troops H and G and followed a trail to the south, while Major Young took Troops E and F and scouted the second trail.⁵⁴ Both commands lost their trails in the mountains. The Mexicans followed no defined road and split into smaller and smaller detachments, eventually breaking into groups of one or two. At sunset, the two commands reunited at Napa Veche.⁵⁵

Over the next ten days, the Second Squadron continued to move further south, heading to Parral as Pershing had ordered. On April 5, the command received much needed supplies from the Cusi Mining Company, near Cusihuiriachic, but most of the native inhabitants continued to remain unfriendly, and it was impossible to secure a local guide. One guide ran away in the darkness, and the men were unable to find him. On April 9, at Tres Hermanos, the command encountered a detachment of the Mexican army that agreed to supply an officer to serve as a guide.⁵⁶ At Satevo, which had been looted by revolutionary armies during the fighting in Chihuahua, the residents were amazed when the Americans offered to pay for supplies, and they eagerly provided the Tenth with corn fodder.⁵⁷ During this march, the regiment received no information on the whereabouts of Villa.

By April 12, the squadron was at Rancho El Medio, an open mesa located about twenty-four miles from Parral. At 6:30 P. M., as the command was going into camp, several soldiers of the Thirteenth Cavalry galloped into the squadron's lines and reported that a

detachment of the Thirteenth commanded by Major Frank Tompkins had been attacked by Mexican soldiers at Parral and was now surrounded at a ranch eight miles away. The regimental trumpeter immediately played "Boots and Saddles," and ten minutes later the Second Squadron was in the saddle and riding to the Thirteenth's relief.⁵⁸ The Tenth Cavalry arrived at the ranch fifty minutes later. Colonel Brown halted the command and had the trumpeter sound "Attention" and "Officers Call." A few minutes later, a faint reply from Tompkins's command could be heard through the darkness. The squadron then rode into the ranch where Tompkins was located.⁵⁹ Upon seeing the black troopers, Major Tompkins walked out to greet them and shouted, "I could kiss every one of you." Major Young smiled and replied, "Hello, Tompkins! You can start in on me right now."⁶⁰

Colonel Brown assumed command of the combined regiments. The Mexicans had withdrawn at the arrival of the Tenth Cavalry, and no further fighting occurred; but the situation remained tense. Over the next ten days, Brown conferred with the Mexican commander, who refused to allow the Americans to continue south, but he did provide some much needed supplies.⁶¹ On April 21, a United States army mule train arrived with money and a small supply of rations. These were the first supplies the Tenth Cavalry had received from the government in a month.⁶²

The next day, the combined command began moving north. The Tenth Cavalry had marched some 350 miles into Mexico during the last month and a half, exhausting the horses and men; the march north took nearly a month to complete. On May 19, the Second

Squadron arrived at Colonia Dublan, where it established camp and began constructing adobe shelters. The squadron's wagons were returned, but all items of necessity had been looted by everyone who handled the wagons, and they were practically empty.⁶³ The Punitive Expedition was for all practical purposes over; even though the search for Villa ended, Pershing's command remained in Mexico for the rest of the year.

The tense situation that developed after Parral remained, and the Mexicans informed Pershing that if any American forces scouted to the east, south, or west they would be attacked. Pershing, however, continued to send out scouting detachments. In mid-June, Pershing ordered Captain Charles T. Boyd, commanding the Tenth Cavalry's Troop C, to scout thoroughly the country to the east around Ahumada. He was to avoid a fight. Unknown to Boyd, Pershing also sent Captain Lewis Morey, with Troop K, Tenth Cavalry, on the same mission.⁶⁴

Boyd left on the morning of June 20. That evening, he met Captain Morey at San Domingo Rancho; the two officers combined their forces, with Boyd as senior captain in command. The next morning the two troops proceeded to Carrizal. About four hundred Mexican soldiers occupied the village, but Boyd was determined to pass through the village enroute to Ahumada. Halting at the town's outskirts, Boyd sent Lem Spilsbury, a white guide accompanying the troops, into Carrizal with a note requesting permission to enter the town. General Felix Gomez, commanding the Mexican forces, rode out to confer with Boyd. He told Boyd that his orders were to prevent any United States troops from passing through Carrizal, but, if Boyd

would wait, he would ask his commanding officer by telegraph if the American troops could pass through.⁶⁵

Boyd refused to wait, and he told his men, "I am going through this town and take all you men with me."⁶⁶ The black troopers cheered and began singing spirited songs. The command dismounted and advanced toward Carrizal, Troop C on the left and Troop K on the right. Two hundred yards from town, the Mexicans, who had already flanked Troop K, opened fire. Small arms and machine gun fire staggered the American line, but Troop C continued to advance until Boyd was hit three times and killed and Boyd's lieutenant was fatally wounded. The non-commissioned officers attempted to rally the remaining troopers, but any hopes of continuing the assault were over.⁶⁷

On the right, Troop K laid down in the open field and began firing at the Mexicans. For an hour and half, they held their ground and inflicted heavy casualties, but the Mexicans were in too strong a position and ultimately advanced toward the beleaguered troop. As the Mexicans advanced, First Sergeant Felix Page realized the hopelessness of the situation and told Captain Morey, "we can't stop them and we can't stay here because it is getting too hot."⁶⁸ Morey ordered the men to retreat, each man to look out for himself.

The Tenth Cavalry left twelve men killed and twenty-three captured on the battlefield at Carrizal, and the remaining troops staggered across the desert toward Colonia Dublan. Some men took more than a week to reach the camp. When the troops arrived at the American base, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Young (he was promoted in early June) flew into a rage and told Pershing he wanted to take

the Tenth Cavalry back to Carrizal to get his men back. Pershing did not let him.⁶⁹

The fight at Carrizal nearly caused a war between Mexico and the United States. American newspapers reported that the black troopers were "treacherously shot down while talking with" Mexican officers, and many Americans demanded revenge.⁷⁰ President Wilson moved more cautiously. He demanded the return of the American prisoners and all United States government property taken after the battle. A week later, the Mexicans, who wanted to avoid war, agreed.⁷¹

For a brief moment in the early summer of 1916, the black troopers of the Tenth Cavalry were once again American heroes. The newspapers had routinely ignored their accomplishments in March and April, but now reported every detail of the battle at Carrizal and declared that the troopers "faced certain death with bravery."⁷² When the twenty-three black soldiers captured at the battle arrived in El Paso, Texas, on June 30, cheering crowds greeted them and motion picture cameras recorded their march across the border.⁷³ The editor of the *El Paso Morning Times* praised their "gallantry and unselfish devotion to their country's honor" and described their sacrifice as "splendid, brilliant, enduring."⁷⁴ The Tenth Cavalry never again received so much attention and praise.

After Carrizal, Pershing concentrated his forces at Colonia Dublan and spent the rest of the year in Mexico sending out patrols but taking no offensive action. The troops used most of their time for training, and life took on a dull routine. The black soldiers of the Tenth Cavalry did their best to fight off boredom. The men played

football with other regiments and put on vaudeville shows. They also enjoyed themselves at the silent movies, that were never silent, as the men often spoke for the characters, displaying their wit with colorful comments.⁷⁵ Pershing also organized and policed a force of Mexican prostitutes in order to keep the men under control while they were idle. In July, the regiment celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. Charles Young organized and wrote the pageant, and the enlisted men performed all of the skits, which included mimic battles and the portrayal of several memorable events in the regiment's history.⁷⁶

While in Mexico, the enlisted men did not suffer any racial abuse and never complained about unfair treatment, but Charles Young was not so fortunate. White officers refused to socialize with him. The night of the regiment's fiftieth anniversary celebration, a dinner was held for the regiment's officers and guests. Young claimed he was sick, and he refused to sit at the table so as not to offend anyone.⁷⁷ Occasionally, white officers would talk with Young as they walked along the picket line at night, but for the most part Young was left to sit alone in his tent or talk with black non-commissioned officers.⁷⁸

The regiment remained in Mexico until late January 1917, when the march home began. Before leaving, Pershing inspected the regiments; Lieutenant George Patton, Pershing's personal assistant, later wrote that he believed the Tenth "had the best equipment and put up the best show."⁷⁹ On January 29, 1917, the troops began marching back to the United States. The first units arrived in Columbus on February 2. The Tenth Cavalry returned to Fort

Huachuca, arriving there on March 17, a little over a year after they left for Mexico.

In April, the United States entered World War One, and the Tenth Cavalry began preparing for another conflict. Eight hundred new recruits joined the regiment by June, and the men began training for service overseas. A trench system was constructed to instruct the men in trench warfare, and they learned how to use hand grenades and gas masks. Lieutenant Colonel Young established an officer's training school for enlisted men who hoped to be commissioned.⁸⁰

The Tenth Cavalry, however, never left Arizona. Throughout the war, the regiment remained on duty at Fort Huachuca and continued to patrol the Mexican border. The army commissioned sixty-six enlisted men, and another six hundred men left the regiment to serve in the new black units forming for service overseas. These men were the nucleus of many of the new units.⁸¹ The black soldiers who remained behind contributed to the war effort by subscribing \$200,000 for liberty bonds during the Second Liberty Loan Drive.⁸²

The Tenth Cavalry's only black officer, Charles Young, was also denied the opportunity to serve overseas. In the spring of 1917, Young was temporarily commanding the regiment, and he was also undergoing examination for promotion to full colonel. If promoted, he was almost certain to become the first black man to reach the rank of brigadier general. In order to qualify for promotion, Young had to pass a medical exam, but he failed this exam because he suffered from Bright's Disease and high blood pressure.⁸³ The

examining board recommended that he be retired, but the army initially decided to ignore this and promote Young anyway because he appeared to be in excellent physical shape and had never complained of any medical problems. The promotion, however, did not come easily or immediately.

At this moment, First Lieutenant Albert B. Dockery, a white officer, requested a transfer from the Tenth, complaining that he not only found it "distasteful" but "practically impossible" to serve under Lieutenant-Colonel Young.⁸⁴ Dockery's complaint led four other white officers to request a transfer from the regiment so they could avoid serving under a black officer.⁸⁵ These officers complained to their senators, and the matter eventually reached President Woodrow Wilson, who asked his Secretary of War to look into the situation and remove Young if necessary.⁸⁶

Though the political pressure was intense, Young's chances for promotion evaporated only when the Adjutant General intervened in the case. The Adjutant General of the army said that it was not possible to promote any junior officers until the army acted on the recommendation of Young's examining board.⁸⁷ Thus, it was decided to promote Young to colonel, retire him, and then recall him to active service at a later date.⁸⁸ The army did not recall him until November 1918, almost a year and half after retiring him and only a week before the armistice ending World War I. Young's career and chances of serving in France suffered from the combined assaults of racism and army bureaucracy.

Throughout 1917 and 1918, the Tenth Cavalry continued to patrol the Mexican border and engaged in several minor skirmishes.

In January 1918, Troop E was patrolling the Bear Valley, twenty-five miles west of Nogales, when it encountered a band of thirty Yaqui Indians three miles north of the border. The Yaquis worked in the Tucson-Phoenix area at local citrus and cotton ranches. They used their wages to buy arms and ammunition that they then smuggled into Mexico to be used against the Mexican government, with whom the Yaqui were then at war with. Local ranchers had warned the troop that the Yaqui were operating in the Bear Valley, and the troop sent numerous patrols into the valley searching for bands of Indians.⁸⁹

Upon sighting the Yaqui, the troop dismounted and formed a skirmish line. The men advanced and immediately drew fire from the Indians, who had concealed themselves behind boulders. A sharp fire fight ensued that lasted for about thirty minutes, both sides using rocks and brush for cover, until a party of ten Yaqui formed a rear guard to cover the withdrawal of the rest of the Indians. While the main group slipped across the border, the black troopers concentrated their fire upon the smaller group and eventually forced them to surrender. The troop suffered no casualties, while wounding only one Indian.⁹⁰ The little skirmish received no attention outside of Arizona, where the *Nogales Oasis* said the event "reflects great credit upon the soldiers."⁹¹

In August 1918, three troops of the Tenth Cavalry participated in the Battle of Nogales. The troops were encamped two miles from the town, while three companies of the Thirty Fifth Infantry garrisoned Nogales when the fight began. Tensions were high due to rumors that German agents were encouraging the Mexican garrison

of Nogales to attack the American side of town.⁹² At four P. M. on August 27, a Mexican attempted to cross International Avenue, which ran straight through the city and marked the border line. A United States customs official, escorted by a private from the Thirty Fifth, ordered the Mexican to stop. A Mexican border guard then shot and killed the private, and American soldiers immediately returned the fire.⁹³ The Mexicans retaliated, and within a matter of minutes a full blown battle was raging in the streets of Nogales.

Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Herman, commanding the Tenth Cavalry troops in the area, was driving toward Nogales when he heard the shots. He immediately stopped, telephoned his troops, and ordered them to proceed to the city. Troops A, C, and F galloped into Nogales, dismounted, and moved toward the border line.⁹⁴ The city was a mess. American citizens were either madly running around or firing upon the Mexican side of town. One officer said that "it seemed as though everybody in Nogales was shooting from the windows."⁹⁵ Colonel Herman took command and ordered the county sheriff to round up all the civilians and lock them in the city hall.⁹⁶ He then ordered Troop F to assault Titcomb Hill, located in Mexico in the west end of town, and assigned the infantry the task of taking Reservoir Hill on the east side. Troops A and C were held in reserve.⁹⁷

The non-commissioned officers of the Tenth Cavalry gave an excellent performance. Captain Henry C. Caron led Troop F across the border and up Titcomb Hill, taking heavy Mexican fire the entire time. Once on top, Caron was wounded; First Sergeant Thomas Jordan took command and effectively led the troop through the rest of the

battle. The infantry, however, failed to take Reservoir Hill, and Troop C was ordered to cross the border and attack the hill. Captain Joseph Hungerford led his men across the line, but was then fatally shot. First Sergeant James Penny took command, continued the advance up the hill, and then methodically cleared the Mexican trenches and rifle pits.⁹⁸

With both flanks secured, Colonel Herman decided to occupy the line of houses on the Mexican side of International Avenue, a job he assigned to Troop A. The Mexicans had positioned numerous snipers in these houses. Under intense fire, the troop crossed the border one squad at a time and immediately entered the Concordia Club. As the black troopers entered the building, a female employee of the club wearing a kimono called out, "Sergeant Jackson! Are we glad to see you!"⁹⁹ The sergeant had no time for pleasantries, and the troop began the messy work of clearing out the houses. The job was quickly completed. The troop then assaulted a nearby hill and gained a commanding position of the Mexican side of Nogales.¹⁰⁰

It was now about 5:45 and the Americans had complete control of the Mexican side of Nogales. The Mexicans, however, asked the Americans to surrender, which infuriated Colonel Herman. He gave the Mexicans ten minutes to surrender. If they did not, he vowed to attack with all of his troops "and burn Nogales, Sonora, to the ground."¹⁰¹ A conference was soon held and a cease fire called. The situation calmed down over the next several days, and each side apologized for the unnecessary battle that cost seven Americans and 129 Mexicans their lives. The Tenth Cavalry suffered one man killed and nine wounded.

The black troopers of the Tenth Cavalry once again demonstrated their abilities in this engagement. The men were aggressive, followed orders, and used good judgment. Colonel Herman commended both Sergeants Jordan and Penny for assuming command of their troops and providing excellent leadership.¹⁰² The battle received some national attention, but it was referred to as merely a "brush," and no mention was made of the role the Tenth Cavalry played.¹⁰³ Its only significance was impossible to know at the time, for this was the last combat action of the Tenth Cavalry.

The battle of Nogales marked the end of an era for the regiment; an era that brought many changes to the Tenth Cavalry, but during which two things remained constant. The first was that the black enlisted men continued to face racism from both white society and the army. The second was that the black soldiers continued to perform well in battle and proved that they deserved to wear the uniform of the United States army.

Throughout this era, white Americans refused to believe that blacks were capable soldiers, and thus they subjected the men of the Tenth Cavalry to intensive racism. The army failed to commission deserving black soldiers because of the belief that they were dependent on white officers and lacked the ability to handle responsibilities. Without whites, it was believed, blacks would lose the steadying influence they needed to maintain their composure on the battlefield. Time and again, the enlisted men of the Tenth Cavalry demonstrated the fallacy of this belief, but the army continued to believe that the performance of black soldiers in Cuba and other conflicts was the result of the leadership white officers

provided. The black enlisted men faced even harsher racism from white society. At its worst, this racism manifested itself through both verbal and physical abuse; at its best, racism was felt through Jim Crow segregation and fear and suspicion. Many whites loathed the sight of blacks in uniform, believing that it led blacks to assume they were entitled to full citizenship and thus to forget that their proper place was at the bottom of a racially divided society. Other whites feared that black soldiers could not be controlled and posed a threat to peace and order, and these whites viewed the Tenth Cavalry with suspicion when the regiment arrived in their towns. The black soldiers could never overcome this racism.

Despite this racism, the enlisted men of the Tenth Cavalry continued to perform well in battle. The regiment participated in the invasion of Cuba, the Philippines Insurrection, the Mexican Punitive Expedition, the battle of Nogales, and several minor military operations. The conduct and performance of the black soldiers was excellent, and they demonstrated that they were soldiers of high professionalism and capability. In each of these conflicts, black enlisted men proved that they were qualified to handle the responsibilities of commissioned officers. The men viewed their regiment and its accomplishments with pride, and they eagerly sought to demonstrate their abilities. By doing so, they hoped to achieve the rights of full citizenship and the honor of receiving a commission in the United States army. Their success in battle, however, never brought them the recognition for which they fought.

The excellent performance of the black enlisted men of the Tenth Cavalry was not wasted, for it was highly significant to black

Americans at the turn of the century. The black press reported and celebrated the Tenth Cavalry's charge up San Juan Hill, the men's courageous stand at Carrizal, and other events. The black enlisted men provided a source of pride that blacks of this era needed. They also became heroes and a beacon of hope to an oppressed race. There was little else, wrote Professor Rayford W. Logan of Howard University in 1954, "to help sustain our faith in ourselves except the pride we took" in the Tenth Cavalry and the other three black regiments. "They were," Logan concluded, "our Ralph Bunche, Marian Anderson, Joe Louis, and Jackie Robinson."¹⁰⁴ This belief was a testament to the achievements of the Tenth Cavalry.

Epilogue

The black soldiers who went to France in 1918 performed well in combat, but after the war their service was discredited. The white commanding officers of these black units submitted reports that portrayed black soldiers as inferior, unable to adapt to the conditions of modern war, and lacking the character necessary for leadership. These racial stereotypes influenced the army's treatment of black soldiers for the next two decades, caused many white officers to question the need and effectiveness of the four black regiments, and resulted in the elimination of the Tenth Cavalry during World War II.¹

The Tenth Cavalry remained at Fort Huachuca throughout the 1920's, but with the end of World War I the border stabilized, and the regiment stopped patrolling the international line. Life took on the slow monotony of garrison duty and routine training. In 1920, the enlisted men began publishing the *Buffalo Bulletin*, a newsletter carrying information on the happenings in the regiment that eventually attained a circulation of twelve hundred. A year later, however, the army ordered it to be discontinued, for the men had violated regulations by using paid advertising to cover the paper's cost.²

The beginning of the 1930's brought the first attempts by the War Department to eliminate the regiment. During the 1920's, as a

standard procedure, the army occasionally abolished a company or converted a combat troop into a service unit. In 1931, the army, because it only had funds available for a limited and specific number of troops, began shifting vacancies in the Tenth Cavalry to the new United States Army Air Corps. This meant that instead of using the vacancies to fill slots in the Tenth, the army was depleting the Tenth and using the slots to recruit whites to serve in the Air Corps. Although no specific policy was stated, the army slowly eliminated the Tenth Cavalry by this process. This action continued until the regiment became little more than a collection of scattered service units.³

This action destroyed the Tenth Cavalry's effectiveness as a combat unit, something the black soldiers bitterly resented. In October 1931, the remainder of the regiment was transferred out of Arizona. By this time, there were only two squadrons remaining. The First Squadron was sent to Fort Leavenworth, and the Second Squadron to West Point. The machine gun troop was transferred to Fort Meyer, Virginia. The day the regiment lowered its colors at Fort Huachuca, the men turned in their arms and equipment and stood for inspection. As the band played, one black trooper realized that this was the end, and he turned away, tears streaming down his face.⁴

It was not quite the end as the various Tenth Cavalry units continued to exist as service units in the 1930's, but the black soldiers faced segregation within the army on a scale that they had never seen before. They received almost no training, and the army used them only as orderlies and laborers in a manner similar to how the army used blacks in the era before the Civil War. At West Point,

they worked seven days a week serving the cadets.⁵ The men also faced segregated facilities. At Fort Meyer, there were separate dining halls, post exchanges, and barber shops.⁶ At Fort Leavenworth, the black soldiers were not even allowed to use the post swimming pool, clubs, and restaurant.⁷

The final indignity came during World War II. In 1941, the regiment was reassembled at Fort Leavenworth, where it began training as a large unit. A year later it was transferred to the Cavalry Training Center at Camp Lockett, California, and received intensive combat training.⁸ The army promised the men that they would soon be sent into combat, and early in 1944 the regiment was shipped to North Africa to undergo more training. Once in Africa, however, the regiment was disbanded. The men were assigned to such duties as repairing roads and driving trucks, and they were also forbidden to write home about the action. Their mail was censored to prevent news of the situation from leaking. The black community eventually learned of the dissolution of the once proud regiment and protested, but the army refused to reactivate the Tenth Cavalry.⁹

Throughout its existence, racism had plagued the Tenth Cavalry. After 1892, this racism became more prevalent, manifesting itself in racial slurs, violence, stereotypes, and suspicion. Black soldiers did their best to overcome this racism and convince white Americans that they were capable and deserved respect. In Cuba, the Philippines, and Mexico, the regiment proved that it could perform in combat as well as any white regiment; in Montana, Nebraska, and Vermont it demonstrated its ability to behave with courtesy and not threaten the peace as many whites feared. Whites,

however, continued to believe black soldiers could not be commissioned officers, were dependent on white officers, and lacked the intelligence necessary for capable soldiers. This racism ultimately proved to be too strong, wiping out the memories of the Tenth Cavalry's charge upon San Juan Hill and other events, and leading the army to disband the regiment.

Notes

Abbreviations

MHI Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pennsylvania

NA National Archives, Washington, D. C.

RG Record Group

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