The Story Behind the Story

Colonel Edward Hatch
First Commander of the 9th Cavalry Regiment

Following the Revolutionary War, the new United States virtually eliminated its army and navy. The U.S. Army was soon established and accepted blacks; the U.S. Navy was created in 1798, accepting black sailors as it had during the revolution and continuing to do so throughout the nineteenth century. Black soldiers served in the War of 1812, but in 1820, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, responding to Southern slave owners, banned any further enlistment by African Americans. As black veterans left, the U.S. Army became exclusively white until the Civil War.

Fourth U.S Infantry Detail, US Colored Troops, 1864

The Return of Black Regiments

During the Civil War, the U.S. government formed regiments known as the United States Colored Troops (USCT), composed of black soldiers and Native Americans. The USCT was disbanded in the fall of 1865. In July 1866, Congress passed the Army Reorganization Act. The first draft of the bill that the House Committee on Military Affairs sent to the full chamber on March 7, 1866 did not include a provision for regiments of black cavalry, however, this provision was added by Senator Benjamin Wade prior to the bill's passing on July 28, 1866. This legislation created six all black regiments. The Army Reorganization Act of 1869 reduced the four all-black infantry regiments to two regiments.

During the peacetime formation years (1865-1870), the black infantry and cavalry regiments were composed of black enlisted soldiers commanded by white commissioned officers and black noncommissioned officers. These included the first commander of the 10th Cavalry, Benjamin Grierson and Edward Hatch, the 9th Cavalry commander. The first black commissioned officer to lead the Buffalo Soldiers and the first black graduate of West Point, was Henry O. Flipper in 1877.
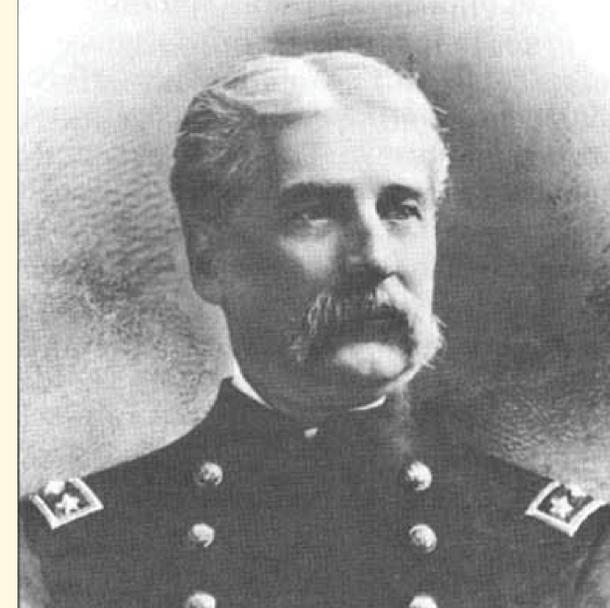

Recruiting Poster 1865 for The Supervisory Committee For Recruiting Colored Regiments

Despite the excellent Civil War record of black soldiers, some white officers who stayed on in the U.S. Army retained their prejudices and were dismayed at the thought of accepting senior positions in black regiments. Others who had witnessed their excellent service during the Civil War, like Benjamin H. Grierson, rushed at the opportunity to serve in these new regiments.

"Always in the vanguard of civilization and in contact with the most warlike and savage Indians of the Plains, the officers and men [of the Buffalo Soldiers] have cheerfully endured many hardships and privations, and in the midst of great dangers steadfastly maintained a most gallant and zealous devotion to duty, and they may well be proud of the record made, and rest assured that the hard work undergone in the accomplishment of such important and valuable service to their country is well understood and appreciated, and that it cannot fail, sooner or later, to meet with due recognition and reward."

-Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson, Tenth Cavalry

Date of Birth: December 22, 1832
Place of Birth: Bangor, ME
Date of Death: April 11, 1889
Burial Location: Fort Leavenworth National Cemetery, Fort Leavenworth, KS

Colonel Edward Hatch was a career American soldier who served as a general in the Union Army during the American Civil War. Hatch was educated at the Norwich Military Academy in Vermont. He spent his early life at sea and then moved to Pennsylvania to work in the lumber business. He then moved to Iowa, where he was living Army at the outbreak of the Civil War in April 1861. He volunteered for service as a private in the Union Army, but was appointed to a captain in August 1861. He assisted in raising the 2nd Iowa Cavalry, of which he became colonel in June, 1862. He served under General Ulysses S. Grant in the South. After commanding the entire cavalry division in the
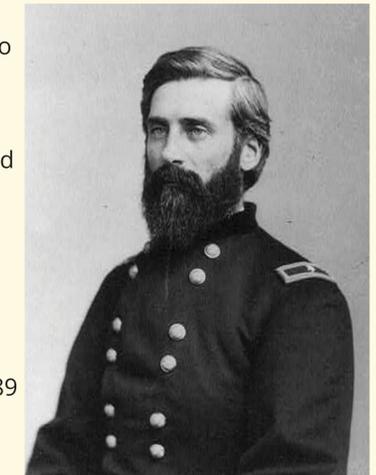

9th Cavalry Regiment Insignia

Army of the Tennessee, he was made brigadier general in early 1864. His gallantry in the field caused his further promotion to the rank of brevet Major General (1864).

The 9th Cavalry Regiment

After the war he transferred from the volunteer to the Regular Army as colonel of the 9th Cavalry regiment (1866). He was charged with organizing the 9th Cavalry. Col. Hatch was an able and ambitious officer. He was the ideal commander for this all black unit. He was described as "racially unprejudiced" by his peers. Recruitment of White officers proved to be a serious problem for both the 9th & 10th Cavalries. Despite enticements of fast promotion, many officers, including George Armstrong, Custer and Frederick Benteen, refused commissions with African-American units.

From their organization in Greenville, LA in 1866, the troopers of the 9th Cavalry, under the command of Hatch, moved west across Texas and finally into New Mexico Territory. For the next two decades, the 9th kept the peace in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona.

Edward Hatch served admirably in this position until his death in 1889. He died in Fort Robinson, Nebraska April 11, 1889 and is buried in Fort Leavenworth National Cemetery, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Col. Hatch during his time with the 2nd Iowa Cavalry

1861	1864	1866	1869
Commissioned Captain of the Second Iowa Cavalry	Commands entire cavalry division in the Army of the Tennessee	Becomes Colonel of the 9th U.S. Cavalry Regiment	Replaces Col. Wesley Meritt as post commander of Ft. Davis