

THE BRUNET NINTH CAVALRY IN TEXAS DURING
RECONSTRUCTION, 1865-1875

by

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A THESIS

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RECONSTRUCTION, 1865-1875

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ABSTRACT

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Purpose

It was the purpose of this study to ascertain the significance of the Black Ninth Regiment of United States Cavalry in the development of West Texas during the nadir years, those of reconstruction.

Methods

The methods used to obtain material for this study were the following: (1) examination of the National Archives of the United States Record of the Colored Ninth Regiment of the United States Cavalry; (2) examination of the Texas State Archives; (3) examination of the University of Texas Archives; (4) examination of the National Congressional Records, the State Congressional Records, and other National and State Government documents; (5) examination of Texas' major newspapers from 1867 to 1875, as well as other newspapers and periodicals of the period; and (6) examination of various secondary sources.

Findings

The evidence presented in this study suggests the following conclusions:

1. When reconstruction finally came to the Texas people in 1875, it was the Brunet man who played the major role in achieving that milestone, for the Texas people and the Union thus aided in placing the United States in the forefront of major countries around the world.

2. Brunet soldiers, troopers of the all Black Ninth Cavalry Regiments, played a decisive role in the settlement of the Texas frontier.

3. The Brunet Ninth Cavalry reopened mail routes that had been closed because the men that were guarding these routes were unable to make them safe to travel. They safely guarded the cattle drives and mail coaches along these roads better than any other unit on the frontier.

4. The Brunet Ninth Regiment returned cattle and horses by the thousands that had been stolen from the people of Texas.

5. The Black Ninth Cavalry built roads and telegraph lines; mapped and explored territories that here-to-fore were said to have been impossible.

6. The Ninth Cavalry Regiment safely escorted railroad crews and surveyors into areas that no other military unit had been able to do.

7. The Brunet Ninth Cavalry Regiment for a decade, prevented plunder by an elusive, vicious enemy who struck from ambush when least expected and disappeared like whispering ghosts into the thousands and thousands of miles of brush and hills. The regiment returned roving bands of Indians to their reservations despite their ghost like appearance.

8. The Black Ninth Regiment greatly curtailed the activities of bandits, desperadoes, and revolutionaries that were driving law abiding citizens and state officials out of their minds.

9. The Brunet Ninth Cavalry Regiment's contribution to the era of reconstruction in Texas enabled the unit to emerge as one of the outstanding military regiments of the United States.

10. The Ninth Cavalry helped to conquer the territory that would permit the movement of settlers into the new and different environment of West Texas.

Approved:

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In military history, the cavalry has perhaps received less attention than the infantry. There are some cavalry units which played vivid and decisive roles in United States history whose contributions are forgotten by the historians. The Brunet Ninth is one of the great cavalry units of the American West.¹ For more than three decades Negro soldiers successfully defended the frontier plains and prairie country against all intruders. Their superb horsemanship and their dauntless courage enabled them to guard well the vast, semi-arid land that the white man claimed as his own. Yet, for a variety of reasons, no attempt at a comprehensive study of the Negro cavalry has been made. The story of the Brunet Ninth Cavalry has remained unwritten. The tendency of the average historian either to ignore entirely or to acknowledge very grudgingly the courage and patriotism of this so-called

¹Harry A. Ploski and Roscoe C. Brown, Jr. (eds.), The Negro Almanac, 548. The white soldiers called the Negro soldiers "Brunets."

alien race has caused the Black Ninth Cavalry to become one of those almost forgotten regiments. This unit is almost unknown not only to Americans at large. Its contribution has been forgotten even by the vast majority of the Negro people. Thus the Ninth Cavalry, which undoubtedly ranked among the foremost military organizations of this nation during the turbulent years of settling the frontier of Texas after the Civil War, is all but forgotten. The details of the sacrifices, hardships, and arduous duties of these Black men of the Ninth Cavalry Regiment, contributing to the settlement and civilization of West Texas during Reconstruction, are to be found only in scattered sources.

Because of the mass media most Americans are aware of, and hopefully will not forget, the honorable military contribution being made by Negroes today, especially in the common threat against the aggressors of Southeast Asia. This has not been true throughout the history of the United States, although the Black man has sacrificed and shown courage in making this country the great nation that it is. It has been courage that has distinguished both the Black man and the white man, who fought shoulder to shoulder for survival against all common enemies. The historians' grudging

acknowledgement of the contributions of the Black man has left a gap in American history.

The Black man was brought to this country during the infant stage of its civilization. He was immediately forced into slavery, in which condition most Blacks were held until the Civil War. Negroes took part in American exploration of the western part of the United States. When Meriwether Lewis and William Clark commanded the first official attempt to extend the "geographical knowledge of our continent," a Negro went with them. A Negro named York accompanied the expedition from the time it hoisted sail near the mouth of the Missouri River in 1804 until it returned in 1806 after having crossed the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean.² Thirty-seven years later a Negro, Jacob Dodson, accompanied John C. Fremont on his 1843 expedition to search for a new pass through the High Sierra Mountains. Another Negro, Saunders Jackson, joined Fremont's fourth expedition in 1848.³ There were Negroes who staked claims and formed mining companies. James Beckwourth, a Negro mountain man, found a

²William Brandon, The American Heritage Book of Indians, 137-138.

³Ibid., 117-118.

pass through the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Negro prospectors and miners also joined in later developments in Nevada, and they were among those who headed for Colorado to become part of the Pike's Peak Gold Rush of 1858. Negro women cooked for hungry trappers in isolated forts during the Civil War, and for travelers on the Butterfield stages that rolled through Texas.⁴ Despite the deep involvement of Black men and women in every aspect of this nation's development and progress, the historians have rarely accorded them the place they have earned in history.

Since the 1890's there has been an increasing interest in the course of the American westward movement. The full significance of American expansion has been appreciated, except for the role of Black Americans. In less than a century of time, the United States extended itself over the vast reaches of this continent from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, but its territorial growth accompanied the exploitation of the Black man and the displacement of the Indian. The part the Negro played is bound to concern the historian of the future, whose mental grasp will be immeasurably

⁴Wendell G. Addington, "Slave Insurrections in Texas," The Journal of Negro History, XXXV (1950), p. 414.

greater than is that of the men who now write and teach American history in the old conventional, aristocratic way with a halo around New England.

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the significance of the Brunet Ninth Cavalry Regiment in the development of West Texas during the nadir years, those of Reconstruction. The paper is restricted to the regiment's first nine years because it was during this period that the unit accomplished the first phase of its long and distinguished career.

Although greatly handicapped, this brave regiment came into existence after the Civil War and defended the Texas frontier against Indians and Mexican revolutionaries along the Rio Grande; it prevented plunder by Indians; it returned roving bands to their reservations; it built forts and helped to provide civil law and order. The only obstacles the Ninth could not overcome were those of discrimination and prejudice.

CHAPTER II

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BRUNET CAVALRY

During the latter part of May, 1865, the Union Army staged its last great spectacle, passing in review for days along Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington. If one had paused for a moment to review the Negro's conduct and participation in the Civil War he would have found that the Black soldier had made a profound impression on all who observed him. There were many who were slow to acknowledge his worthiness to participate in the battle for freedom and to practice the right of citizenship; still they would gladly grant that he possessed the qualities of which heroes are made. Blacks would exhibit as much courage when the occasion required as any other citizens.¹ One would have found that nearly 180,000 Black soldiers had served in the Union Army and of this number twenty percent lost their lives. He would have found that

¹L. D. Reddick, "The Negro Policy of the United States Army, 1775-1945," The Journal of Negro History, XXXIV, No. 1 (January, 1949), pp. 17-18; Dudley T. Cornish, The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865, p. 288.

they took part in 449 engagements. But despite the record there were many who still doubted that the Negro could be a first-rate combat soldier, and therefore his future in the Army of the nation that he had fought to preserve remained uncertain.²

"When he [the Negro] returned from military service to pose as a hero among those of his own color," he became a henchman of scalawags and carpetbaggers, who, "abusing the confidence of the deluded Blacks," caused the somewhat latent ferocity and evil passion to become aroused in the Southern white man.³

As the racial conflict took place, it seemed an intolerable thing for Blacks to become United States soldiers, but they did. One of the first things that the federal government did after the Civil War was to demobilize the large volunteer army. The Black soldiers, therefore, were "turned loose on those he had formerly served,"⁴ for more than a year.

²Sidney E. Whitman, The Troopers: An Informal History of the Plains Cavalry, 1865-1890, p. 33.

³Basil W. Duke, Reminiscences of General Basil W. Duke, C.S.C.S.A., 241.

⁴Ibid.

After a year the federal government finally realized that there was an urgent need for a sizeable regular army, especially of cavalymen, to mend the damage of the neglected frontier. They prepared to use the Black soldiers for a dirty job which nobody relished. In an act to increase and fix the military peace establishment of the United States, the Ninth Cavalry was approved on July 28, 1866. Congress in passing this legislation opened a new chapter in American military history and afforded the Negro an opportunity to play a major role in the settlement of the West.⁵

Since the exploitation of Negro troops in a peacetime army was regarded as a new experiment, the authorizing act contained some new and unusual provisions. The chaplains were normally assigned to a particular post or station, but in the case of the Black units the chaplain was assigned directly to the regiment with both spiritual and educational duties, for he was to instruct the soldiers in the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The act further stated

⁵ John K. Herr and E. S. Wallace, The Story of the United States Cavalry, 1775-1942, p. 144; Act of July 28, 1866, 39th Congress, 1st Session, "An Act to Increase and Fix the Military Peach Establishment of the United States."

that since there were no experienced Negro officers, all officers of the new regiment were to be white, and that all of these officers must take a special examination before a board of experienced officers that was to be appointed by General Ulysses S. Grant, the Secretary of War. Two years of active field service in the Civil War were required of all officers, with two-thirds of those holding the rank of captain or above drawn from the volunteer regiments and one-third from the regular army. The officers of lower rank were to be drawn exclusively from the volunteer cavalry.⁶ Since this act was only one among many passed by the Radical Republicans in an effort to perpetuate their existence, it was not looked upon as exploitation or segregation so much as a friendly and progressive move, as a recognition and reward for valor, so that henceforth and forever Blacks would have a place in the United States Army.

Grant, on August 3, 1866, dispatched a telegram to his old comrade-in-arms, Major General Philip H. Sheridan, then Commander of the Military Division of the Gulf with

⁶ Ibid.; Charles H. Wesley, The Quest for Equality: From Civil War to Civil Rights, 82; T. G. Steward, The Colored Regulars in the United States Army, 86-87.

headquarters at New Orleans, Louisiana. Sheridan was authorized to raise, among other things, one regiment of colored cavalry to be designated as the Ninth Regiment of United States Cavalry. It took a good officer to accept a commission with the Ninth Cavalry, and even a better one to be its commander. Grant, therefore, picked Colonel Edward Hatch of Maine. In earlier years, Hatch has gone to sea and then engaged in the lumber business in Pennsylvania. In 1855 he moved to Iowa and was residing there when the war came. He received appointment as a captain in the Second Iowa Cavalry in August, 1861, and in less than a year was its Colonel. He took part in Grierson's famous raid of 1863, received citations for gallantry and meritorious service at the battles of Franklin and Nashville, Tennessee, and closed out the war as Brevet Major General of Volunteers.⁷ It was for this brilliant Civil War record that Hatch received the appointment.

The over-rated and glory-seeking Civil War hero, Brevet Major General George Armstrong Custer, could have been the

⁷Francis B. Heitman, Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, I, 510; Dee Alexander Brown, Grierson's Raid: A Cavalry Adventure of the Civil War, 61-62.

Lieutenant Colonel of the Ninth, but the idea of using American Black soldiers was too new for him. By some devious means, he got the same rank in the newly-formed white Seventh Cavalry. The West Pointer's skepticism about the future of the Black troops was probably fortunate for the Ninth Cavalry, because he led his men into the Little Big Horn Massacre some ten years later.⁸ Almost all white officers agreed with Custer's opinion about Black troops. Brevet Major General Eugene A. Carr, for example, took a lower rank in order to serve with a white regiment because he simply thought that Negroes would not make good soldiers.⁹

Since Custer would not lead, the Brunet Ninth got a perfect officer in a Lieutenant Colonel, Wesley Merritt, United States Military Academy graduate of 1860, and not the bottom man in his class by any means. Merritt had been Major General of Volunteers and Brevet Brigadier General, United States Army, during the Civil War. He commanded a cavalry corps under Sheridan, a grade higher than Custer's

⁸James M. Merrill, Spurs to Glory: The Story of the United States Cavalry, 211-228.

⁹James T. King, War Eagle: A Life of General Eugene A. Carr, 77.

command of a division. Merritt was thirty in 1866, old for one of Sheridan's boy generals, but younger than the well known frontier fighter, General George Crook, or Sheridan himself. He had a brilliant career in the six years after he graduated from West Point, but accepting a colonelcy with the Ninth meant that he had to prove himself all over again.¹⁰

Colonel Hatch, nominally commander and the organizer of the Ninth Regiment, established headquarters first at Greenville, Louisiana. From the beginning, with everyone predicting trouble, difficulty was encountered in getting experienced officers because many of them refused to serve with Black troops. Under such circumstance, officer enlistment proceeded at a very slow pace. The white officers were often down-and-outers with uncongenial wives. Some were adventurers and others were men who for one reason or another found it comfortable to be absent from their home communities for a time. A recruit's morals were not scrutinized. Disappointment in love, participation in riots, or irregular personal conduct involving difficulty with the law often caused the enlistment of white men (officers) who

¹⁰Heitman, Historical Register, 706.

proved not to be the best of soldiers. Many German and Irish immigrants entered the service as a means of livelihood until they could get a better knowledge of the new language. Some of these foreigners were men of excellent education. The native-born white American ordinarily hesitated to sign up on account of the small pay offered, his reluctance to surrender his individuality, and his unwillingness to submit to a system of social caste which, though inevitable in military life, clashed with his ideas of equality and democracy.¹¹ This kind of potential deserter and troublemaker Hatch was not interested in, and in November, 1866, he complained to the Adjutant General that he had several hundred Black recruits on hand, but still was unable to get any suitable officers. It was his belief that regular army officers were being assigned to all white regiments and only volunteers were sent to Negro units.¹²

¹¹Herr, The Story of the United States Cavalry, 145.

¹²Hatch to the Adjutant General, November 4, 1866, Record of the War Department, Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94, National Archives, Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry. To the writer it is uncertain as to the validity of Colonel Hatch's complaint, but in view of the conditions of the times he was probably correct.

Later, officer procurement was stepped up and the Ninth Cavalry obtained some excellent men, including Major Albert P. Morrow, Captain John M. Bacon, and Captain Edward M. Heyl. But the rate of enlistment was still much too slow for Colonel Hatch's purpose. The Black recruits were coming into the camp from all directions. It is not hard to see why opportunities in civilian life for Blacks were practically non-existent in those post-war days. Employers with jobs to give out had returning relatives or friends to give them to, and there were virtually no Black employers. But the new regiment offered real opportunities for Negroes. The recruiting officers for the Ninth could draw on the cream of the Black population.¹³

¹³Albert P. Morrow rose through the ranks of the Sixth Pennsylvania Cavalry to become Brevet Colonel. He joined the Ninth Cavalry on March 6, 1867 as a Major. He remained with the Ninth Regiment for fifteen years (Heitman, Historical Register, 729). John M. Bacon was from Kentucky. He joined the Eleventh Kentucky Cavalry as a Second Lieutenant in 1862 and was discharged as a Major in 1864. He joined the Ninth as a Captain on July 28, 1866. Bacon remained with the Ninth for only five years. He retired in 1899 as a Lieutenant Colonel. (Ibid., 179). Edward M. Heyl rose through the ranks of the Third Pennsylvania Cavalry to become one of its captains. He joined the Ninth Cavalry on July 28, 1866, and remained there for four years. (Ibid., 527).

Although most of the Ninth's recruiters concentrated their efforts in nearby New Orleans, they had little trouble enlisting many of the necessary number because, in addition to a job, the Cavalry to a degree afforded an opportunity for social and economic improvement difficult to obtain in a society closed or almost closed to Negroes. Despite the success that the recruiters were having in New Orleans some of the men came from as far away as Virginia. Virginia produced Washington Wyatt, who would die at the hands of persons unknown in Austin, Texas, before he was twenty-one years old. Kentucky contributed George Gray, doomed to die of tetanus in the post hospital at Fort Clark, Texas; and William Sharpe, who would have an Indian arrow awaiting him near old Fort Lancaster on the Pecos River. During this organizational period, Emanuel Stance, one of the regiment's future Medal of Honor winners, came from Charleston, South Carolina.¹⁴ They were paid from \$8.00 to \$13.00 per month. However, with conditions as they were, this was as good as a Black man could expect in the northern cities and much better than

¹⁴Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry, August-September, 1867, Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94, National Archives.

anything the ravaged South offered, and when food, clothing, and shelter were added, a better life seemed to be assured.¹⁵

Whatever their reasons, men enlisted in large numbers. Hatch moved swiftly to organize all twelve companies of the regiment, although only eleven officers had reported for duty at that time. The unit was only 800 strong.¹⁶ According to the Civil War Dictionary this was below minimum strength; for a regiment the minimum strength was to have been 845 with a maximum strength of 1025 troopers.¹⁷ The six months of organizing from August, 1866, to February, 1867, was too much time for the people on the frontier of Texas. The cavalry was much in demand on the frontier according to Charles W. Ramsdell:

Throughout 1865 and 1866 the whole extent of the frontier from north to south was in constant terror and became almost depopulated. The governor was besieged with petitions for troops and made repeated requests . . . for cavalry. . . . Almost

¹⁵Richard Edward Wormser, The Yellowlegs: The Story of the United States Cavalry, 1st ed., 428.

¹⁶Merrill, Spurs to Glory, 197.

¹⁷Mark M. Boatner, III, The Civil War Dictionary, 612.

two years elapsed . . . before frontier posts
were finally established. . . .¹⁸

Meanwhile, the federal government turned again to treaty-making in 1866. Although officials at Washington did not realize the extent of Indian depredations in Texas, they were aware that conditions were not satisfactory. Accordingly, during the latter part of 1866, agents were sent to investigate. The agents reported that a large part of Indian tribes were flagrantly violating the treaty of the Little Arkansas. They reported that the Indians did not even come in to receive their annuity goods, which were of inferior quality, the blankets being "hardly fit for saddle blankets." The majority of the army officers were charged with "utter ignorance of the Indian character and of the proper method of dealing with Indians." The committee of Indians affairs recommended the establishment of permanent agency headquarters with adequate buildings for residences, office, and storehouses, and the prompt delivery of annuity goods that would be useful to the Indians. It was believed by the committee

¹⁸Charles W. Ramsdell, Reconstruction in Texas, 84.

that if these steps were not taken there would be an outbreak of hostilities in the following spring.¹⁹

With this kind of problem and demand for cavalrymen, Hatch hardly had time to complete his organizational procedures before rumors of service on the frontier were circulating among the men, and within a month the rumors became a reality. In March, 1867, Hatch received orders to transfer the regiment to Texas. Two companies, L and M, were to take up station at Brownsville on the Rio Grande while the remaining ten companies were to camp near San Antonio, where they would undergo further training before moving on to the frontier to establish headquarters at Forts Stockton and Davis.

¹⁹ Annie Heloise Abel, The American Indian Under Reconstruction, Vol. I, 9; Earnest Wallace and E. Adamson Haebel, The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains, 308.

CHAPTER III

THE NADIR OF TEXAS AND THE ZENITH OF THE BRUNET

During the period of reconstruction after the Civil War there were many problems in Texas. It was, in part, these problems that brought about the formation of the Brunet Ninth Cavalry. The story of the development of the whole reconstruction problem is not necessary for the purpose of this study. It is necessary, however, and important to review some of the more important events that were transpiring in Texas, and especially on the frontier, since it was these events that led to the formation and the immediate transfer of the Ninth to Texas.

At the end of the Civil War, in April, 1865, matters were in a frightful shape on the western frontier of Texas and along the Mexican border, for the Indians had taken full advantage of the distractions of the conflict and had loosed furious attacks against the settlements. The situation was even more critical, because the Confederate troops, after sporadically occupying the old frontier forts, had largely abandoned them, and the dreaded Comanches and Apaches were

again raiding into the outskirts of San Antonio and beyond to the east. All the constructive toil of the army before 1861 had been practically undone.¹

In 1840 the frontier line of forts had been established at approximately the ninety-eighth meridian in Texas. The federal government had established a general chain of defense beginning with Eagle Pass on the Rio Grande, running north to the Red River. This line was composed of Fort Duncan on the Rio Grande, at Eagle Pass; Fort Clark, near the source of the Las Moras River in Kinney County; Fort Stockton, near Comanche Spring in Pecos County; Fort Terrett, in Bexar County; Fort McKavett, on the San Saba River in Menard County; Fort Chadbourne, in Runnels County; Fort Phantom Hill, in Jones County; Camp Cooper, in Throckmorton County; Fort Belknap, in Young County; and Fort Preston, in Grayson County. Some twenty years later, through continuous effort, this line had only moved west to about the one hundred-fifth meridian.

By 1864 the Indians had returned to a line from one hundred to one hundred and fifty miles east of their position

¹Wallace, The Comanches; James P. Boyd, The Gallant Trooper: General Philip H. Sheridan, 162.

before the Civil War. The Apaches ravaged the southwestern part of Texas, while the Comanches and Kiowas were burning and looting with impunity over much of northwestern Texas. The weak Texas frontier regiment was unable to stop them. In desperation the people tried to negotiate, but found most of the Indians totally unresponsive. They watched with fear, therefore, as large war parties roamed the plains. The raiders were so numerous that they confidently would attack large bodies of troops.

It was the Black man who helped to conquer the territory that would permit the movement of settlers into the new and different environment of western Texas. While this was true of the settlers on every frontier in the United States, it was especially so for those who were trying to leave the wooded area to establish new homes on the plains of west Texas.²

For more than a century after the establishing of the republic, the Indians were regarded by the federal government of the United States as a foreign nation within our

²For an understanding of this thought read chapter 5 "The American Approach to the Great Plains" in Walter Prescott Webb's The Great Plains, 140-203.

boundaries. The existence of this warlike race on the margins of settlement naturally called for the employment of troops. These troops had the unique task of enforcing the treaty stipulations that protected the Indians from white aggressors, and they also protected the white settlers from the Indians.

By the time of the Civil War, two significant gifts from the white man had already appeared and made the Indian what he was in west Texas. The horse had revolutionized an old way of life in the 17th century and had made nomadic hunters of virtually all but the coastal fish eaters. This transformation of a hitherto sedentary people wrought not only a new economy, but also a whole new social ceremonial and material organization. Many of the Indians had inhabited their area for a very long time. However, their culture, changed by the horse, was of relative recent vintage. The second gift, the gun that the Indians got at the various trading posts or by some devious means, had by the beginning of the Civil War already demonstrated its enormous utility in war.³

³Ray Allen Billington, Soldier and Brave: Indian and Military Affairs in the Trans-Mississippi West. Including a Guide to Historic Sites and Landmarks, Volume XIII of the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, 3.

The Indian's possession of fire-arms, in some cases of the most modern invention, and his warlike instincts led to continuing aggressive action. The fact that the government had been compelled to withdraw the regular army and abandon its frontier posts in Texas during the war seemed to the Indians an evidence of weakness of which the savages were quick to take advantage. The Indians, more confident than ever, banded together in large bodies and began murder and destruction over half of Texas.⁴

It is natural that an enlightened American who reads today the events of the past should suppose that with the close of the Civil War the government would have turned its attention seriously to the solution of the Indian problem in the Southwest. But it did not do this. There were pressing and glamorous postwar issues that absorbed the attention of people and officials. Texas was very remote. The knowledge of the conditions and needs of the people in the area was meager to those in authority. As a result, Indian hostilities went on unabated.

⁴"General Mackenzie and Fort Concho." An article in the Colonel Martin L. Crimmins' Collections, University of Texas Archives; Earl A. Brinstool, A Trooper with Custer and other Historic Incidents of the Battle of the Little Big Horn, Introduction.

The Committee of Indian Affairs' failure to make acceptable and decisive recommendations concerning the Indians in 1865 left the whole matter no further advanced than before the committee had started. The federal troops, therefore, upon reoccupying Texas and its western frontier at the close of the Civil War, were able to recognize a growing confidence in Indian strength. The Indians were greatly exasperated, while far to the north the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad across the continent to the Pacific Coast directly through their hunting ground drove them almost to frenzy. They knew that the extermination of the buffalo would bring an end to the wandering tribes. To the Indians the buffalo was the very staff of life. With the buffalo gone, the way of life for the nomadic Indians of the plains was finished. And they knew it. The winter of 1866 and spring of 1867 found them arrogant and defiant. And later in the summer they boldly threw off all concealment and entered upon the warpath.⁵

It seems today that the failure of the federal government at that time to devise some clear, firm policy for the

⁵Dallas Herald, August 10, 1865, March 10, 1866; Robert Edgar Riegel, American Moves West, 480; Robert G. Carter, On the Border with Mackenzie, 1.

disposition and control of the wild Indians was stupid and reprehensible. The untold loss of life and destruction of property on the part of whites as well as Indians, and the unimaginable sufferings that came to individuals of both races during the next ten years, must be laid squarely at the feet of the government. The citizens did the best that they could; and, as for the savage, he struggled to maintain his existence and his hitherto free domain in the only way he knew, by murder and plunder.

It should have been as plain to the officials at that time as it is today that the only humane course was to allow the Indians to choose between restraint and wise educational direction by the government, on suitable reservations, with complete fulfillment of treaty.

The people in Washington evidently thought that there were other things that made conditions critical in Texas. In May, 1865, General Philip H. Sheridan was rushed south with 52,000 troops. Included in the group was a Michigan volunteer cavalry regiment under Major George A. Custer, which went to Hempstead, Texas, and another mounted regiment under General Wesley Merritt, which rode to San Antonio.

Sheridan himself went to New Orleans.⁶ Before Sheridan had settled this large body of troops down in the south for the purpose of mustering them out, he should have been ordered to march the men north through the states of Arizona and New Mexico and into the plains and back. This one sweep through the area would have probably ended the Indian problem once and for all. The Ninth probably would not have been formed. But some of Sheridan's men were entitled to discharge and some were thought to have been needed on the Mexican border for the purpose of a possible invasion of that country. General Sheridan's display of force and strong diplomatic pressure from Washington encouraged the Mexican liberals, led by General Juarez, to make a fresh effort to overcome the foreign ruler.⁷ Tension was eased when the Mexican revolution ended on June 19, 1866, with Maximilian's death. It was the removal of the French troops, however, that made it easy for Juarez and his revolutionaries to defeat the Archduke Maximilian, who had been made Emperor

⁶Report of Major General Philip H. Sheridan in Annual Report of Secretary of War, 39th Congress, 1st Session, 1866, pp. 45-46; J. Fred Rippey, "Mexican Projects of the Confederates," The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXII, 316.

⁷Boyd, The Gallant Trooper.

during the preoccupation of the United States in its civil strife. Sheridan never had to invade Mexico, although his presence on its northern frontier might have encouraged Napoleon III to pull his troops home in January, 1867. The Monroe Doctrine was again in force. Neither the display of force nor the Monroe Doctrine had any effect on the real problem of the Rio Grande. That will be discussed in a later chapter.

As the war ended many of Texas' principal state and Confederate officers left. By May, 1865, the state was without a civil government. "It was thought by many that some of the Southern leaders would endeavor to revive in Texas the famous project of an independent government . . . somewhat as imagined by Aaron Burr in the early days of the Republic."⁸

Although General E. Kirby Smith and John B. Magruder were still keeping up a show of resistance, it lasted only until they learned that the South had surrendered. At this time General Smith, Magruder, Pendleton Murrah (Governor of

⁸Boyd, The Gallant Trooper, 163. During the last week in June, Sheridan received orders appointing him as Commander of the Military Division of the Gulf, embracing Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi as well as Texas.

Texas during the Civil War), and many other prominent ex-Confederates fled to Mexico. This deflated Sheridan's ego, and again one of his purposes for being sent here was destroyed, since there was no one to fight. As administrator of government, Sheridan was to have the last say in Texas. "The conditions of civil affairs in the state were anomalous, singular, and unsatisfactory."⁹

General Sheridan, after two upsets in his plans, made his main task the compilation of a new list of qualified voters which would include only those white men who had taken the "ironclad" oath of allegiance to the United States and which would not exclude Negroes. When this was done, he was to conduct elections for a convention which would draw up a new state constitution. In the meantime, though civilian government was not entirely suspended, all cases at law involving either freedmen or soldiers were subject to military supervision and review. Only Blacks and white men who had taken the "ironclad" oath were allowed to hold

⁹Frank W. Johnson, A History of Texas and Texans, Volume I, 549; Secretary of War, 39th Congress, 48.

public office of any kind, with the result that many towns did not even have a postmaster.¹⁰

On June 17, 1865, Andrew Jackson Hamilton was appointed provisional governor of Texas.¹¹ Hamilton was a native of Alabama who had imigrated to Texas in 1847 and had occupied several high offices before the war. A staunch Union man, he was obliged to leave Texas in 1862. His appointment now was acceptable to Union men, but was received with misgivings by some of the former Confederates. He had instructions to prescribe rules and regulations for holding a convention at the earliest practicable period, and to assist in the restoration of civil government, and the re-establishment of the constitutional relations between the state and the nation. He was capable and honest. He understood the people of Texas and wished to govern them well.

In 1860, Texas had 182,921 Negroes and 420,891 whites, thus putting this state among those where the Negro population was a decided minority, and white immigration was to increase the preponderance of whites. The division of the planters

¹⁰Ramsdell, "Texas in the New Nation, 1865-1909," in The South in the Building of the Nation, III, 421-422.

¹¹Johnson, A History of Texas and Texans, 550.

and poor whites was less distinct in this state than in many others. There was plenty of rich land and the poorest white men could get a start. This increased the demand for labor.¹²

Texas was one of the southern states that had considerable prosperity during the war. She was outside the area of conflict; excellent crops were raised and slave labor was plentiful. Many slaves were brought to Texas for protection, especially from Louisiana and Arkansas, so that Texas could furnish food and raw material for the Confederate states; and, when the blockade was strengthened, Texas became the highway for sending cotton and other goods to Europe by way of Mexico. There were many losses because of the distance, the dishonesty of traders, and lawlessness. Nevertheless, these were offset by the high prices.¹³

Governor Hamilton did not reach Texas until late in July, 1865. Meanwhile the military commander, General Gordon Granger, had reached Galveston, with the first contingent of

¹²William Z. Foster, The Negro People in American History, 313; Henry Gannett, United States Census Office, William R. Merriam, Director, Bulletin, 102.

¹³Johnson, A History of Texas and Texans, 545-547.

occupation troops, a month earlier on June 19.¹⁴ He declared that the slaves were free; that all acts of the Texas government since secession were illegal; and that officers and men of the late Confederate Army should be parolled. A few troops were sent into the interior. They were supposed to restore the authority of the United States in Texas and preserve order. Charles W. Ramsdell says they did neither.¹⁵

Very little respect was given to law and order in Texas. The result of this unsettled state of affairs was numerous murders of Negroes and some whites. There was little security of life or of property in the state during the first part of reconstruction. The few people who did not approve of the crimes of the lawless were powerless. General Joseph B. Kiddoo, in charge of the district of Texas, reported in August of 1865 to Sheridan: "The greatest trouble I have in this state consists in protecting the freedmen from lawless violence" Twelve days later Kiddoo again expressed the same opinion and "forwarded with it cases that

¹⁴President Lincoln's preliminary emancipation proclamation had been announced on September 22, 1862. Texas Negroes, however, at one time observed June 19 as the date of their emancipation.

¹⁵Ramsdell, Reconstruction in Texas, 69.

had been examined by his officers in corroboration of his statement."¹⁶

The Assistant Commissioner for Texas under the Freedmen's Bureau arrived in Texas late in September, 1865, and made a thorough examination of affairs. He found the freedmen not only willing but anxious to improve every opportunity offered for their moral and intellectual advancement.¹⁷ "The organization of the bureau has never been as effective in Texas as in other states, owing to its vast territory, scattered population, and the difficulty of traveling over large districts destitute of railroads."¹⁸ In December he started organizing by appointing local agents.

The crops had been good in 1865. A republican newspaper, Flak's Bulletin, in January, 1866, reported that in one of the Black Belt counties, "two-thirds of the freedmen's population were then at work at good wages and . . . seven thousand contracts had been filed already and . . . unemployed

¹⁶Secretary of War, 39th Congress, 744.

¹⁷Report to General Oliver O. Howard, Executive Document, Number 70, 39th Congress, 1st Session, 1866, p. 375.

¹⁸Secretary of War, 39th Congress, 714.

freedmen were becoming scarce."¹⁹ An examination of records would reveal that his county had been working Blacks from other states. And at this time many of them were on their way back to their native states. As a result of this quick shift in labor, things looked better than they really were.

The Inspector-General on the staff of General O. Howard declared, early in 1866:

That Texas was in the worst condition of any state that he had visited; that almost the whole population was hostile in feeling and action to the United States; that there was a mere resemblance of government, and that the whites and the Negroes were everywhere ignorant and lawless²⁰

Although conditions were bad, this did not delay the organizing of the new state government. An election was held January 8, 1866, and a convention was scheduled to meet in Austin in February. There were strong differences of opinion among the delegates. W. C. Dalrymple said:

My opponents . . . each and all, concede something to the Negroes; some more, some less, approximating to equality with the white race.

¹⁹Flak's Bulletin, Galveston, Texas, January 24, 1866.

²⁰Ramsdell, Reconstruction in Texas, cited in the New York Herald, January, 1866, p. 69.

I concede them nothing but the station of 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'. . . . If a republican form of government is to be sustained, the white race must do it without any Negro alloy. A mongrel Mexico affords no fit example for imitation. I desire the perpetuation of a white man's government. . . ."21

Colonel M. T. Johnson of Tarrant County

declared his opposition to granting the Negro any political rights whatever, and insisted that he should be made to work by uniform laws regulating pauperism, labor and apprenticeship; but at the same time asserted the necessity of treating him with justice and kindness in his helpless condition.²²

A prominent German of San Antonio, E. Degener, was the only candidate who openly advocated Negro suffrage.²³

One prominent Texan, John H. Reagan, a prisoner of war at Fort Warren, Massachusetts, wrote a thoughtful letter in August which was published in Texas in October. He pointed out that the South was in the position of a conquered nation, that Texas would not be restored until it did what the north

²¹Ibid., 86, cited in Texas State Gazette, January 6, 1866.

²²San Antonio Daily Herald, January 3, 1866.

²³Ramsdell, Reconstruction in Texas, 87.

demand, and that the north demanded protection against secession, the abolition of slavery, and civil rights for the freedmen. Moreover, it was probable that this alone would not satisfy the north, and that it would demand Negro suffrage. Reagan, therefore, advised that Negro testimony be admitted in courts, and that then an intelligence and, possibly, a property test be set for admission to the right to vote regardless of race or color, provided that no persons previously entitled to vote should be deprived of the right by the new requirements.²⁴

President Andrew Johnson secured a parole for Reagan, and it was hoped that he would have influence on the state, but his wise advice raised such opposition that he long refrained from further discussion. Addressing the people of Texas, he said, "a refusal to accede to these conditions would only result in a prolongation of the time during which you will be deprived of the civil government of your own choice, and will continue subject to military rule."²⁵

²⁴John H. Reagan (Walter F. McCaleb, ed.), Memoirs with Special Reference to Secession and the Civil War, 286-295.

²⁵Ibid.

When the convention assembled, the former leaders were in control. But Governor Hamilton had performed his main duty of supervising elections for a convention to draw up a new state constitution.

Violence continued in the spring and summer of 1866. Most of the town of Brenham was burned, and there was general lawlessness. Gangs of horse thieves and desperadoes were roaming about. Federal officials reported that Union men and Negroes were fleeing for their lives and that murders and outrages on Negroes were on the increase, while criminals were always acquitted.²⁶

The new head of the Freedman's Bureau, General Kiddoo, favored the employers as against the Negro laborers, and established heavy fines for enticing laborers away from employers. A black code gave certain rights to freedmen not prohibited by the Constitution, but forbade inter-marriage, voting, holding public office, serving on juries, or testifying in cases where Negroes were not concerned. Johnson urged that civil rights be extended to the Black people if it had not already been done.²⁷

²⁶D. W. C. Baker, Brief History of Texas From Its Earliest Settlement, 128-129.

²⁷Secretary of War, 39th Congress, 48.

In the election of 1866, J. W. Throckmorton received a great majority of the votes cast and became Governor of Texas in August. His chief intention was to get rid of the federal authorities in Texas. But in his effort he often came into conflict with the authorities as indicated in this letter dated January 3, 1867, to him from J. B. Kiddoo:

I regret that there should be any misunderstanding of conflict between the civil authorities whenever and wherever they will give any show of justice to the freedman in the civil courts, but I am pained to be obliged to inform your Excellency that after some months trial I find in some counties and towns no encouragement is given my Agents to instruct the civil rights of freedmen in the civil courts: When we have evidence to this effect, full and complete power is vested in the Bureau by virtue of the civil rights Bill, and the Act to continue in force and to amend an Act to establish a Bureau for the Relief of refugees and Freedmen etc . . . to take supreme judicial cognizance of all the interest of the freedmen and to use military power for that purpose. But I have stated to your Excellency in former communications it is not my desire or intention to intervene between the civil authorities and the freedmen except in extreme cases, and when it is necessary to procure for the latter justice²⁸

In an effort to make things better, Kiddoo substituted yearly contracts instead of monthly contracts in the cotton

²⁸"J. B. Kiddoo to Governor Throckmorton." An article in James H. Baker's Diary, 1858-1918, University of Texas Archives.

districts, and tried to assure the freedmen of their wages. He repudiated the labor law passed by the legislature but Major General Charles Griffin, his successor, adopted some of its provisions.²⁹ On March 2, 1867, an act to provide for the more efficient government of the rebel states came into effect. Sheridan was made commander of the fifth military district, consisting of only the states of Louisiana and Texas. Unable to secure the relief of large numbers of Negroes imprisoned on trivial charges, Sheridan issued his jury order excluding from juries persons who were unable to take ironclad oaths. Sheridan declared that one trial of a white man for killing a Negro was a farce.³⁰

Meantime, the registration of voters under the new congressional legislation began. The Negroes were eager to vote. A new state Republican Party was organized, and there was advocacy of free common schools and free homestead for the public lands to all without discrimination of color. Elisha M. Pease was appointed governor by Sheridan on July

²⁹Ramsdell, "Presidential Reconstruction in Texas." Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, XII, 1908-1909, pp. 216-217; and Texas in the New Nation, 420-421.

³⁰Ibid.

30, 1867, and Throckmorton removed. Pease was a native of Connecticut but had been governor of the state. He opposed secession. There arose among the Republicans severe differences of opinion as to how far the former Confederates should be disfranchised.³¹

The President in August removed Sheridan from command and substituted Thomas; ten days later he substituted Hancock for Thomas. Hancock assumed command in November. He was a Democrat, and a follower of Johnson. He received Sheridan's orders concerning juries, and declared that the country was "in a state of profound peace." Pease flatly contradicted this, and said there had been one hundred murders during the past year, with only ten arrests and five trials. He declared that, because of Hancock's order concerning juries, there had been an increase in crimes and hostility to the government.³²

Agitation arose because it was said that Negroes were carrying arms, although it was well known that every white

³¹John Henry Brown, History of Texas, II, 446-449.

³²Annual Report of Secretary of War, 40th Congress, 2nd Session, 1867-1868, p. 26; Francis A. Walker, General Hancock, 296.

Texan was habitually armed. A Negro meeting which was addressed by a Supreme Court Judge was broken up, and the judge complained:

None but a Johnson man could be tolerated here. He must cuss Congress and damn the nigger General Hancock is with the President politically and will only execute the letter of the law to escape accountability There is not an intelligent rebel in all the land who does not understand him³³

During 1867 there was bad feeling between Blacks and whites. The whites especially resented arms in the hands of the Black soldiers. And the impossibility of convicting white aggressors against black men was continually manifest.³⁴

By way of summary, let us review the relation of the conditions in Texas to the organizing of the Black Ninth Regiment Cavalry. Up to the end of the Civil War, the people of Texas showed a degree of independence that apparently could not be continued. And up to this time there had not been any provisions for Blacks to serve in the arm forces of

³³Ramsdell, Reconstruction in Texas, 189.

³⁴E. Merton Coulter (Walter Prescott Webb and H. Bailey Carroll, eds.), The South during Reconstruction, 1865-1877, p. 117.

the United States. The frightful conditions on Texas frontiers, along with the civil problems, were just the things to try out on a green regiment. The men were needed. The federal troops, after sporadically occupying the old frontier forts, had largely abandoned them. Although the situation was critical and the Indians were raiding with ease, the presence of a Black regiment on the frontier of Texas could at least act as a buffer against intruders. In addition, it was the lack of the people to conform to post Civil War conditions that helped to bring about the formation of the Federal Brunet Ninth Cavalry Regiment. It was also these things that brought the Ninth Cavalry to Texas during the spring of 1867.

CHAPTER IV

A YEAR OF APPRENTICESHIP

As the people of Texas were having trouble with civil affairs, so was the Brunet Ninth Cavalry Regiment in their attempt to move to Texas for eight years of almost continued field duty. With unsurpassed courage and determination the Black troops learned to cope with Texas criminals, Mexican bandits, and marauding Indians.

The troopers had experienced a rugged time during their original period in Louisiana, and even rougher times were to face them in the future. Enroute to Texas, mutiny broke out in K Company because the young officers were unable to understand the Black soldiers as men. The mutiny was temporarily suppressed after great difficulty. But this did not last for long. Mutiny was started all over again after the Ninth Cavalry reached the city of San Antonio. On April 9, 1867, mutiny broke out in three companies. The promotion seeking, trigger-happy Lieutenant Frederick Augustus Smith, a Mississippian who had risen through the ranks during the Civil War, shot two of the troopers of Company K. The mutiny spread to

A Company and E Company, and was not stopped until a young Lieutenant, Seth Griffin of Company A, was mortally wounded.¹

Colonel Hatch, Commander of the Ninth Cavalry, did not blame the Black troops for the unfortunate affair. Instead, he placed the blame on a shortage of officers. There were only fourteen officers present at the time of the mutiny. Immediately, Hatch appealed to the War Department for more officers, stating that little could be expected of the regiment until this shortage was corrected. Upon receiving the report, the War Department responded, and within a month Hatch reported that both morale and discipline were much improved. The improvement came none too soon, because conditions along the Rio Grande were fast becoming intolerable, and troops were needed badly. Companies L and M were sent to Brownsville.²

There had been none of the brass band fanfare for the regiment upon its arrival in San Antonio. The lack of a

¹Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry, February-April, 1867; Hatch to the Assistant Adjutant General, District of Texas, May 14, 1867, Selected Documents, Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94, National Archives; also see San Antonio Daily Express, May 8, 1868.

²Ibid.

welcome for these much needed troops was evidence of Texas Governor James W. Throckmorton's vigorous efforts to get rid of the United States Military. The citizens did not like the idea of the Black man in a blue uniform. Trouble, therefore, developed quickly between the citizens and the troopers. The cavalry's occupational duty in San Antonio was a dirty job which nobody relished, for the enforcement of the civil laws, especially when those laws were harsh and often unreasonable, was not to the taste of the Black men who had joined the cavalry for other kinds of action and adventure. The cavalry, however, was too much in demand on the frontier in 1867 to be held for long on this kind of assignment and soon it was ordered west, much to the satisfaction of all, for it has been said that "every cavalrymen is at heart a Westerner."³

Companies L and M at Brownsville found Mexico just south of the river to be a country torn for a half century by almost uninterrupted revolution and counter-revolution, where desperadoes and government officials often were distinguishable from each other only by the uniforms they wore, and even

³John K. Herr, The Story of the United States Cavalry, 144.

those changed hands frequently. Border bandits--white, Black and Mexican--based their operations on the side of the Rio Grande that seemed most opportune at the moment.⁴

The Republic of Mexico spawned almost countless bandits and revolutionaries. Often the difference between the two was merely a matter of semantics, and many of these by reason of birth or convenience made their homes on Mexico's northern frontier. Here the weak and fatigued arm of the federal government posed no real threat to their activities. The bandits and revolutionaries had many sympathizers among the Mexican population on the American side of the river, which they crossed and recrossed, killing, stealing, or organizing as need dictated. Activities of these groups brought affairs on the Rio Grande to a state of near anarchy for several years, but the troubles of the Texas frontier, and therefore the problems of the Ninth, did not end here. White riffraff abounded, ever ready with gun, knife, rope, and branding iron to ply any trade which afforded an easy and illegal dollar.⁵

⁴Henry Bamford Parkes, A History of Mexico, 242-250; Annual Report for the Department of Texas, 1869.

⁵Ibid.

Companies L and M were placed under the command of Lieutenant John Morrison Hamilton. Hamilton was to assist with the units until the regular officers were appointed and had arrived. The units went to work immediately. On May 7, 1867, Companies L and M under the leadership of Hamilton started a year of search out of Fort Brown. They went on a six-day scouting trip north of Brownsville. The unit scouted thoroughly for a distance of more than a hundred miles. During the trip the scouts came upon an old corral outside of Roma, Texas. The corral was located about three miles south of Candelaria, Texas. The scouts learned that the well known Antonio Abe Diaz had been collecting stolen stock there and had carried them across the Rio Grande at Roma to Matamoros, Mexico. The stock that Diaz and his men had been gathering came from a territory of some sixty or seventy miles into the United States. It was reported to the party that Diaz had about one hundred fifty head of cattle. Heavy rain made it impossible for the scouting party to estimate the exact number with any degree of certainty. The trails had been obliterated. It was further reported that Diaz and his gang of robbers made

their way over the Rio Grande into Mexico two days before the Brunet Cavalry had left their post in Brownsville.⁶

The cavalry received information that Felipe Perez, who lived in Texas on the Quote Ranch, was one of the gang with Diaz. The soldiers found Perez not at home; doubtless he was on the Mexican side with Diaz. Diaz was to continue his plundering operations on the stock raisers of Texas for many years.⁷

Another important event of the six-and-one-half-day mission was that the troopers learned that the crops were looking good as far north as Colorado. And the grass along the way was better than usual to a point some fifteen miles beyond Aroya, Colorado. The party under Lieutenant Hamilton traveled some three hundred miles before returning, proving the Black man's durability in the saddle.

While two companies of the Ninth were on the march in South Texas, the other ten prepared to move to West Texas. Hatch received orders in May, 1867, to march west and occupy

⁶The Daily Ranchero, Brownsville, Texas, May 15, 1867. Hamilton at this time had not been mustered out. He later joined the infantry, but in 1870 he was assigned to the cavalry. He became a Lieutenant Colonel in the Ninth in 1896.

⁷Ibid.

Fort Stockton and Fort Davis. During the early part of June, Hatch and his men of the Brunet Ninth Cavalry Regiment started their march west in companies of two. Captain William Bayard and Lieutenant Michael Cooney with Companies C and I were the first to leave their camp near the headwaters of the San Pedro Spring.⁸ The troops were to set up camp at Fort Hudson, some two hundred miles westward, for the purpose of guarding and convoying supplies. This fort at the mouth of the Las Moras River, about 80 miles north of Fort Clark, was commanded by First Lieutenant Bird L. Fletcher of the Fourth Cavalry Regiment. Near the end of the month, a second detachment of four companies under Colonel Merritt moved to Fort Davis on the Limpia River some 475 miles northwest of San Antonio. Hatch, in mid-June, brought west the remaining four companies, leaving Captain J. M. Bacon at Hudson with Companies D and G.

By mid-summer eight companies had reached Fort Stockton and Fort Davis. An untried regiment, with the stain of

⁸Francis B. Heitman, Historical Register, 200-325. Captain William Bayard was a union man who had received honors in 1864 and 1865 for his gallantry and meritorious service in the pursuit of the rebel forces under General John B. Hood for the capture of Major Selma Ala at the battle of Nashville; Lieutenant Michael Cooney rose through the ranks during the Civil War from private to captain.

mutiny on its standard, faced the formidable task of standing guard over hundreds of miles of neglected frontier. The territory was incredibly difficult to patrol. It contained thousands of acres of nearly impenetrable brush along the Rio Grande, hundreds of square miles of plains and desert, where temperatures ranged from above one hundred degrees in summer to well below freezing in winter. The lack of water made survival difficult. The area had some of the most rugged mountain country on the North American continent. It was a land where the savage Mescalero Apache, the Lipan, and the Kickapoo Indian tribes had held sway for hundreds of years, and where Kiowa and Comanche Indians often sought and found refuge when driven by cavalry units and Texas Rangers from territory farther north and east. This was an area where violent and sudden changes were the norms. It was a land where nearly a hundred tribes, probably between seventy and a hundred thousand Indians in the 150,000 square miles (roughly about one-half of Texas), had to be patrolled and kept in order by less than one thousand cavalymen.⁹

⁹Richard Irving Dodge, The Plains of the Great West, XVIII-XIX; Herschel Boggs, "Preface," A History of Fort Concho; Herr, The Story of the United States Cavalry, 150.

This remote and sparsely settled portion of west Texas had long been a favored haunt for the predatory Indian tribes. For many years the Mescalero Apaches had swept down from retreats in the Guadalupe Mountains to prey upon cattle herds, stages, wagon trains, and unwary travelers. Swarms of Kiowa and Comanche warriors came down from the north, spreading devastation and terror from the Red River to the Rio Grande and for hundreds of miles into Mexico. It was no accident that Fort Stockton was located at Comanche Springs, astride the "Great Comanche War Trail," the welltrod highway for the warrior elite, running from the shallow waters of the Arkansas to the large ranches of Durango, Mexico. It is probable that no other tribes equalled, much less surpassed, these Indians "for calculated viciousness, vindictiveness and destruction of life and property" when raiding against their Texas enemies.¹⁰ The Comanches could have resisted well the energies of a full regiment of cavalry.

The Comanches, Kiowas, Mescalero Apaches, Kickapoos, and Lipans actually controlled western Texas and eastern New Mexico and wandered freely back and forth from southern

¹⁰Arrel Morgan Gibson, The Kickapoos, 210.

Colorado to many miles south of the Rio Grande. The Comanches had hidden retreats in the Staked Plains, south of the Canadian River, and the Kickapoos, Apaches, and Lipans hid over the border in Mexico. From these bases, they constantly prowled about the frontier settlements, stealing livestock and attacking any settlers they met, if the odds were in their favor.

The wagon trains that took up commerce from various points in Texas to El Paso immediately after the Civil War encountered many Indian problems. By May, 1867, the wagon trains had suffered as a result of Indian depredations along the routes to and from El Paso. This had made life and property too valuable for the risk.¹¹ The transportation of mail was unsafe and was suspended temporarily until it could be rendered safe to travel again.¹²

The movement west of the Brunet Ninth to the neglected Fort Davis and Fort Stockton in the summer of 1867 was accompanied by initial orders to reopen and protect the mail

¹¹Fort Stockton Centennial, 1859-1959, Chamber of Commerce, Fort Stockton, Texas, 1959, No. 1.

¹²Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry, May-June, 1867; Hatch to the Assistant Adjutant General, District of Texas, May 14, 1867.

and stage route between San Antonio and El Paso. The units of the regiment were to search out and defeat marauding Indians infesting the region. It was by no mean an assignment for a single regiment, particularly one whose early history provided scant encouragement for the belief that it would ever develop into an efficient and reliable military unit.¹³

Lurking always in the background were Comancheros or traders from New Mexico with the whiskey, knives, calico, coffee, arrow points, tobacco, gewgaws, guns and ammunition. They were eager to trade with anyone for stolen horses or cattle. An idea of the enormous extent of this trade may be gained from the fact that in 1867 Charles Goodnight found 600 head of his cattle, which had been stolen sometime before from his ranch, near old Fort Belknap at Gallinas Creek in New Mexico. He was firmly convinced that at least three hundred thousand head of Texas cattle had been stolen and sold or traded to New Mexicans during the Civil War. A later and more conservative estimate by John Hitson, another Texas ranchman, in the San Antonio Daily Express, set the loss for the two decades preceding 1873 at one hundred

¹³Ibid.

thousand head. Most of these cattle were driven to New Mexico by the Comanches and their Kiowa and Apache allies. The most active band of Comanches engaged in plundering cattle was the Antelope band of the Llano Estacado.¹⁴

Cattle were easily procured and transported, and they could be obtained in almost unlimited numbers. The Comanches believed that if only the raiders could succeed in driving off enough of the intruder's cattle, they would discourage further encroachment into their country. There were regular meeting places where traders with their cart-loads of commodities met the Comanches to trade for horses and cattle. So extensive was the trade that A. B. Norton, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, reported that the territory of New Mexico was "filled with Texas cattle."¹⁵ With these conditions existing, he immediately gave orders for the cancellation of all trade permits and forbade any one to trade with the Indians without a license duly signed by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs at Washington. This by no means put a

¹⁴J. E. Haley, The XIT Ranch of Texas, 26; Carl C. Rister, The Southwestern Frontier, 82; San Antonio Daily Express, February 27, 1873.

¹⁵Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1867-1868, Part I, 194-195.

stop to the illicit traffic, for the Commissioner granted licenses to four different citizens who sublet their privileges to others until matters were as bad as before. Norton, speaking of conditions at a later time, said:

When no cattle or horses are found in the Comanche camp by the Mexican traders, they lend the Indians their pistols and horses and remain at camp until the Comanches have time to go to Texas and return, and get the stock they desire.¹⁶

Agent Lorenzo Labadi made another attempt at Santa Fe, to bring these hostile tribes under reservation restrictions. His attempt was to no avail. In 1867 he set out toward the east from Santa Fe to demand that these Indians give up their captive persons and livestock. The Indians met Labadi at a place called Ontaque, near the Texas border, and when Labadi demanded that the Indians give up their captives and cease their depredations in Texas, they claimed that the military officers had encouraged them by saying that Texas was making war on the federal government and therefore must be reduced to submission. The Indians promised that they would cease their depredations and that if Labadi would meet them in the following October at the full of the moon, they would take up with him the surrendering of captives and

¹⁶Ibid.

livestock. They said their chiefs were away on the war path at that time and that they would be able to take no action on this matter until the chiefs returned. Agent Libadi said that at that time "eighteen expeditions were then under way against Texas." Though the agent pronounced these Indians "good at heart," he went on to say that "they have Texas cattle without number, and almost every day bring in more."¹⁷

Such challenges were enough to occupy fully every soldier in Texas, but of the three regiments of cavalry in the state only one, the Brunet Ninth, was assigned exclusively to the frontier, and not more than half of four regiments of infantry were available for such service.

Probably one reason for the Brunet Ninth being the only cavalry regiment assigned to the frontier by General Sheridan was a report of Major George A. Forsyth of the Ninth Cavalry, who had been sent to the frontier to investigate conditions there and report back to Sheridan. The report which was finally sent to the commander of the district was entirely in harmony with the opinion of General Sheridan. Concerning the situation here, Sheridan said, "I am convinced that many of the people who are moving in from the frontier are doing

¹⁷Ibid.

so to better their condition and not from any fear that they may have from the Indians." In support of his theory he said instead of stopping at the first well settled county, the fleeing frontiersmen came eastward until they had a market for their products. He further said that all this clamor for protection was for political purposes. For too long, ranking officers such as Sherman and Sheridan refused to believe conditions were as bad as painted by thousands of frontier petitioners and, although Texas was undergoing the problems of Reconstruction, two regiments of cavalry troops were not needed in the interior of the state.¹⁸

Raiding Indians, Mexican bandits and revolutionaries, pistol-happy border scum, and stealing comancheros might wipe out cattle herds and hundred of lives, but they were not sufficient to wipe out the poison of racial prejudice. In the face of near-overwhelming responsibilities, the Black Ninth was forced to contend with a problem that compounded the difficulties of their tasks. Citizens on the frontier might rage and storm and demand and plead for greater protection, but they gave scant comfort and support when that protection arrived in the form of Black soldiers.

¹⁸ Secretary of the War, 39th Congress, 1st Session, 1866, p. 15.

After a long march of 468 miles from San Antonio, Texas, Lieutenant-Colonel Wesley Merritt arrived at Fort Davis on June 29, 1867, with four companies of the Ninth Cavalry. Fort Quitman, on the Rio Grande, was reoccupied by Captain Henry Carroll, with one of the four companies of the Ninth on January 1, 1868. They found the forts in ruins. Unoccupied during the Civil War years, the forts had been systematically destroyed by Confederate troops because they were being used by the Indians and Mexicans for protection from time to time. When reoccupied by four units of the Ninth Cavalry, Fort Davis became a regimental post. The fort was located on the John James estate and the construction of permanent buildings was begun.¹⁹ Fort

¹⁹Lieutenant Grote Hutcheson, Adjutant Ninth United States Cavalry, History of the Ninth Regiment of Cavalry, in the Brinninstool Collection at the University of Texas Archives. This article is a historical sketch of the Ninth Cavalry from its beginning to 1890. The entire sketch consist of fewer than a dozen pages but is good for a listing of the major battles of the regiment. Post Returns, Fort Stockton, July-August, 1867; Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry, August-September, 1867. Fort Davis, located near Limpia Creek, Presido County, was established in October, 1854, to protect the San Antonio-El Paso road. Named for Jefferson Davis, then Secretary of War, the post was evacuated by Federal troops in April, 1861. Merritt and six companies of the Ninth rebuilt it completely. Though isolated, the general climate and healthfulness made it a desirable post at which to serve.

Davis and Fort Quitman were two posts in the "Big Bend" section which were built to protect the stage line and immigrant road, running east and west.

Some of the building materials for both Fort Davis and Fort Quitman were brought over the long and jolting road from San Antonio in the great-wheeled wagons. But most of the material was secured by the men from the surrounding area. Two sawmills were set up in the mountains, one at the head of Madero Canyon and the other at the head of Limpia Canyon, where pine trees grew large enough for the sawing of heavy lumber. The wide-wheeled wagons went directly over the hills from the fort to the sawmills. But the return haul was so heavy that the wagons went down the Madero to its mouth and came back around the mountains and up the Limpia Canyon.²⁰

There were few comforts at Fort Stockton and Fort Davis to compensate for the heavy work. With the flies swarming, it was impossible to sleep in the afternoon. They were attracted by the dirty clothing and perspiring men who filled the tents. It was reported that one man in the Ninth Regiment

²⁰Barry Scobee, The Story of Fort Davis, 23. The upper end of Madero which mean lumber and timber is called Sawmill Canyon today. It butts against Mount Livermore.

caught 119 flies on one sweep of the hand during the evening. The kitchens were beclouded with them. They could not be kept from the food. In addition, the food was poor in quality and lacking in variety. The meals seldom deviated from coffee, bread, beans, and beef, with molasses, cornbread, and sweet potatoes added to spice up the meals on special occasions. To complicate things even more, rest for the men of the Ninth meant sleeping on bedsacks filled with straw, tossed across slats on iron bunks.²¹

On July 7, 1867, some eight days after Merritt had arrived at Fort Davis, Major General Edward Hatch, with 269 enlisted men of the Ninth Cavalry, moved to the banks of Comanche Creek and camped there while the men worked on Fort Stockton. The primary object in its reconstruction was to protect the mail route from San Antonio to El Paso against the depredations of both Indians and outlaws of the region. The new Fort Stockton was constructed on what is now the Old Fort Addition to the city. It was built for the use of four companies of cavalry. Before the fort was occupied, two

²¹Roger Batchelder, Watching and Waiting on the Border, 124-125; Hutcheson, History of the Ninth Regiment of Cavalry. See Francis Paul Prucha, Army Life on the Western Frontier; Organization Returns, Ninth Cavalry, August-September, 1867.

companies of the Black Forty-first Infantry marched in from south Texas to guard the supplies, workmen and teams employed in this building task. Mill Street now crosses the location where the sawmill was erected. The cavalrymen were put to work at once. They lost little time cutting logs, constructing sinks, making brick, and reconstructing quarters for both enlisted men and officers.²²

The desire by the Ninth to succeed was too great to waste time complaining. The rebuilding of Fort Stockton and Fort Davis progressed slowly because of the many diversities of their job. The rebuilding of forts was the first priority, although patrols began within days after the arrival of the still untried troopers.

Because of the yellow-fever epidemic of 1867, the Ninth was expected to force quarantine on the people who did not think this was necessary. During this year the state was hit by the worst yellow-fever epidemic in its history. The "yellow-jack" struck hard at all the coastal cities, then moved inland, decimating the population of Huntsville, in Walker County, and reaching as far as Kaufman County, where

²²Hutcheson, History of the Ninth Regiment Cavalry; Post Returns, Fort Stockton, July-August, 1867; Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry, August-September, 1867.

one community of thirty-three families lost twelve persons to the dreadful disease.²³

Yankee soldiers stationed in Texas were particularly susceptible to yellow-fever. The story is told that at Houston, Sexton H. G. Pannell, having fallen behind in his work of burying the dead, was called in by an angry commander and charged with disliking to bury the boys in blue. "General," answered the Sexton, "whoever told you that told a damned lie. It's the pleasantest thing I've had to do in years and I can't get enough of it. I would like to bury every damned one of you." For this Pannell was clapped into jail, but he was soon released for need of his services.²⁴ To help enforce the quarantine, Major A. P. Morrow of the Ninth United States Cavalry was ordered to detail one of his non-commissioned officers and six enlisted men, all selected as quarantine guards to the crossing of the Colorado on the Corpus Christi road. These men were expected to be

²³C. C. Cox, "Reminiscences, II," Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, VI, 231.

²⁴Cited by S. O. Young, "True Stories of Old Houston and Houstonians," Houston: A History and Guide, 83.

away for at least twenty days before being relieved. The records are full of incidents like this.²⁵

Meanwhile the Indian raiders were so active in west Texas that from the beginning heavy guard duty was necessary. The troopers had to be kept in the field to prevent the stealing of the horses. Scouting detachments were in the saddle all day, as they were along the Mexican border, probing along the Pecos, the Concho, and Devil's River, while others patrolling the San Antonio-El Paso road escorted trains and stages. Others guarded the mail stations along the way.²⁶

A typical detachment would leave about the fourth of each month for a suitable point where they were to make camp. From this camp they would scout for twenty days and then return to the original post. During the time of scouting, the men were to pay careful attention to the different passes through which the Indians reached the various settlements. Any Indians found in the area being scouted were to be attacked and, if possible, killed.

²⁵The Daily Ranchero, August 13, 1867; Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry, August-September, 1867.

²⁶Ibid.

October 1, 1867, found a detachment of D Company of the Brunet Ninth Cavalry firing their guns in the service of their country. This was at Howard's Wells, Texas, about thirty-five miles north of Camp Hudson on the Pecos River. A party of Kickapoos killed two Brunet soldiers. They did it the easy way, ambushing and killing Corporal Emanuel Wright and Private E. T. Jones as they escorted the mail from Camp Hudson to Stockton.²⁷

At first, the green troopers and officers unfamiliar with the country had little success in stopping the Indians. Destructive Kiowas, Comanches, and Kickapoos plundered the frontier of Texas with ease. These Indian raids, combined with the growing sentiment for reform, led to the formation of a special peace commission in 1867 that made the situation even worse. On October 21, 1867, the special commission of Indian Affairs met with tribes of the southern plains and concluded the Medicine Lodge Treaty, by which the Indian chiefs agreed to cease fighting and withdraw to land set aside in Indian Territory. The eastern part of this land where the five civilized tribes--the Cherokees, Chickasaws,

²⁷Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry, August-October, 1867.

Creeks, Choctaws, and Seminoles--lived had been seized from the Indians, who had sided with the Confederacy in the Civil War and had thus, reasoned Federal officials, forfeited their title.²⁸

While the chiefs were engaged in councils and treaty signing, the restive Comanche, Kiowa, and Apache warriors continued to plunder the settlements. The winter of 1867-1868 was one of the worst the frontier people of Texas ever experienced. At certain times to help protect their young warriors, the old men, the women and the children of the tribes would go to the forts for their supplies and would camp there for months to show that they were peaceable. At the same time the young warriors might be hundreds of miles away murdering and stealing. Philip McCusker, a special scout or agent sent by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to keep in touch with the Indians and report on their conduct and movements, stated that "the Comanches, Apaches, and

²⁸House of Representative Document No. 13, 42nd Congress, 3rd Session, Vol. V, 1-3; Gibson, The Kickapoos, 212-213; J. W. Wilbarger, Indian Depredations in Texas, 633; Lawrence F. Schmeckebier, The Office of Indian Affairs: Its History Activities and Organization, 2; Ray A. Billington, Soldiers and Braves, 35.

Kiowas are going to Texas to steal horses continually, and if they get them without any trouble, they do so, but if in order to get them it is necessary to kill a family or two, they do so."²⁹

The peace commission action did not deter the small raiding parties that seemed to prefer the quick hit-and-run method for getting cattle and horses. The news of such small scale raids was usually slow in reaching the authorities and pursuit was next to useless by then. It is well at this point perhaps to include the version of an Indian chase given by Elijah Cox, known generally as "Old Cox," a Black soldier who served at Forts Davis, Bliss, Quitman, and Clark, and who was much in demand by the historians during the latter part of his life:

After the report of Indian raids would come into the post, the officer in charge would order out a scouting trip. The scouts would ride from one to five miles to the front and sides of the main body of troops. In would come a scout at full gallop. Riding up to the officer in charge, he would say, "Sir, there's a band of Indians in camp just over the divide to the south." The officer

²⁹United States Office of Indian Affairs, Interior Building, included in the University of Texas photostat copy collection. They were supplied with guns and ammunition by the agents of the government and by the traders.

would give the order to the bugler to halt the command. Then the officer would go to work, making plans for the attack, which would be set for the following morning. Men would build fires to cook their meals. Sometimes they would shoot a gun in target practice. Next morning the command would ride over the divide and what do you think? The Indians would be gone! Well, they would keep that up for days (always seeing to it that the general direction of the Indians was to the south). When the savages had been driven into Mexico, then the soldiers went back to the fort. They had done the work.³⁰

It did not take the Indians long to learn how to cope with this kind of attack. As winter came the Indians grew bolder. Early in December, 1867, just south of Fort Quitman, Texas, along the Rio Grande at a place called Eagle Springs, the Indians made another attack. The Apaches again made sure that the odds were in their favor. There were more than one hundred Indians involved in the attack on the stage. The Indians killed Private Nathan Johnson of F Company, a member of the escorting squad. They also wounded four of the squad's horses. The Apaches followed the stage until it came within sight of Eagle Springs' Station, where they

³⁰San Angelo Standard-Times, May 3, 1934. On the frontier a bugle could be heard for miles, smoke could be seen for a long ways, and the sound of a bullet could be heard for some distance.

were driven off by Captain Henry Carroll and F Company who were camping nearby.³¹

Before the year 1867 ended, the Brunet soldiers were given an opportunity to test their courage and skill with a unit of company strength. An estimated force of at least nine hundred Kickapoos, Lipans, Mexicans, and some white renegades attacked Captain William Frohock and the troopers of Company K at old Fort Lancaster, some eighty-five miles east of Fort Stockton. The midafternoon attack afforded the Brunet soldiers their first opportunity to meet their enemies face to face and they responded with cruel enthusiasm. K Company, at full strength, had only seventy-five men, but after a vicious two-day fight, they were left in possession of the field. The company had killed twenty of their attackers and wounded a much larger number. Three Brunet soldiers--Privates Andrew Trimble, William Sharpe,

³¹Heitman, Historical Register, 286. Companies A, B, E, and K were at Stockton, C, G, H, and I were at Davis; Carroll was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Third Cavalry in May, 1864, and was promoted to first lieutenant in April, 1866. He joined the Ninth Cavalry as a captain in January, 1867, and remained with the regiment for eighteen years.

and Eli Boyer--who had been taken by surprise, roped, and dragged away, were missing and presumed dead.³²

In its first face to face test of fire, the Black Ninth had proven its ability to meet and defeat the enemy, a tribute to Hatch's training and the innate courage and skill of the men. There was no doubt that the Brunet Cavalryman was the equal of his white counterpart when the chips were down.

After K Company's success at Fort Lancaster the Indians were reluctant to fight the Brunet soldiers at close range, but there was no letup in their hit, steal, and run tactics. To counter these thrusts more effectively and in anticipation of an aggressive spring campaign, Colonel Hatch moved L and M Companies upriver from Brownsville to Fort Duncan and Fort Clark. At the same time Fort Quitman, on the river southeast of El Paso, was reactivated and garrisoned by a detachment under Major Albert P. Morrow. The colonel was planning a vigorous counter-attack that spring, once all the units were in position, but in February, 1868, he was appointed Assistant Commissioner of the Freedman's Bureau for Louisiana

³²San Antonio Weekly Express, January 9, 1868; J. Lee Humfreville, Twenty Years Among Our Hostile Indians, 178. The remains of Privates Tribble, Sharpe and Boyer were found three months later near the scene of the fight.

and placed on detached service and transferred to New Orleans.³³

His second in command, Lieutenant Colonel Wesley Merritt, replaced Hatch as commander of the Ninth Cavalry. Merritt was eager to carry out the plans of Colonel Hatch. But savage raids across the Rio Grande by small bands of Kickapoos, Kiowas, and Comanches kept the troops busy at putting out brush fires that Indians had started. These were parties threatened to de-populate Atascosa, Duval, Schleicher, and Uvalde counties. On one raid into Atascosa county they killed three men and drove off four hundred horses. Within less than three months they had killed five more citizens and stolen another three hundred animals in the county. On one occasion the ranchers formed a posse to recover their livestock. The posse soon caught up with the Indians only to be badly defeated.

The Indians were so bold around Fort Quitman that large bands attacked Company F at least sixteen times in January. In an effort to stop the Indians, Merritt started sending out scouting parties during the spring of 1868. A party of thirty was sent out from Fort Stockton, on May 3, and returned

³³Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry, January-April, 1868.

on May 14. The detachment was commanded by Captain Francis Safford Dodge. It was composed of troops from Companies A, B, D, and E. During the eleven-day mission the twenty-nine enlisted men and one officer traveled a distance of 350 miles. They saw no Indians.³⁴

From Fort Quitman Captain Henry Carroll set out with thirty enlisted men of Companies F, H, and I. The party departed on May 19, and returned on May 24, after traveling a distance of 170 miles. No Indians were seen. The records show that another unsuccessful scouting party was sent out in June. The party, composed of troops from Companies A, B, D, and E, left Fort Stockton, Texas, on June 19, and was out for three days. The one officer and twenty-two enlisted men traveled for some 100 miles, but the journey did not carry them into contact with the Indians. Such scouting parties continued throughout the summer of 1868.³⁵

August found the Indians just as aggressive as they were during mid-winter. Company H was attacked. Fortunately

³⁴Secretary of War, 40th Congress, 715; Francis S. Dodge rose through the ranks from private to first lieutenant during the Civil War. On July 28, 1866, he was made first lieutenant in the Ninth Cavalry. He remained with the Ninth for many years. He was awarded the Medal of Honor March 22, 1889.

³⁵Ibid.

the company was able to drive the Indians off without any casualties. In the Records of Engagements with Hostile Indians, for the first week only of September, 1868, there is an article by Lieutenant General Sheridan, Commander of the Missouri District, about the activities of Roman Nose.³⁶ The one week report by Sheridan of Roman Nose's activities declared:

At Spanish Fort, Texas, four persons were murdered, eight scalped, fifteen horses and mules run off and three women outraged. One of these women was outraged by thirteen Indians who afterwards killed and scalped her and then killed her four little children.

This week was not particularly worse than any of the others.

The Ninth Cavalry Headquarters was notified of this raid, but they were so busy that no regular cavalry was available at the time or place, so Major George A. Forsyth, of the Ninth Cavalry, who had ridden with Sheridan from Winchester to turn defeat into victory, and Lieutenant Frederick H. Beecher, a nephew of the famous Brooklyn minister, Henry Ward Beecher, realizing that something had to be

³⁶Cited by Philip H. Sheridan, "Roman Nose," Record of Engagements with Hostile Indians within the Military Division of the Missouri from 1868 to 1882, p. 16.

done, collected fifty civilian frontiersmen and scouts, of which a good number were Union and Confederate veterans, and started out to trail Roman Nose and his murderous band on September 10, 1868. The party of scouts encamped on the Arickaree Fork of the Republican River in northwest Kansas on September 16. The next morning Roman Nose and his braves suddenly attempted to stampede the party's horses, but the alert fighting Forsyth hastily led his small band to an impossible island in the partially dry river bed where they formed a circle and dug in, using the horses--which were gradually all killed--as a sort of breastwork. The grand climax did not come until Roman Nose fell mortally wounded, leaving his braves confused by the loss of their leader.

Not all of the Indian raiders from the south in September escaped uninjured. Two days before Major Forsyth left on his scouting trip, a party was sent out from Fort Davis, Texas, commanded by First Lieutenant Patrick Cusack, composed of troops from Companies C, F, and K. The entire party consisted of one officer, sixty enlisted men and ten civilians. They departed on September 8, 1868, and returned September 23, 1868. The party traveled 180 miles through country east of Fort Davis. After having been out for six

days, the party won one of the Ninth's more impressive victories during 1868. The victory came when nearly two hundred Apaches and Lipans raided a wagon train at a point near Horse Head Hill, Texas, about 80 miles southeast of Fort Davis. The Indians ran off all the stock, and, as always, headed for sanctuary across the Rio Grande. Determined to make the Indians pay a bitter price for their dead, Lieutenant Cusack and the seventy men under his command immediately took up the Indians' trail. It was not hard to follow, and the Indians were unable to move rapidly because they were driving several hundred head of stock. Cusack and his men overtook them in the rugged Santiago Mountains, just short of the border, and attacked at once. In a running fight to the river, the Brunet soldiers soundly defeated the Indians, killing twenty-five braves, wounding many more, and recovering two hundred animals and one captive Mexican boy. No troopers were killed and only three wounded--Privates G, Collyer, Company F; Lewis White, Company C; and John Foster, Company K.³⁷

³⁷Secretary of War, 40th Congress, 1868, p. 716; Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry, September, 1868; Army and Navy Journal, Vol. VI, No. 8, October 10, 1868, p. 114.

The success of Texas' Black cavalry regiment during the year 1868 did not go unnoticed by the press. The San Antonio Express, in reporting an incident that happened on the night of November 30, praised the work of the Ninth Cavalry regiment. The El Paso mail stage was attacked at a point about five miles out of Kickapoo Springs by a party of Indians. The driver was killed, scalped, stripped naked and tied by the heels to the back of the stage and dragged for about a mile off the road. Only the four mules pulling the stage were allowed to go unharmed. The harness and stage coach were cut into pieces. Fortunately, there were no passengers on the stage at the time of the attack. The El Paso mail had been delayed this trip above Fort Concho on account of high water, so there was nothing on the stage but some local mail from Fort Concho. The mail from El Paso due on that stage came down on the next stage and was not attacked.³⁸

It was believed that if the commanding officer of the Fourth Cavalry at Fort McKavitt had utilized a detachment of fifteen men as had been requested in writing by the road agent, this never would have happened. This attack

³⁸San Antonio Express, December 5, 1868.

by the Indians at Kickapoo Springs had been anticipated for some time.

Why the commanding officer at Fort McKavitt refused to help remains a mystery. Just a month prior to that the Indians stole all of the stage stock from the station and attacked the station. And only with the help of a couple of soldiers who happened to be camped there, were the station-keepers able to drive the Indians off. It seems that the Indians were camped within a half mile off the road where they had captured the stage. From the look of the camp site they had been there for several days. It was believed that if members of the Ninth Cavalry had been in the area, this would never have happened. The article strongly suggested that the Fourth Cavalry was afraid of the Indians in their neighborhood.³⁹

Again in mid-December the San Antonio Express praised the Black regiment for its success in reopening the mail route from Fort Concho to El Paso. The praise came after a bold attack by the Indians in Medina County near San Antonio. The Indian party gathered up all the best horses

³⁹Ibid.

in the vicinity and placed them in a corral for a drive into New Mexico later. The same Indians chased and captured an eleven-year-old boy whom they kept as a servant or slave. These savages seemed never to have numbered more than fifteen, although they maneuvered as though they were several times that many. The operations of the Indians hundreds of miles inside the cordon of military garrisons prove that they had become satisfied with their security upon Mexican soil. By 1868, the Indians had perfected a system of trails, and couriers into the Texas settlements, that rendered travel safe and secure to them at night. Out in west Texas, where it was supposed to have been impossible for the men to patrol, this was not the case. The gallant and able men under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Merritt were able to patrol their area well, although they had been assigned to the duty, among many other things, of providing for the defense of the mail route and the mail in transit.

After members of the Black Ninth Cavalry Regiment had defeated the Indians in the Santiago Mountains scrimmage of 1868, the raids eased somewhat. The year-and-a-half of apprenticeship campaigning on Texas soil had made both officers and enlisted men tough. The officers had learned to treat

the Black men under their leadership as full-fledged United States cavalrymen. That they were. The enlisted men were now respected by their leaders, white or black. It was a period of growing up. The regiment had developed into an efficient and reliable military unit. While a lack of decisive victories over the savage Indians was frustrating to the men of the Ninth, they had proven beyond doubt that as long as the Indians could secure arms and ammunition, and were not defeated and made to return their stolen commodities, the people of Texas were unsafe. The Ninth had scouted, pursued, and mapped areas never before penetrated by troops. The information gained by the men would certainly shorten the time required to stop the Indians. Their long rides had proven the black men's durability in the saddle. And it was the Ninth's courage and durability in the saddle that had enabled them to reopen the mail route to the west.

CHAPTER V

CAMPAIGNS OF THE NORTHWEST 1869-1871

One observer, writing of conditions in west Texas, declared that the immense frontier during this period was so near the Indian territory and New Mexico that rogues of all kinds could commit many crimes with impunity, for, once out of Texas, a murderer or cow thief or horse thief could hide in the hills or in some village until his pursuers were fatigued, and could then make his way out in another direction to total freedom.¹ The period of apprenticeship had been ample time for the Black Ninth Cavalry Regiment to learn how to cope successfully with the problems on the northern and western frontier of Texas. From 1869 to 1871, the area was probably the safest place along the entire American western frontier.

In 1869, after more than a year as head of the Freedman's Bureau for Louisiana, Colonel Edward Hatch resumed

¹Edward King, The Southern States of North America, 178. This volume has an excellent account of conditions which existed from Kansas to Texas, and particularly affairs related to the social life of the people.

command of the Ninth Cavalry. Upon review of his regiment he could not help but be happy with the accomplishments of his Black men. Hatch re-established his headquarters at Fort Davis. He found that the admirable arrangements made by him under his own personal supervision had already, by mid-December of the year before, resulted in the successful re-establishment of the El Paso mail line--that is, so far as preventing molestation by Indians is concerned. Despite a report that came from Fort Davis, Texas, dated January 14, 1869, and printed in the San Antonio Express with some reservations, that the Indians had captured the mail coach from El Paso outside Vanhorn Wells and murdered its passengers, there are no factual reasons for believing there was serious trouble in the area. Lieutenant Colonel Wesley Merritt, upon receiving the report, immediately ordered out a detachment from Fort Quitman. Road Agent Jim Spears was to accompany the detachment. Fortunately for the Indians, if there were any, and unfortunately for the Black troopers, "horses had been without corn for sometime."² Therefore, the Black troopers were not able to accompany Spears beyond Eagle Springs, only some thirty miles southeast of Fort

²San Antonio Express, December 15, 1869; January 22, 1869.

Quitman. If the stage was molested by Indians, "the Ninth Regiment was getting the El Paso mail into San Antonio's post office with more regularity, three times a week, than any other line."³ And this compliment came from a city that had less than a year before refused to accept Hatch and his Black men in blue.

The success of the Ninth Cavalry to deliver mail continued into 1869; so did the raids of the savage Indians. The year was a particularly bloody one on the frontier. The Indian raids of small parties made it most frustrating for the Black Ninth Cavalry. The raids began early in the year and continued without letup. Small parties of savage Kickapoos were active in the vicinity of Fort Clark and Fort Duncan between January, 1869, and April, 1869. The hit-and-run raids by the Kickapoos in Bexar, Frio, Uvalde, Zavala, Medina, and Atascosa counties cost the lives of sixteen ranchers and settlers, and the loss of hundreds of cows and horses, along with thousands of dollars in other property damage. To add to this, with the first warm winds of spring, Kiowa and Comanche raiders resumed their old habits of racing

³Ibid.

down from their territorial reservations to strike at homesteaders in central Texas. The Kiowas and Comanches came hard on Burnet, Comanche, Johnson, Parker, and Tarrant counties. War parties seemed to have been everywhere.

The officers commanding posts on the frontier were rarely able to intercept these thieves and murderers, so skillful were the Indians in concealing their tracks. But as the warm weather brought more raids by the Indians, so did the officers send out more search parties. The troopers of the Ninth Cavalry literally slept in their saddles as they rode their horses to death over thousands of miles of arid land. They were constantly pursuing but seldom finding. The results were often discouraging, as appeared in the records. June found troopers of G, L, and M Companies in pursuit of Indians on the Johnson and Pecos Rivers. The June fifth chase on the Johnson River was made by Company L to no avail. Two days later a band of Lipan Indians attacked a detachment from the Ninth Cavalry on the Pecos River. It was believed that the Black Seminole chief, Juan Caballo, was in charge of the attack. On this same day, June 7, 1869, Captain E. M. Hayl of the Ninth Cavalry was attacked by some Comanches. When the fighting was over Hayl had lost

one man and one horse. On this day along the Pecos River the Indians were not that easy with Captain John Mosby Bacon and troops of G Company. They lost thirty-two men.⁴

There was talk of expected trouble in the vicinity of Fort McKavett in the winter of 1868. Captain Henry Carroll of the Black Ninth, who was in charge of the area, was somewhat handicapped in March. On March 16, 1869, Brevet Brigadier General Ranald Slidell Mackenzie, with the Field Staff and Companies D and I of the Forty First Black Infantry, and Companies F and M of the Black Ninth Cavalry, arrived at Fort McKavett from Fort Clark, Texas.⁵ General Mackenzie was placed in charge of the post. Immediately after taking command of the post he was called away to attend a general court martial. When Mackenzie returned to the post, he was called on to help straighten out a local problem of neighboring counties regarding elections. This type of activity kept

⁴"Depredations on the Frontiers of Texas," House Executive Document, 43rd Congress, 1st Session, XVII, No. 257, p. 22; Brinninstool Collection, History of the Ninth, compiled from official records by Headquarters Military Division of the Missouri, Record of Engagements with Hostile Indians within the Military Division of the Missouri, from 1868 to 1882, Lieutenant General P. H. Sheridan, Commander, 36.

⁵Colonel M. L. Crimmins, "Fort McKavett, Texas," Southwestern Quarterly, Vol. 38 (1934-35), p. 30.

General Mackenzie out of direct contact with the problem of the Indians. Mackenzie, therefore, denied the many requests by Benjamin Franklin Ficklin, a civilian in charge of the mail route of the area, of which the last one was dated July 30, 1869, to station a company of the Ninth Cavalry along the mail route from Fort Concho and the head of the Concho River.

The result of General Mackenzie's denial of Benjamin Franklin Ficklin's request appeared in the Post Returns for Fort Concho, Texas, in July, 1869: "Indians ran off mail mules and government horses from the mail station at head of the Concho, July 29. Pursuit by Captain George Henry Gamble, Company B, Ninth Cavalry with detachment failed to overtake the Indians."⁶ Although the western mail route was supposed to have been the Ninth's area of concentration, it was learned by early 1869 that if the Indians were to be removed from Texas, it had to be done by the Black cavalrymen in blue.

"The most serious depredations," reported J. J. Reynolds in his annual report dated September 30, 1871, "on the western

⁶Record Group No. 94, National Archives: Monthly Returns for Fort McKavett, Texas, March-July, 1869; Post Returns, Fort Concho, Texas, July, 1869.

frontier have been committed by Indians from the reserves north of Red River."⁷ This statement could have been made in his report for 1868, 1869, and 1870, because small parties of Indians from the headwaters of the Brazos made incursions on the settlers around Fort Concho during 1868 and 1869. Although there were five companies of the Fourth Cavalry stationed there, horses, mules, and cattle were stolen, even within the fort limits. As late as the middle of February, 1870, a citizen was killed and scalped within a mile of the adjutant's office.⁸ During the first half of 1869, therefore, the Black Ninth Cavalry Regiment established a rendezvous at the "Sundial Post," Fort Concho. Since the Ninth Cavalry used this post as a rendezvous point for several important campaigns, it is fitting that a little space be devoted to a description of the establishment of the fort. Fort Concho was established on December 4, 1867. On this date Major J. P. Hatch, Fourth Cavalry, and five companies of that regiment arrived and pitched their tents along the Concho River. As the old story goes, the greatest achievement of the Fourth Cavalry at Fort Concho was the building

⁷Report of Secretary of War, September 30, 1871, p. 65.

⁸Colonel M. L. Crimmins, "Fort Concho, Texas," University of Texas Archives, Austin, Texas.

of a sundial. The shadows cast by the sundial carried out the discipline and minute exactness of a peacetime non-frontier army post, and for years old-timers were accustomed to set their watches by it as they passed. The dial still has the hours and half hours plainly marked on its stone face, and the perpendicular triangle is still firmly set in the center.⁹ Perhaps it was while the dial was in the making that the first romance that culminated in a wedding took place here. Miss Jessie Caldwell of New Jersey became the bride of Lieutenant Byron Dawson of the Ninth United States Cavalry, April 26, 1870.¹⁰

From the Surgeon General's Office, Fort Concho, on December 5, 1870, came a report describing the fort as the center of a line of posts extending from El Paso, on the Rio Grande, to the Northeastern border. The garrisoned positions at that time were Fort Bliss, Fort Quitman, Fort Davis, Fort Stockton, Fort Concho, Fort Griffin, and Fort Richardson. Geographically, but without as direct a road connection as with the one just named, a line of posts

⁹Rose Austin, "Fort Concho-Yesterday and Today," Farm and Ranch (December 1, 1935).

¹⁰Ibid.

formed one of the southern chains to the mouth of the Rio Grande. It included Fort Concho, Fort McKavett, Fort Clark, Fort Duncan, Fort McIntosh, Fort Ringgold Barracks, and Fort Brownsville. After the establishment and garrisoning of the new or outer line, several of the older posts, which had been occupied by federal troops after the Civil War, were abandoned. Fort Mason, Camp Verde, Fort Inge, Fort Lancaster, and Fort Hudson were abandoned on account of their position, and Fort Chadbourne because of the failure of the water supply.¹¹

The report adds that Fort Concho was situated at the juncture of the North Concho and Main Concho rivers, immediately west of their point of confluence, the North Concho flowing in a nearly southeasterly direction, and the Main Concho very nearly east, continuing that course until its juncture with the river. Brief as its existence had been at the time of the report, the foundation of the first building having been laid in January, 1868, the identity of the post was by that time nearly lost, especially to the Post Office department, on account of the non-involvement

¹¹Ibid.

of the Fourth Cavalry in the problem of the frontier, and the multiplicity of names it had had. Originally called Camp Hatch by the first garrison, it was changed at the request of the "distinguished" officer of that name in that regiment, and rebaptized Camp Kelly, in memory of another officer of the same regiment.¹² The construction department, or quartermaster, called it Fort Griffin, until an order from district headquarters fixed the present appellation of Concho. It was still misnamed, according to the report. Misnamed or not, the Indians had become emboldened by their July success and started open strikes again.

In the vicinity of Fort Concho, and not far from Fort McKavett, on the San Saba River, a strong war party of Comanches and Kiowas committed depredations, and headed north for the reservation. On September 15, 1869, Captains Carroll and Hayl with Company B, Company E, Company M, and Company F, making a total command of nearly one hundred, took up the pursuit. The trail was lost, supplies ran low,

¹²It was to Troop E, Fourth Cavalry, that Captain Robert G. Carter was assigned upon graduation from West Point in 1870. He brought his bride with him from Boston. See the first chapter of his book, On the Border with Mackenzie.

and the command was forced to halt at Fort Concho to refit. Captain Carroll was good at finding Indians and he knew it; therefore, he had no intentions of giving up the search. Once supplies were obtained, he returned to the pursuit with renewed determination. Pushing north from Fort Concho ahead of Hayl, Carroll regained the trail which led to the headwaters of the Salt Fork of the Brazos and a camp of nearly two hundred lodges. The eager troopers were given the orders to charge by Captain Carroll. The blare of the bugles and the thunder of hoofs were enough for the Kiowas and Comanches, who sought safety in flight.¹³

On September 20, the same command, augmented by Captain Hayl and detachments from Troops B and M, engaged the same band of Indians. For eight miles the Black soldiers chased the panic-stricken Indians and pulled up only when their mounts had given out. They had caused great loss to the Indians. More than two dozen Indians had been killed or wounded, and their entire camp and all its equipment had been captured and destroyed. The troopers returned to Fort

¹³Margaret Bierschwale, Fort McKavett, Texas: Post On The San Saba, 57-58; Army and Navy Journal, Volume VII, No. 15 (November 27, 1869), p. 224.

McKavett forty-two days after their departure. They had traveled more than six hundred miles.¹⁴ Additional scouts and horses were desperately needed, but Indians and tomahawks were the only things readily available.

General Joseph J. Reynolds, commanding the Fifth Military District, reported that the "troops were busy with construction work and driving wagons." He further reported that the men of the Ninth were on continuous scout and "all that is possible for their number to do has been done to protect the people and property of the frontier counties."¹⁵ This was not a fair assessment of the Black regiment which had borne more than its proportionate share in hard frontier service, and produced a successful record equal to that of any other regiment.

It was about this time that Colonel Hatch resumed full command of the Ninth Cavalry. In his review of the Black Ninth Cavalry he found the regiment badly scattered. Four of the regiment's companies comprised of garrisons at Fort Stockton were at Comanche Springs under the command of

¹⁴Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry, September-October, 1869; Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

Captain George H. Gamble; three other companies were at Fort Davis, on the Limpia River, 475 miles northwest of San Antonio, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel W. Merritt. Two companies were at Fort Clark, three quarters of a mile from the source of the Las Moras River, commanded by Major A. P. Morrow; two more companies were stationed at Fort Quitman on the Rio Grande, eighty miles below Franklin under the command of Captain G. A. Purrington; and one company was at Fort Duncan, at Eagle Pass, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel W. R. Shafter, Forty First Infantry. In addition, the regiment was woefully undermanned and, as usual, poorly mounted. Some measure of relief for reorganizing was in order, but conditions on the Texas frontier did not permit any such luxury.

So bold were the large bands of Indians raiding the frontier that at times it was necessary for several of the frontier units to cooperate in sending out expeditions to drive the Indians from the frontier. Hatch, distressed by the scattered situation of the men of the Ninth Cavalry, but encouraged by the enthusiasm of the overworked men to come to grips with the Indians, planned an all-out campaign to drive the Indians from the region under his command. He

decided that the only feasible way to stop these murderous raids would be for a large column of troops to invade the Indian strongholds and destroy them. Accordingly, Hatch sent detachments from six companies of the Ninth and two of the Fourth Cavalry to scout the region of the headwaters of the Nueces, Llano, Concho, and the Brazos rivers. They were under the command of Captain John Bacon of G Company. On October 10, 1869, Bacon led an expedition of a hundred men out of Fort Clark and marched them to the site of old Fort Phantom Hill on the Brazos, where they met "a large force of Indians . . . whom they fought for two days," with little success.¹⁶ Bacon reported this skirmish to Fort Concho. General Mackenzie at once ordered out a detachment of the Fourth Cavalry and twenty Indian scouts to join Bacon. Then, with seven officers and almost two hundred men, Bacon moved upriver to a point near the headwaters of the Brazos. Their exhaustion forgotten, the Bacon force took to the trail of a large band of Indians. They came within close range of the Indians late on the evening of October 27, 1869. Bacon intended to send out scouting parties

¹⁶J. Evetts Haley, Fort Concho and the Texas Frontier, 160.

the next morning to locate the Indians for a possible surprise attack. But on the morning of October 28, while the troops were in bivouac, some five hundred Comanche and Kiowa warriors spared him the trouble by attacking at sunrise from all sides.¹⁷

The engagement which followed was characterized by brilliant charges made by the Indians and spirited counter-charges by the Black troops. The attack was opened when the Indians sought to capture the pack horses which were guarded by Lieutenant Frederick William Smith of Massachusetts (he was to die before Christmas), and a detachment of troops which formed the left wing of the line. The Black troops held their ground, and when the Indians began a withdrawal, the men charged among them, killing eight and wounding several others. Lieutenant Byron Dawson, an outstanding cavalry officer who later received honors for gallantry with the Ninth, charged the retreating Indians with his detachment on the right, killing and wounding thirty. After the fight had continued for four hours, the Indians were finally completely stampeded and driven from the field.

¹⁷Ibid.

The Indians were pursued by the members of the Ninth Cavalry for over six miles.¹⁸

The long day of fighting left the Indians partially demoralized. Bacon and his men were in charge of the field. But neither Bacon nor his men were satisfied, and the next morning, October 29, 1869, they set out to find the savages. Their efforts were rewarded early that afternoon. Bacon's men had captured most of the Indian's horses the day before. The Black patrol had now come face to face with the encumbered warriors without their horses. And with their families in camp, for one of a few times, they definitely fought at a disadvantage. The scouting party made good the two-day skirmish. They burned the Indians camps and supplies, captured eight women and children and a herd of horses, and estimated "seventy-five to one hundred Indians killed and wounded."¹⁹ A check of Bacon's men showed that there had been only eight wounded despite the odds. The Black cavalry had

¹⁸Post Returns, Fort Concho, November, 1869; Post Returns, Fort McKavett, November, 1869; Army and Navy Journal, Volume VII, No. 20 (December 4, 1869); Haley, Fort Concho and the Texas Frontier, 160-161; The site of their engagement is in Crosby County, Texas, on Catfish Creek.

¹⁹Ibid.

now been on the frontier for more than two years, but this band of Comanches, Kiowas, and Apaches was the second group of Indians bold enough to attack a camp of Black cavalymen. And, as before, the Indians found themselves defeated.

One month to the day after the Brazos River affair on the head of Llano River, Captain Hayl was seriously wounded in a fight with some more of the savages.²⁰ The troops of L and M Companies had to fight desperately in order to survive. A month later some twenty Indians received a trick instead of a treat on Christmas Day as they attempted to ambush the mail coach at Johnston mail station west of Fort Concho. In the attempted surprise attack, the five Black excorts from troop E were ready and they defeated the Indians.²¹

Although many bitter conflicts lay ahead, the campaigns of late 1869 marked a turning point in the eight-year war between the Black Ninth Cavalry and the Indians of the Texas frontier. The Black unit had been unable during its first

²⁰Brinninstool Collection, "History of the Ninth Cavalry," University of Texas Archives; Francis Heitman, Historical Register gives the date of the fight as November 24, 1869.

²¹Ibid.

two years on the frontier to find, much less defeat, the Indians. But now they had gained the knowledge of the country, and the experience on the trail was needed to meet the Indians on their own terms. By January, 1870, Hatch's Black cavalrymen had sufficiently instilled a fear in the wandering Comanches and Kiowas and therefore could turn their attention to the Apaches who struck from their mountain strongholds in the almost inaccessible Guadalupe Mountains area.

With the new year came bitter cold weather, but Hatch and his men campaigned relentlessly. On January 3, 1870, for assurance over the Comanches and Kiowas, Company G and a detachment from Company L went on more than a month's scouting trip along the Rio Grande and Pecos. They were led by Captain Bacon. After being out for thirteen days the party surprised an entire Indian village, capturing all of the supplies, including six hundred beautifully dressed hides and eighty-three head of stock.²² The party continued its search and did not return to its post until February 6, 1870.

²²Ibid. The records of this attack do not show whether this was a Comanche or Kiowa village. It was probably impossible to tell because many times the two tribes of Indians would use each other's village for a few days rest and to get more supplies.

The supplies and stock were turned in at Fort McKavett, some seventy-five miles to the northeast.²³

Three days after Bacon and his men left for a month's scouting trip, so did detachments from Companies H and I. They scouted the Guadalupe Mountains area to no avail. Although this was known Apache country, the most important thing about this first expedition into the Guadalupe was that it allowed the troopers to map an area never before explored by white troops.²⁴

The Guadalupe expedition set the stage for a more successful campaign in the future. Captain Francis Dodge of Company D was not satisfied with the early January Guadalupe Mountains expedition. On January 20, 1870, he took two hundred men into the Apache area. Dodge set out from Fort Davis to conquer the Apaches as Bacon and his men had the Comanches. Detachments from Companies C, D, I, and K were out with his scouting party for only a day before they found action. The rain and sleet were too bad for anybody to be stirring except the members of the Black

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

Ninth Cavalry. While traveling in the bad weather of the Guadalupe Mountains, Dodge and his men came upon a village of Apaches camping on the Delaware Creek.²⁵ As the scouting party approached the camp, the Apaches fled and took refuge on a nearby hill. Dodge ordered the men to dismount and the fighting began at once.²⁶

Climbing the sleet-covered hill while under gunfire was not easy, but the Black troopers continued to press on, and by dark they had possession of the hill. The exhausted Black troops slept on the hill that night. A survey of the field the next morning revealed that ten Apaches were killed. It was believed that many of their dead had been carried away during the night. The Black cavalrymen destroyed a large number of bows and arrows, robes, and other supplies. And after a search of the immediate area and the rounding up of twenty-five horses, the men returned to Fort Davis. This expedition put an end to the action for two months.

²⁵North of Fort Davis in the Guadalupe Mountains area, there are several smaller mountains. Many of these mountains have springs that are strong enough to create creeks. One of the smaller mountains is the Delaware Mountain.

²⁶Post Returns, Fort McKavett, January, 1870; Army and Navy Journal, Volume VII, No. 27, February 19, 1870, p. 422.

The action started again on April 3, 1870, when fifteen men of Company H, under a non-commissioned officer, ran into some Indians near San Martin's Spring in Pecos County. The men stood their ground and killed one of the Indians. The others fled.²⁷ Hatch, like his men, was a man of action. Once he had had an opportunity to study the mapped area, he proposed to launch a campaign into the Guadalupe Mountains designed to clean out the Apaches' nest and stop raids on the Texas frontier from that section. According to information gathered earlier by men of the Ninth Cavalry there was need for a rendezvous post. The mapped area indicated that Pine Spring, in the lower Guadalupe Mountains, was the ideal spot for such a base. This assignment Hatch gave to Company H, stationed at Fort Quitman, about seventy miles south of El Paso on the Rio Grande. The men were under the direct leadership of Major Albert P. Morrow.²⁸

²⁷Heitman, Historical Register, 435.

²⁸George A. Purington, Journal of the March of Indians' Expedition as kept by Brevet Colonel George A. Purington, Captain of Ninth Cavalry from April 3, 1870 to May 26, 1870, included in Morrow's letter to the Assistant Adjutant General's sub-district of the Presidio, June 1, 1870.

Morrow left Fort Quitman on the same day of the San Martin's Spring affair, on April 3, with almost a hundred men of Company H and detachments from Company C and Company K. Although the Black men of the Black Ninth Cavalry had proven themselves as Indian fighters and hunters, there seems to have been some skepticism as to whether their ability to fight and hunt was true, unless Colonel Hatch was using this method to gain entrance into Mexico later, because the Mexican scouts knew very little about the area to be scouted. Morrow and his men were to go to El Paso and employ some Mexican guides before setting up camp at Pine Spring in the Guadalupe Mountains area. This camp was to serve as a supply post and a rendezvous with reinforcements from Fort Davis and Fort Stockton.²⁹

If Morrow hoped to set up camp without the Indians knowing, he was badly wrong. On April 9, while Morrow was en route, the grass was fired accidentally by Private John Johnson of K Company. The huge balls of smoke and racing flames undoubtedly aroused all the Indians in the area, because from that point on the party was escorted by smoke

²⁹Ibid.

signals on all sides.³⁰ Pine Spring was reached on April 11, 1870, and work began at once to construct a base camp.³¹

For several reasons some of the wagons did not arrive with the captain. Therefore, he ordered Corporal Ross of K Company to take the back trail and urge the lagging wagons on. About a mile from the camp site three Apaches tried to stop the corporal from carrying out his mission. Ross, having learned to ride and fight like Indians, immediately dropped his bridle reins, spurred his horse to a full run, and opened fire on the savages. He killed one and the other two ran. Corporal Ross then located the wagons and brought them into camp safely.³²

Second Lieutenants Gustavus Valois and Martin Griggs Hughes were in charge of the wagon train. There were sixty men under their command. Early the next day, April 13, 1870, Morrow set out to find the scene of Dodge's fight in January. After locating the area, they then rushed into the heart of the Guadalupe Mountains. Canyon after canyon was scouted,

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

and in nearly all of them abandoned camps were found. The mountains were tricky, and so were the Indians. Many times they traveled in circles. Morrow reported:

After marching four or five hours I found myself back in the camp of the night before. In this march we passed about two hundred recently occupied lodges. . . . Our (Mexican) guides, although the best in the country were completely lost and buffled by the multiplicity of trails running in every direction crossing and retracing. They finally succeeded in finding a trail leading down what appeared an impossible ravine, the horses and pack mules had to be lifted down onto the rocks. One of two fell into crevices and could not be extricated. Toward evening we came across a rancheria of seventy-five lodges which the Indians abandoned at our approach leaving large amounts of Mezcal bread, about a hundred gallons of an intoxicating beverage brewed from the maguey and other commissary supplies, a great number of hides, robes, dressed and green skins, baskets (and) ojos. . . .³³

This camp site was located in the southeastern part of New Mexico, in sight of the Sacramento Mountains. Morrow and his men pushed on northward to Cuervo Springs, just northeast of present-day Santa Rosa, New Mexico. There the men bivouacked for two days. The men were in bad condition. Their clothing was in threads. Their boots had fallen to pieces and most were barefoot. So great had been the loss

³³Ibid.

of horses, that at least half of the men were dismounted. During the two days of bivouacking the men mended their rags, and made moccasins for bruised and bloody feet. They regained some energy by eating their hardtack spiced with a little dried meat. The men broke bivouac on April 23, 1870. They scouted the northwest as far as the Penasco River and then returned to their supply camp at Pine Spring.³⁴

There was no time to waste. After a brief rest, the men headed back to Fort Quitman. They located an Indian party in the Sierra Diablo area, on April 25. The troopers followed the Indians to their camp at Crow Springs, Texas, in the northern part of El Paso County. There the troopers attacked an Apache party, but the Indians fled without offering any resistance and left the Black troopers in possession of thirty lodges and twenty-two horses. After extensive scouting turned up nothing more of importance, Major Morrow and his Black troopers moved on to Fort Quitman after fifty-three days in the field. The Black troopers could not boast of the many Apaches that had fallen to their carbines, because few Indians were killed. But they could

³⁴Ibid.

name the scores of lodges that they had destroyed along with great quantities of stores. As a result of this campaign no Apache would ever again feel entirely secure in the old haunts in the Guadalupe Mountains area. From this point on the Apache raids on the frontier of Texas diminished. The Black cavalrymen in blue, therefore, could claim a victory.³⁵

Major Morrow was proud of the men that he had led. In his official report he had nothing but praise for the performance of his Black troops:

They had marched about 1,000 miles, over two hundred of which was through country never explored by troops, drove the Indians from every rancheria . . . destroyed immense amounts of . . . food, robes, skins, utensils and material and captured forty horses and mules. I cannot speak too highly of the conduct of the . . . men under my command, always cheerful and ready, braving the severest hardships with short rations and no water without a murmur. The Negro troops are peculiarly adapted to hunting Indians knowing no fear and capable of great endurance.³⁶

With the exception of Company K having a skirmish on May 29, in the Bass Canyon, these three companies were not to see action again in 1870.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

As Morrows' appraisal of the Black troopers for their bravery and courage in the Guadalupe Mountains campaign was taking place, so was another major event of the year of 1870. On May 20, Company F troop's commander Captain Henry Carroll ordered Sergeant Emanuel Stance to lead a detachment of ten troopers out of Fort McKavett on a routine patrol along an old Indian trail known locally as the Kickapoo Road, some twenty miles to the north of Fort McKavett. The detachment was about eighteen miles from the fort when it spied a small band of Indians driving a herd of horses across a nearby hill. Spurring their own horses to the attack, the troopers engaged the Indians in a running skirmish until the Indians escaped into heavy hillside thickets of oak. The men were able to capture nine horses. With darkness coming on, Sergeant Stance moved on to Kickapoo Spring, where he ordered an overnight camp.³⁷

The next morning the troopers broke camp and made their own trail back to Fort McKavett with the animals they had captured. About six miles from the fort, they spotted a band of twenty or thirty Kickapoos pursuing a herd of

³⁷Ibid.

government horses. The herd guards, outnumbered ten to one, were fighting a losing battle. The leather-tough little sergeant, who stood about five feet and six inches in his cavalry boots, immediately ordered a charge, and for eight miles or more the troopers engaged the Indians in a running battle, forcing the Indians to flee and capturing five more horses. But the savages were not quite ready to call it a day.³⁸

They soon reappeared at Stance's rear and opened fire at long range, but the diminutive sergeant would have none of this. Sergeant Stance, already a veteran of five similar encounters with the Indians, "wheeled about and turned my little command loose on them." Stance led the left flank as his troopers sought to overhual the Kickapoos from the rear. Pulling far ahead of his men, he repeatedly emptied his sidearms and reloaded without breaking stride, "and after a few volleys they left me to continue my march in peace."³⁹ Although no Indians were killed, the fact that the detachment of ten Black cavalry troopers had driven

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.; Sergeant Stance, Company F. Ninth Cavalry, Report to Post Adjutant, Fort McKavett, Texas.

off a band of almost thirty Kickapoos was not to be treated lightly by the Indians or Stance's superiors.

The following day Stance and his patrol rode back into Fort McKavett with a total of twenty-five horses taken during the two day patrol. The sergeant made a typically laconic report and turned in for some well deserved rest. But Captain Carroll, himself one of the most capable Indian fighters on the western frontier, was less blase about the sergeant's escapade. The following day he commended his redoubtable sergeant for conspicuous courage and devotion to duty and, unknown to Stance, recommended him for the Medal of Honor. On July 24, 1870, the crusty little Indian fighter openly wept as he received the highest military honor his country could bestow.⁴⁰

After considerable success in the north against the Apaches, the Black men of the Ninth Cavalry could take a breather, or the regiment could turn its attention southward again. The activities of thieves and outlaws along the Rio Grande had become so destructive that, by the middle of 1870, the Texas Legislature passed a joint resolution calling

⁴⁰Ibid.; Sergeant Stance's Report to the Adjutant General, Washington, D. C., July 24, 1870.

upon Congress to take steps to prevent Mexicans from shielding cattle thieves when they sought refuge there.⁴¹ The Comanches, Kickapoos, Kiowas, and Lipans still were causing some problems on the southern half of the frontier. Colonel Hatch at Fort Davis, considering what had happened in the northern half of the frontier, believed his regiment could make short work of the Kickapoos, who numbered several hundred, and Lipans, a much smaller number, if the men could only pursue the raiding parties to their villages in Mexico, as they had pursued the Apaches in the Guadalupe Mountains. In October Hatch submitted a plan to General Reynolds for a winter campaign with this objective in mind. The plan was that Black cavalry would take to the field with every effective trooper that could be mustered, advance toward the Rio Grande on a broad front driving every Indian they could flush before them, and, crossing the river, cooperate with the Mexican troops in gaining an overwhelming and decisive victory.

Colonel Hatch's proposal was sound and won the approval of his superiors, but diplomatic channels put a halt to it.

⁴¹J. Frank Dobie, A Vaquero of the Brush Country, 181.

Mexican officials professed their willingness to co-operate, but they notified Thomas Nelson, United States Minister to Mexico, that foreign troops could operate on Mexican soil only with the express consent of the Mexican Congress, and that body would not convene until April, 1871. This diplomatic problem ruined Hatch's plans for a winter campaign in 1870. On April 29, 1871, a suspicious and lethargic Congress refused entry of American troops onto Mexican soil even if in pursuit of raiders.⁴²

Some of the Indians on the reservations during the Civil War received confirmation of a safe passage from the Indian territory to Mexico. With the assurance of the Texas officials that they could pass through Texas unmolested, they decided to leave. On their way through Texas they were attacked by a party of Texas Rangers and some of them were killed, though they defeated the Rangers. For this reason,

⁴²Ibid.; Hatch to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, October 4, 1870; Thomas Nelson to Hamilton Fish, Secretary of State, April 29, 1871; Also see San Antonio Daily Express, June 1, 1870, for a discussion of this measure.

if none other, Mexico had the right to refuse the entrance of American troops on to their soil.⁴³

The Black men of the Ninth Cavalry had already paid a high price for the lack of cooperation along the Rio Grande. As Hatch was pleading for cooperation by the Mexicans, Charles Keerl and family were killed by some Indians. They were Americans living just south of the border, in Mexico. The Indians attacked the Keerl family and all but one were killed and the bodies mutilated. Keerl's head and that of his wife were severed and her head was placed upon his shoulders. Although the men of the Ninth Cavalry wanted to hunt the Indians down and punish them for their wrongdoings, their hands were figuratively tied. And the Mexican forces under Colonel Joaquin Terrazas refused to run them down and punish the guilty parties. This was only one of many such affairs that had occurred in the past, and there would be many in the future.⁴⁴

⁴³Zenas R. Bliss, Reminiscences of Zenas R. Bliss, Major General, United States Army, 5 Volumes, University of Texas Archives, copied from original in possession of Mrs. Alice B. Massey: Boerne, Texas, Volume 5, 1866-1876. Written at Fort Bayard, New Mexico, June 1, 1894.

⁴⁴Ibid.: Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry, December, 1870; Post Returns, Fort Davis, January, 1871.

For some reason, Hatch was relieved of any immediate concern for affairs in west Texas. In December, 1870, he was ordered to St. Louis as Superintendent of the Mounted Recruiting Service, an assignment he held for more than two years. Command of his regiment once more fell to Lieutenant Colonel Wesley Merritt. It was many months before Hatch again returned to the Texas frontier.⁴⁵

Since the men of the Ninth could not pursue the raiders of the south, they had to settle for patrols and the hope that they would come into contact with the Indians. The officers and men had only the memories of the fact that they had scouted, pursued, and mapped in areas never before penetrated by troops. The information gained by the men would certainly shorten the time required to put the Indians on the reservation.

A routine affair in the summer of 1871 carried the troopers of the Black unit into one of the last portions of west Texas still regarded as safe by the raiding Indians. The bold Indians on the night of June 16, 1871, raiding from the north, ran off forty-three animals from the herd of

⁴⁵Ibid.

Company A, Twenty Fourth Infantry, bivouacked at Barillo Springs between Fort Davis and Fort Stockton. Lieutenant Colonel William R. Shafter, Twenty Fourth Infantry, commanding at Davis after Hatch left, set out for Barillo with a Company of the Ninth and a Company of the Twenty Fourth Infantry, all Black soldiers, and was joined there by Captain Michael Cooney and Company A of the Ninth Cavalry. On June 21, 1871, Shafter, with six officers, seventy five troopers, and two guides, set out on the Indian trail and followed it northeast to the Pecos River. From the Pecos the trail led north into the virtually unknown Staked Plain region, where Shafter managed to find water after a two day search. Trails led through the sand in every direction, and for ten searing days the dogged Shafter and his tough Black troopers plowed back and forth along a maze of trails, suffering intensely from thirst and heat.⁴⁶

Finally, with the command at the point of utter exhaustion, Shafter marched back to Fort Davis and Cooney to

⁴⁶Shafter to H. Clay Wood, Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, July 15, 1871, Selected Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office; Robert M. Utley, "Pecos Bill on the Texas Frontier," The American West, Volume VI, No. 1, January, 1961, pp. 7-8. William R. Shafter later commanded American Forces in the Spanish-American War.

Fort Stockton, after turning a routine pursuit of Apaches horse thieves into a major exploration of the Staked Plains. The search party killed no Indians. The immediate results of the march were meager at most. But the march had determined that soldiers could survive in the forbidden lands of the Staked Plains. The men had captured an abandoned village of some two hundred lodges and destroyed them all. There had been a bit of long-range skirmishing with furtive Comanches, and a few horses and mules and a small quantity of powder and lead were captured. In addition, from an old Indian woman the party learned much about the Apache and Comanche habits of the area. She described in detail how traders of New Mexico would come down on regular schedules to trade with the Indians of the Staked Plains.⁴⁷ This reinforced an early finding by the Black Ninth Cavalry that Indians were in the area and that they were trading regularly with the white men. But the United States government did nothing for many years to curtail this Comanchero trade. This was definite evidence that the Staked Plains was a place of barter for the Comancheros. The real significance

⁴⁷Ibid.

of the March, however, lay in the destruction of the myth that soldiers could never operate in such country. The Black soldiers proved that they could, and never again would an Indian or a Comanchero close his eyes with any guarantee of unbroken sleep in the once mysterious White Sand of the Staked Plains.⁴⁸

The Comanchero made it worth the Indian's time and effort to raid. Therefore, despite increased military activity and the penetration of old sanctuaries, Indian raiders continued to plague ranchers and their herds. July 22, 1871, found a lone man of Company F in pursuit of the thieves, and July ended this way near Fort McKavett with a detachment from Company M of the Ninth Cavalry and a detachment from Company A of the Twenty Fourth Infantry likewise in pursuit to no avail. But late in August the Indians stole three hundred head of cattle near Fort McKavett. Detachments from Company F and Company M of the Ninth Cavalry were sent out to pursue the Indians.⁴⁹ On September 1, 1871, Lieutenant John L. Bullis, Twenty Fourth Infantry, and four

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Edward S. Wallace, "General Ranald Slidell Mackenzie Indian Fighting Cavalryman," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Volume 56 (1952-53), p. 386.

troopers of Company M, Ninth Cavalry, while scouting some distance from the main column, came upon three Indians driving the stolen cattle. Bullis and the men attacked immediately and soon found themselves in possession of the herd, but not for long. The initial three raiders returned with reinforcements of fifteen men, and for an hour and a half they fought, skirmished, charged, retreated, turned and fought again, eventually retiring with two hundred head of the cattle still in their possession.⁵⁰

In the autumn of 1871, an expedition was organized at old Camp Cooper (just northwest of Fort Griffin) by Colonel Ranald Slidell Mackenzie, Fourth Cavalry. In October the expedition left Camp Cooper under the command of Colonel Mackenzie in search of hostile Comanches led by Quanah Parker. The command encamped on the Freshwater Fork of the Brazos River on October 9, 1871. At one o'clock a.m., October 10, a number of mounted Comanches, yelling and firing

⁵⁰Wallace, "General John Lapham Bullis: Thunderbolt of the Texas Frontier, II," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Volume 55 (July, 1951), p. 77; Post Returns, Fort McKavett, September, 1871; Army and Navy Journal, Volume IX, No. 16, December 2, 1871, p. 243; Kenneth W. Porter, "The Seminole Negro-Indian Scouts, 1870-1881," Southwestern Historical Quarterly (1952), pp. 358-377.

pistols, charged past the soldiers' camp and stampeded some of their horses and mules. At daybreak several officers with detachments of men were sent by Colonel Mackenzie to hunt the stampeded animals. Indians attacked Captain E. M. Hayl's troops on this search and one of his men was killed. Lieutenant R. G. Carter, with his detachment, rushed to Captain Hayl's aid. The Indians were held back until Colonel Mackenzie, with additional troops, arrived. The Indians now scattered, and the soldiers gave chase. In the pursuit Lieutenant Carter was badly injured by the falling of his horse when making a charge upon a body of Indian sharpshooters posted on a cliff. Carter's leg was jammed against a rock in the fall. Later Colonel Mackenzie received an arrow wound in his eye, causing him to relinquish the command and return to Fort Griffin. The Indians escaped the troopers on this occasion.⁵¹

In the fall of 1871, General Shafter organized and led an expedition into the Chihuahuan deserts and mountains of

⁵¹Report of Secretary of War, 1872, pp. 55=56; Rupert Norval Richardson, The Comanche Barrier to South Plains Settlement, 346; John H. Dorst, "Ranald Slidell Mackenzie," Twentieth Annual Reunion Association Graduates United States Military Academy, 1889; R. G. Carter, On the Border with Mackenzie, 154; Rister, Fort Griffin, 89-92.

Mexico. The expedition was made up of two companies of the Black Ninth Cavalry and one of the Twenty Fifth Infantry. During the scouting trip, a group of Apaches was found, but they were fortunate enough to escape.

At the close of 1871, the men of the Ninth Cavalry had the Indians on the northern and western frontier of Texas on the run. They had perfected a new American method of fighting. The members of the Black Ninth United States Cavalry accepted the Indian's tactics and adapted them to their own fighting. The four years of almost constant frontier fighting were not a campaign of pitched battles but of distant traveling, sudden incursions, and sudden charges on horses. The fleet and well-organized Indians always attacked on horses. To defeat the Indians one had to meet and pursue them on horseback with an organization equally as mobile. This the members of the Black Ninth Cavalry had done. The Ninth Cavalry's success on the northern and western frontiers had made life fairly safe in these areas, but that could not be said for the southern frontier.

The southern frontier caused Texans and the members of the Black Ninth Cavalry some real problems. To cope with

this situation, and aware that the spring of 1872 would bring more problems, General C. C. Augur, who succeeded General Reynolds as commanding general, Department of Texas, in November, 1871, decided to make the best possible disposition of troops available to him. To do this the entire Fourth Cavalry, under Colonel R. S. Mackenzie, was sent to reasonably safe west Texas, while the Ninth Cavalry, under Colonel Merritt, was ordered to move southeastward so as to bring them into contact with the dirty work along the Rio Grande. To support the Ninth Cavalry were detachments of the Black Twenty Fourth and Twenty Fifth Infantry Regiments.⁵²

The Black men of the Ninth Cavalry had killed only a few Indians, but the men had marched up and down mountains and through plains and deserts that had never before been traveled by men in American uniforms. There is no doubt that they knew more about the Texas frontier than anybody else. Before the close of the year they had destroyed scores of lodges along with great quantities of food and supplies. In the long run this would indeed have an effect on the Indians.

⁵²Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the year of 1872, pp. 54-55; Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry, January-April, 1872.

CHAPTER VI

DISCRIMINATION AND PREJUDICE IN THE MIDST OF FRONTIER CAMPAIGNS 1872-1875

New countries or territories in the process of settlement have generally been the theaters of lawlessness and crime until their populations have had time to become assimilated and homogeneous. In the occupation of Texas by white Americans, the Rio Grande border region was the backwash of civilization. It was natural that the reckless and turbulent Americans and Mexicans, fleeing from the restrictions of orderly communities, should seek this area where they would find an environment in which they could carry on their careers of crime and plunder without interference.

By the time orders came for the Black Ninth Cavalry Regiment to move southward from its northern position, the situation along the southwestern border of Texas, putting it mildly, was bad. The activities of bandits, desperadoes and revolutionaries, when combined with those of marauding Indians, drove law abiding citizens and state officials

along the Rio Grande to the brink of despair. Losses in cattle and horses ran into the thousands. Ranches were looted and their owners shot down. Post offices and custom-houses were systematically robbed. Murders were so frequent as to be commonplace. Many officials charged with enforcing the laws were either in league with the lawbreakers or too fearful of reprisals to make the effort needed for enforcing the law. If criminals were apprehended, prosecutors were afraid to prosecute and juries unwilling to convict. Little wonder that Governor Richard Coke could write to President Grant that he feared the whole country between the Neuces River and the Rio Grande would be depopulated.¹

By 1872, the Black men of the Ninth Cavalry had spent nearly five years on the frontier during some of the hardest kind of service with no respite. Almost none of the men of the regiment had seen their homes since enlistment. The officers' requests to secure extended furloughs for the Black men of the Ninth Cavalry were repeatedly denied. The duties were among the most lonely and isolated to be found

¹Governor Richard Coke of Texas to President Grant, May 29, 1875, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Letters Consolidated, File No. 1653, Affairs on the Rio Grande and Texas Frontier, National Archives.

anywhere in the country. To have served in such an area would seem to have called for at least honorable mention in some way. To add to this, discipline was severe, food usually poor, recreation lacking, and violent death always near at hand.²

At Fort Concho, near present San Angelo, the huge centrally-located post which protected Texans from raids from the west and south, things were bad, but typical. Ice was almost unknown, for it cost six dollars for a small piece packed in sawdust and sent by express from San Antonio. The poor meals were constant with Black troopers. The post surgeon at Fort Concho put it bluntly about the meals. The food was inferior to that provided at other posts, according to the surgeon's report. The bread was sour, and there was only enough flour for the officers; the butter that the men had was made from suet and was like oil. The milk was thin and watery and tasted of wild garlic. The beef that the men ate was of the poorest quality, dry and of a strange musty flavor. There were almost no fresh vegetables, and the canned peas that they sometimes got were not fit to eat.

²Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Texas for the year 1875.

When a shipment of potatoes came in, it was usually a mass of decay when unpacked. There were none of the staples common at other posts such as molasses, canned tomatoes, dried apples, dried peaches, sauerkraut, good potatoes or onions.³

To add to the general miseries, a profusion of snakes, scorpions, tarantulas, centipedes, and giant roaches made the summer deplorable for the young recruits and wives, especially if they had recently arrived from the East.⁴ Although life for the women of the frontier post was unbelievably crude and hard, the devotion and loyalty which those truly gallant wives showed to their husbands and their way of life have become a byword to Blacks.

In the border camps sometimes the thermometer stood at more than a hundred degrees in the shade for as long as six months at a time, and for the next six months it was often below thirty-two degrees.⁵ For the women, any kind of

³Records of the War Department, Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94, Medical History Fort Concho, Volume 404.

⁴Circular No. 4, Surgeon General's Office, December 5, 1870.

⁵United States War Department, Quartermaster General's Office, Outline Description of the United States Military Post and Stations in the Year 1871, August, 1871, pp. 42-43.

picnic during the summer months, even after nightfall, was impossible, for the ants, woodticks, and redbugs or chiggers, the joke ran, would eat more of the picnickers than the latter would of any food. To add to the discomforts, quarters were allotted by rank, and if a newly married officer arrived or a bachelor married it might mean a general shifting of quarters all down the line, with some poor devil of a Second Lieutenant and his wife and children ending up in a tent or a Black private without a tent.⁶

On February 10, 1868, ground was first broken for the establishment of Bismarck Farm, seven miles southwest of Fort Concho. The soldiers stationed at Fort Concho, in need of fresh vegetables, welcomed the farm since watercress was the only supplement they had to the routine staple foods. Jack Marshall, the founder, was a real estate promoter. He had made money by bringing German immigrants into New Braunsfels, Fredericksburg, and Mason. He was in touch with developments at the frontier post and, realizing that he would have an opportunity to capitalize by quick action, selected a suitable location for a farm, laid out irrigation ditches,

⁶Ibid.

and rented the property to Mexicans. Fort Concho made use of Bismarck Farm in obtaining green vegetables for the soldiers and grain for the horses.

Among social events that played a part in the lives of those at Fort Concho were dances, which were held in the mess hall. The white officers and their wives took one end of the hall and the Black soldiers the other. A band in the middle played for both sides. Square dances, the Virginia Reel, and occasionally a waltz were featured.⁷

There were other amusements at Fort Concho. A favorite of the Black soldiers was that of "bouncing the tenderfoot." A group of regulars would put a fresh recruit on a wagon-sheet and throw him about twenty-five times high into the air. Whenever a recruit got nasty about the fun, the troops would strip him and take him to the washroom. There, with a horse brush, he would get a good scrubbing. However, it was not often that a recruit would get so angry.⁸

Discipline was severe, and when the men were in camp about one fourth of them were in trouble ranging from

⁷Grace Bitner, A History of Tom Green County, Texas, Master's Thesis, 40.

⁸Ibid.

drunkenness to accusations of attempted rape and murder. The same men were splendid in the field, and the problem was to keep them occupied and away from the miserable sink-holes of vice which fringed the outskirts of the frontier posts.⁹

A private was paid thirteen dollars a month, room, board, and one pound of tobacco. Extra tobacco cost sixty cents a pound at the post commissary. A majority of the soldiers were swindled into making purchases on credit during the month, and the paymaster subtracted the amount due before paying the troopers. The creditors' record was final. W. A. Alberthal, a tailor, is supposed to have earned a livelihood by altering the army-measured uniforms, but to supplement this he lent money to soldiers. Alberthal was only one of the many creditors loitering near the paymaster's window on the appointed day.¹⁰

Off-post recreation, more in keeping with the spirit of frontier, was available in the sordid little towns that

⁹Standard-Times, "Interview," San Angelo, October 1, 1939.

¹⁰"W. A. Alberthal, 67 Years A Tailor, Was 80 on Saturday," Standard-Times, San Angelo, November 5, 1938; Sancho Mazigue.

blossomed around the posts. Across the Concho River, not far from Fort Concho, was located a settlement which, for a number of years, bore the name "Over the River." A description of early frontier settlements, which also accurately portrayed "Over the River," follows:

Rampant lawlessness exists in the sparsely settled border counties. Bands of criminals and desperadoes defy the law, commit murder with impunity, drive off cattle belonging to citizens, and produce a general feeling of terror in the country.¹¹

Fights were frequent and drunkenness was a daily occurrence in "Over the River." Every third building in the place was a saloon with gambling accommodations filled after nightfall with a depraved, adventurous crowd, whose profanity was appalling, whose aspect was hideous.¹² In saloons, which exceeded the number of all other business houses combined, men drunk and sober danced to rude music in the poorly lighted rooms, and did not lack female partners. In vulgar bestiality of language, in the pure delight of

¹¹Carl Coke Rister, The Southwestern Frontier, 1865-1881, 260.

¹²Robbie M. Powers, "A Vast Frontier Was Guarded By Fort Concho," Star-Telegram (Fort Worth), December 2, 1928.

parading profanity and indecency, the ruffian there had no equal. The gambling houses were nightly frequented by hundreds. Pioneers recall that gambling tables were carried to the sidewalks when saloons became overcrowded.¹³ Soldiers from the fort, buffalo hunters, and Mexican laborers of Bismarck Farm patronized the drinking places.¹⁴ A trumpeter of Troop B at Fort Concho was so poisoned by liquor received from "Over the River" that his life was despaired of several days.¹⁵ Private Ellis was thought to have died in the fort hospital. He was placed on the "cooling board" and later put in the dead house, a room connected with the hospital laundry. Four Black troopers sat up with Ellis the first night, including "Old" Cox, who related the story:

While in the laundry next to the dead house, the four men drank some coffee and two jugs of whiskey. Before long they were in high spirits. About eleven o'clock one of the troopers went to the door of the dead house to look at the corpse. Ellis' hands and feet had previously been tied, but as the man looked in, the body moved. The soldier ran back, yelling "Thet man ain't dead; he's moving!"

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴"Fort Concho of Old," Dallas News, May 7, 1905.

¹⁵Robert G. Carter, On The Border With Mackenzie, 40.

Shortley, others were moving also. Three of them made a dash for the door at once and were so jammed that none could get through. "Old" Cox jumped through the window, followed closely by another, who he thought was "Dead" Ellis. The steward at the hospital heard the noise and, learning the cause, found the revived Ellis and took him to the hospital. In a few days Ellis was out and able to report for duty. Later he received an honorable discharge from the army and remained in San Angelo, though as Cox says, "The Negroes were always a little 'skittish' of him, since they never could forget that he had been 'dead' once."¹⁶

Prejudice made the Black men of the Ninth Cavalry Regiment sometimes wish that they were dead. It was prejudice that kept the men from getting the recognition and often even simple justice that was due them.

Robberies were, of course, frequent in the gambling halls, and in the primitive hotels. But a Black man in the Ninth Cavalry could expect little mercy at the hands of a court-martial, even for trivial offenses. A dishonorable discharge and one year at hard labor were virtually automatic sentences for drunkenness while on duty. And Privates George Perry and Richard Talbot, both of Company I, received this sentence for petty theft. Perry stole some candy from a saloon, while Talbot stole one dollar from a civilian.

¹⁶Bitner, citing James B. Keating in "A History of Tom Green County, Texas," Master's Thesis, 25.

Private William Tolliver of Company A took a cat nap on guard duty and paid for his leisure with six months in the post guardhouse. Private John Curtis of Company H spent two months at hard labor for telling his sergeant to "go to hell" when ordered to help feed the company horses. The court was lenient with Private Andy Clayton of H Company, who was charged with entering the quarters of laundress Mrs. Lydia Brown, drawing a knife, and threatening, "I'll cut you if you don't undress and let me sleep with you." The verdict was "not guilty." Generally, however, the punishment was more harsh than that in white regiments.¹⁷

A number of mysterious characters who lived in "Over the River" caused the Ninth Cavalry some problems. Names of most of these personages have been forgotten, but that of "Mystic Maude" was immortalized in the Frontier Times. This woman came to "Over the River" from San Antonio in 1870. She secured a room in an adobe hut on the outskirts of the town. "Mystic Maude" joined a group of gamblers who met in rooms over a saloon each night. They played for large stakes and "Maude" usually was the winner. This mystery woman received no visitors in her hut and never appeared in public

¹⁷Powers, "A Vast Frontier Was Guarded by Fort Concho," Star-Telegram, December 2, 1928.

before nightfall. She was an attractive, medium-sized woman who, excluding her gambling vice, exhibited all the traits of a refined and educated person. One day "Mystic Maude" boarded a stage and left "Over the River." A short time later word was received at Fort Concho that she was at Fort Griffin, using the name of "Lottie Deno."¹⁸

Fort Concho was typical of the places harsh to the men of the Ninth Cavalry. Even if the Black soldier had no cause to seek trouble, it was awaiting him. If a trooper was unfortunate enough to lose his life in a clash with a white man, his comrades could hardly expect that justice would be served. One such citizen, John Jackson, settler near Fort McKavett, murdered a Black private in cold blood, and eluded the law. Later he shot and killed Corporal Albert Marshall and Private Charles Murray of Captain Carroll's Company F stationed at Fort McKavett. When Jackson was finally apprehended by the Black soldiers and brought to trial, a jury quickly set him free.¹⁹

¹⁸"The Mystery Woman at Fort Concho," Frontier Times, Volume IV, No. 4, p. 49, January, 1927.

¹⁹Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry, February, 1870; J. E. Haley, Fort Concho, 264-270.

Such conditions could have demoralized any regiment; yet morale in the Black Ninth Cavalry remained high. Desertion, quite common in the frontier army regiments, was the lowest of any unit on the frontier. Proud, tough, and confident, the Black Cavalry was equal to any similar combat unit in the country, and it was well that this was so, for the most trying years were still in the future.²⁰

A large part of the turbulent and bloody years on the Texas frontier was due to the disorders of reconstruction, but the lack of control by the Mexican government was worse, and its border states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas were fertile breeding grounds for raids and revolutionaries' activities in the United States and Mexico. This was particularly so for Porfirio Diaz and his followers in their effort to undermine Texans and overthrow the government of Sebastian Lerdo in 1876.²¹ It was the practice of Diaz's revolutionaries and bandits to raid Texas from one of the Mexican border states where they had set up sanctuary.

²⁰House Report Executive Document No. I, Part 2, 45th Congress, 2nd Session, 49.

²¹J. Fred Rippy, The United States and Mexico, 288; Frank A. Knapp, Jr., The Life of Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada, 1823-1889, pp. 283-284.

Because of the disagreements between the two governments it was impossible legally to pursue them over the border. Therefore, border chieftains with large ambitions were numerous and their activities were often indistinguishable from outright banditry. Their lust for blood and cattle theft was seldom if ever satisfied, and their leaders showed a remarkable impartiality as between their own countrymen and those of the United States.²²

To make a bad situation worse, the Rio Grande country was plagued with young desperadoes who had fought in the Civil War and had become accustomed to violence and "had carried the habit into civil life." Drinking, gambling, killing, stealing, and swindling were a way of life, and often these men combined in such numbers as to overawe civilian authorities. More numerous than any of these characters, however, were the cattle and horse thieves, who plagued almost every newly-formed settlement along the frontier. If they entertained any compunctions about killing one of their own kind, they had none about killing a Mexican or Texan. Their common boast concerning the

²²Ibid.

number of their victims was qualified by indicating they were not counting Mexicans. This feeling was shared in reverse by many a Mexican "hardcase" who felt that killing a Texan deserved a medal.²³

The sparsely settled frontier of Texas was one of the most lawless in the Southwest. In this area there were two regions most favored by the desperadoes: (1) the counties immediately south of the Red River, which have already been discussed; and (2) the wild, unsettled country north of the Rio Grande. When pursued in the first area, the outlaws found refuge in the Indian Territory north of the Red River; and, in the second, it was only necessary for them to cross the Rio Grande to find safety in Mexico. One observer along the Rio Grande during this period wrote that hardly an edition of the local weekly newspaper came from the press which did not recount the occurrence of fights and murders. He added that most of the murders were charged

²³Governor Richard Coke of Texas to President Grant, May 29, 1875; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Letters Received, Consolidated File No. 1653, Affairs on the Rio Grande and Texas Frontier, National Archives; Secretary of War Report, 1873, p. 41.

against Mexicans, "whose passionate motives were not rare," and to whom escape over the border was relatively easy.²⁴

Outlawry in Texas reached its climax in the period from 1863 to 1873. Organized bands of desperadoes, both large and small, murdered peaceful citizens, stole cattle and horses, and created a reign of terror in many parts of the state, although the greater part of the crimes were on the border. They became so bold that the Austin Daily Republican of August 21, 1868, reported a raid on a federal commissary train by the Bickerstaff gang, near Sulphur Springs, in which the outlaw leaders overpowered the teamsters, took their commissaries, and then forced them to drive away empty-handed. In 1869, the Commandant of the Department of Texas issued a general order in which he stated that information was received by him which tended to prove that in addition to the robbery problem, "cattle stealing prevails to an

²⁴Frederick Law Olmsted, A Journey Through Texas, or a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier: With a Statistical Appendix, 295. The observation of this writer is corroborated by many others, and tend to show that the most prolific center of outlaw disturbance in the state during this period was along the Rio Grande River.

unprecedented extent" along the Rio Grande.²⁵ John Hitson, a Texas ranchman writing to the San Antonio Daily Express, stated that thieves had driven more than 100,000 cattle from Texas during the two preceding decades. Before the United States Congress had time to act, the Mexican government sent a commission to the Rio Grande to make an investigation. The Mexican commission reported in 1873 that depredations on both sides of the Rio Grande were carried on by American Indians and white outlaws for which the American Government was responsible, since it did little to prevent it. The desperate conditions on the frontier are reflected in almost everything one reads about conditions in Texas.²⁶

To cope with this ugly situation and aware that the spring of 1872 would bring more problems pouring up from the south, General C. C. Augur, Commanding General, Department of Texas, had in November of the previous year ordered

²⁵Headquarters, Fifth Military District, State of Texas, Austin, Texas, June 7, 1869, quoted in Flak's Daily Bulletin, Galveston, Texas, July 23, 1869.

²⁶J. Frank Dobie, A Vaquero of the Brush Country, 81; some sources give the names and descriptions of some 5,000 men wanted in Texas.

a shift of troops. On April 16, 1872, in obedience to those orders, Wesley Merritt and his staff, with the regimental band and Company A, left Stockton to take up headquarters at Fort Clark. On the afternoon of April 20, 1872, en route to Fort Clark, the command reached Howard's Well on the San Antonio-El Paso road, in Crockett County, Texas, at six o'clock, to find the still smoldering remains of a contractor's train. The Kiowas, and possibly some Comanches, carried out what amounted to another Salt Creek massacre. Bodies of sixteen men, women, and children were strewn about, some of them burned to cinders. All the animals of the train were missing.²⁷

Captain Cooney with Company A and Lieutenant F. R. Vincent with Company D took up the pursuit immediately. The trail led into a valley where both companies advanced in parallel ranks. Since these were headquarters units, many of the men were raw recruits, and the veterans gave them instructions on fighting Indians while on the march. Shortly, the Indians were found entrenched on steep rocky slopes, and

²⁷Department of Texas, Annual Report of General Augur, Commander, 1872; Post Returns, Fort Clark, April, 1872; Hostile Indians, Military Division of the Missouri, 1882; San Antonio Daily Express, June 3, 1872.

the troopers began the ascent but were greeted with a withering volley that killed or wounded nine horses. Captain Cooney's horse was shot, pinning Cooney underneath; then the horse arose and started dragging him. Only quick action by trumpeter William Nelson and Private Issac Harrison saved their commander's life.²⁸ Cooney withdrew, had the men dismount, and then advanced to fight on foot. Once more the attempt was made to climb the rugged slopes, and once more the Indians leveled a heavy fire. Lieutenant Vincent was shot through both legs and bled profusely but, wishing to set an example for his green troopers, he refused to leave the field. Darkness fell and still the stubborn Indians

²⁸Ibid.: Bliss, Reminiscences of Zenas R. Bliss, Major General United States Army in five Volumes, University of Texas Archives, copied from original in possession of Mrs. Alice B. Massey, Boerne, Texas, Part 5 covering the period from 1866 to 1876 gives a good account of the Howard's Well skirmish. It was written at Fort Bayard, New Mexico, June 1, 1894; Francis B. Heitman, Historical Register. Michael Cooney was one of the ablest company commanders in the Ninth. A native of Ireland and a professional soldier, he enlisted in the regular army in 1856 and was a private in the Sixth Cavalry at the outbreak of the Civil War. He rose to a captaincy in the Fifth Cavalry by the end of the war and was commissioned a First Lieutenant in the Ninth Cavalry in July, 1866. He remained with the regiment until December of 1888 when he transferred to the Fourth Cavalry with the rank of Major, 325.

held their positions. On the following morning, April 21, 1872, the Black troops advanced again to attack the Indians, but during the night the Indians had withdrawn from their positions, and the troops were forced to march away without having punished the perpetrators of the crime. With water exhausted and ammunition running low, Cooney was forced to order a retreat to Howard's Well, with four troopers carrying a dying Vincent in a blanket. In respect to the valor of the troops, however, the commanding officer made the following comment:

The men engaged did their duty, considering that, at the time the pursuit was ordered, all were fatigued and expecting to camp and get a drink of good water. All wants were forgotten and all were animated with a spirit to punish the perpetrators of the horrid deeds that a passing glance explained.²⁹

In camp was Mrs. Marcella Sera, captured during the attack on the train, who had made her escape during Cooney's fight. More than one hundred Kiowas and Comanches had raided the train. The Indians were led by the implacable leaders White Horse and Big Bow. They had attacked the train with

²⁹Ibid.; Colonel M. L. Crimmins, Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Fort McKavett, Texas, Volume 38, 1934-35, p. 38.

devastating force and overwhelmed the defenders. Eight men had been tied to wagon wheels and burned to death. Mrs. Sera, the lone captive, had been forced to watch while her husband, small child, and mother suffered agonizing deaths. The woman told Merritt that four Indians had been killed in the attack and that Cooney had killed six more. She believed, mistakenly as it turned out, that the war party had come from Mexico.³⁰

On the morning of April 22, 1872, Merritt buried eleven bodies and believed others had been burned to ashes. This grim task accomplished, he had little other choice than to move on to Fort Clark, as rations were barely sufficient to see the command into the post, ammunition was nearly exhausted, and he was encumbered by a large quantity of baggage.³¹

The report of the Secretary of War showing the organization of the Regular Army for 1872 revealed that the Black

³⁰Ibid.; Rupert Norval Richardson, The Comanche Barrier to South Plains Settlement, 348 (quoted in the footnote, 348). According to Left Hand, a leading Arapaho, who was well acquainted with Kiowas affairs, Big Bow led this raid and the Kiowas took from the wagon train a large quantity of arms and ammunition. It was said that the son of Lone Wolf was wounded in the engagement.

³¹Ibid.

Ninth Cavalry had only 632 men compared to the white Eighth Cavalry of 963 men. A review of the companies once all were in position looked like this: Companies H and K were under the command of Major Z. R. Bliss, Twenty Fifth Infantry; Bliss had Company H at Fort Stockton with him and Company K was at Fort Bliss; Company I was at Fort Davis commanded by Colonel G. L. Andrews, Twenty Fifth Infantry. Companies F and M were at Fort McKavett under Colonel A. Doubleday, Twenty Fourth Infantry; Companies A, D, E, and G were at Fort Clark with Merritt; Company C at Fort Duncan, Major Merrian, Twenty Fourth Infantry; Company L was at Fort McIntosh, Captain C. N. W. Cunningham commanding; and Company B at Ringgold Barracks, Major T. M. Anderson, Tenth Infantry in command.³²

Regardless of the size and condition of the Black Ninth Cavalry Regiment, the rebuff at Howard's Well had set the

³²Merritt to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, April 29, 1872, Selected Documents, Letters Received, 1872-76; Ibid.; Affidavit of Marcella Sera to Lieutenant Patrick Cusack, June 20, 1872. Ibid.; Heitman, Historical Register, Lieutenant Vincent, a Missourian, rose through the ranks to a captaincy in the Missouri State Cavalry during the Civil War. He was appointed Second Lieutenant in the Ninth in June, 1867, and promoted to First Lieutenant in the Ninth in July, 1869, p. 967; Report of Secretary of War, October 20, 1872.

tone for the Rio Grande area. Raids and depredations increased, and no regiment ever tried harder, but interceptions were rare. On May 20, 1872, Lieutenant G. Valois with a detachment of the Ninth Cavalry and some Indian scouts chased some hostile Indians near La Pendencia, Texas, but were unable to intercept.³³ Merritt was convinced that both bandits and Indians were aided by Mexican citizens. The pattern seldom varied. Raiders struck, and the troopers pursued, with the trail taking the most direct route to the Rio Grande. Here pursuit had to stop. According to Merritt, the Mexicans never seemed to bother the thieves.³⁴

On occasion there was a bit of good fortune. In August, 1872, Captain Dodge and a detachment of Company D were returning to Fort Stockton after escorting a herd of cattle to the Seven Rivers country of New Mexico. Near the post they discovered a fresh trail and after a short pursuit closed quickly upon an Indian camp. The warriors took to their hills, leaving all their property behind. With great

³³Colonel M. L. Crimmins, Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Fort McKavett, Volume 38, 1934-35, p. 38.

³⁴Merritt to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, November 29, 1872, Selected Documents, Letters Received, 1872-1876, Adjutant General's Office.

gusto the troopers destroyed twenty tipis and all their contents with the exception of one item for each man. This was an Indian bonnet which each man wore gaily as he trotted into Fort Stockton.³⁵

The experience of Company A under the able and aggressive leadership of Captain Cooney was typical:

Fort Clark, Texas, November 28, 1872

To: Post Adjutant

Sir:

I have the honor to submit the following report of a scout made by Troop "A: Ninth Cavalry under my command and in compliance with letter of instructions from Post Headquarters dated November 17, 1872.

I marched from Fort Clark, Texas, at 3 o'clock p.m. November 17 with my command consisting of First Lieutenant Patrick Cusack and thirty enlisted men of Company A, Ninth Cavalry, also a guide, with rations for seven days which were made to last ten days. I marched that night to Cope Ranch on West Fork of Nueces River to Kickapoo Springs with the intentions of crossing the country between the West Fork of the Nueces and Devils Rivers. I found the country almost impracticable for travel being alternate mountain and valley with neither high land or valley favorable to travel. No permanent water between the two rivers. Some water was found in niches from recent rains. On the 21st we came in sight of Devils River but found great difficulty in getting down to it. However, after several hours search a place of descent was found and an Indian camp which appeared to have been abandoned about twenty four or thirty hours previous

³⁵San Antonio Weekly Express, August 22, 1868; Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry, August, 1872.

was found. I crossed over the west bank and marched down the river in search of trail or their camp. After marching some distance a party of four Indians was seen on the east side of the river and coming toward the camp referred to as abandoned. They were driving eight animals. I detached Lieutenant Cusack with a party toward them but they left the animals and rode off at speed. It was now dark and after search an ascend to the left bank could not be found. I drew in the detachment and encamped intending to cross as early as possible next morning. On the morning of the 22nd I sent Lieutenant Cusack across as early as possible but the eight animals were in the same place and no trace of the Indians could be found. We recrossed again to the west bank after resting the animals. The trail being found, meantime, it was taken at as fast pace as possible under the circumstances and followed to the El Paso road about two miles south of California Springs where it crossed. I found Lieutenant Valois with his command on the trail at this point he having just arrived after marching out of Clark. We arranged that he should follow the trail immediately and I would encamp and follow in the morning. Lieutenant Valois followed the trail as far as possible that night and was on it again at daylight. I was also on the march at daylight and pursued his trail. Lieutenant Valois followed the trail to the Rio Grande River and could see signs of the Indians having crossed the day previous and encamped on the Mexican side that night. I met Lieutenant Valois about ten miles this side of the Rio Grande and after him reporting these facts to me I gave up the pursuit and turned homeward. I arrived at Fort Clark on the 27th of November after a march of about 250 miles in eleven days over country almost impracticable between this post and El Paso road. My animals suffered greatly from the roughness of the country and want of grass. The men also suffered and were forced to lead and pull the horses over at least half the distance travelled but they did not complain

and would feel compensated for all if they could only get a brush with the Indians.

Very Respectfully,
Your Obedient Servant
Michael Cooney³⁶
Captain, Ninth Cavalry

Sergeant Bruce of the Black Ninth Cavalry with a scouting party was also unable to brush the Indians. They were willing to settle for some Mexican cattle thieves. On December 6, 1872, Bruce's party attacked a band of Mexican thieves and captured fifty-nine stolen cattle.³⁷ The Ninth Cavalry again proved its willingness to do its part. But ill feeling and lack of cooperation hurt law-abiding citizens on both sides of the river. In December, a band of American renegades attacked a small village on the Mexican side of the river. It was reported to Lieutenant Cusack of Fort Clark. Cusack and a strong detachment of the Ninth Cavalry marched out immediately to the west bank of the Rio Grande opposite the Mexican village and managed by signals to induce the Mexican Major to come down to the riverbank. Cusack

³⁶Cooney to the Post Adjutant, Fort Clark, Texas, December 2, 1872.

³⁷Colonel M. L. Crimmins, Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Fort McKavett, Texas, Volume 38, 1934-35, p. 38.

tried to obtain information about the raid by shouting across the river, but the Major's reply was so scoffing that Cusack felt himself accused of having inspired the attack.

Revolutionaries were an increasing headache to the Black Ninth Cavalry and kept patrols constantly on the lookout. Superior revolutionary forces had caused the commanding officer of government forces in Piedras Negras, Mexico, to abandon that place on March 1, 1872. The government forces fled to the American side of the Rio Grande and reported this force and arms to Fort Duncan, which was located directly across the river from Piedras Negras. The men were allowed to go free. Sometime during the latter part of 1872, an attempt was made to reorganize this force on the American side of the Rio Grande for the purpose of recrossing into Mexico. Captain C. D. Beyer with Company C, working out of Fort McIntoch, should have received a decoration from both the American and Mexican governments, for he seemed to have been an expert at consistently locating, arresting and disarming troublemakers. The revolutionaries afforded Company C its biggest arrest during the winter. In December, 1872, the company gathered up seven officers and thirty-seven privates in one arrest and learned that their commanding

officer was in Mexico with an equal number of men. Company C haunted the area for a week and had the pleasure of picking up a colonel and forty enlisted men.³⁸

The privates were released but the revolutionary officers were carried to Fort McIntosh, where they were held subject to civil authorities for breach of neutrality laws. The civil authorities refused to take any action; therefore, the officers were released on parole to appear whenever called for. A call never came.

General C. C. Augur probably spoke for every officer and man of the Black Ninth Cavalry Regiment when he noted in his annual report for 1872:

The labor and privations of troops in this Department are both severe. The cavalry particularly are sic constantly at work, and it is kind of work too that disheartens, as there is very little to show for it. Yet their zeal is untiring, and if they do not always achieve success they always deserve it. I have never seen troops more constantly employed.³⁹

³⁸Annual Report to the Secretary of War for the Year 1872, p. 58.

³⁹Carter, On the Border with Mackenzie, 416. Ringgold Barracks, headquarters for the Ninth for more than two years, was situated a short distance below Rio Grande City. Established in 1848, the post was named for Captain Samuel Ringgold, Third United States Artillery, who was killed at

With conditions along the Rio Grande indicating no change, "constantly employed" was a sufficient description of the Black Ninth Cavalry. But in an effort to improve conditions, General C. C. Augur decided to have returning commander Colonel Hatch with Companies B, C, G, H, and L to set up headquarters as far south as possible.

Colonel Hatch, obeying orders, in March, 1873, established headquarters at Ringgold Barracks. The five companies were quartered at Ringgold with detachments thrown out for miles along the Rio Grande river guarding crossings. Out of necessity the other seven companies of the regiment were scattered at Fort Concho, Fort Stockton, Fort Davis, and Fort McKavett to keep the El Paso road open and to protect the citizens in case the war parties started again.

The regiments on the northwestern frontier of Texas let a good situation become so bad that Secretary of War William Worth Belknap and General Philip Sheridan, Commander of the Department of Texas, came to Fort Clark in April, 1873, for

the Battle of Palo Alto during the Mexican War. It was evacuated by federal troops in March, 1861, and reoccupied in June, 1865. The name was changed to Fort Ringgold in December, 1878.

a conference with the District Commander, C. C. Augur, Lieutenant Colonel Merritt, second in command of the Ninth Cavalry since the return of Colonel Edward Hatch in March, and Colonel Mackenzie, Commander of the Fourth Cavalry, who had just arrived at Fort Clark from Fort Richardson. There is strong evidence that Mackenzie was given carte blanche to act as he saw fit in the intolerable border situation, whereas Merritt was restricted from acting as he saw fit.⁴⁰

With the door opened by his superiors and the expeditions by the Black Ninth Cavalry in 1871, Colonel Mackenzie, working on a tip received on May 16, 1873, that some Indians were in the area, set out from Fort Clark with half of the Fourth Cavalry Regiment, a detachment of the Black Twenty Fourth Infantry, and some Black Seminole scouts, to look for the Indians. On May 17, 1873, with more than a half regiment of men, Mackenzie decided to cross the Rio Grande for a raid into the Chihuahuan area, an area explored and mapped by the Black Ninth Cavalry some two years earlier. Some historians indicate that the raid brought a new era along the Mexican border. It is hard to believe that one

⁴⁰Carter, On the Border with Mackenzie, 417-424.

raid, nineteen dead Indians, capture of the Lipan Chief, forty women and children and about sixty-five horses brought about a new era.⁴¹

If the Mackenzie raid had any real significance in controlling the Indians, the men of the Black Ninth Cavalry failed to feel or perceive it. There were many times more Indians, bandits, and white renegades infesting the border. There were more than enough to keep the troopers in the saddle from morning until night.

Since the Ninth was not permitted to cross the Rio Grande, patrols moved from ranch to ranch, from river crossing to river crossing in constant motion. Others were stationed at or near the small border towns where the "deputy collectors could not stay a day without troops at those places."⁴² When raiders were caught, there was no guarantee of punishment, for local juries showed a decided preference for a verdict of "not guilty."

⁴¹Ibid., 431-439; Frost Woodhull, "The Seminole Indian Scouts on the Border," Frontier-Times, Volume 15, p. 3, December, 1937, pp. 118-27; Secretary of War Report, 1873, p. 41.

⁴²Ibid.

With problems like these Colonel Hatch could very easily have used the men under Lieutenant Colonel Merritt's command at Fort Concho. But Merritt, with Company A, Company D, Company E, Company F, and Company K of the Black Ninth Cavalry, reported that every man able to ride a horse was in the field trying to help bring an end to the critical state of affairs in the north. Merritt's problems were like Hatch's, complicated by stepped-up activity on the part of white cattle rustlers who were quick to take advantage of the opportunity afforded them when the activities of the Indians kept every available Black cavalryman on the go. Lieutenant Cusack, with a detachment of Company A, and a citizens' posse from Brownwood broke up one gang of thieves, and detachments under Sergeants Allsup and Morgan had received some stolen stock, but more men were needed to curb the rustlers effectively.⁴³

In May, 1874, angry Lone Wolf with a large party of warriors eluded the Fourth Cavalry's river patrols and set

⁴³Merritt to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, December 3, 1873, Selected Letters Received, organizational Returns; Lieutenant Cusack to the Post Adjutant, Fort Concho, Texas, February, 28, 1874, Selected Documents, Letters Received, 1872-1876, Adjutant General's Office, Ibid.

out to recover the body of Tauankia, slain in the fight with Lieutenant C. L. Hudson the previous winter. The Indians found the body and were on the way home when they were spotted by a detachment of Fourth Cavalry, under Major H. C. Bankhead, and pursued in the direction of Fort Concho. At Fort Concho the Indians obtained fresh horses by stealing twenty-three from the herd of Company D, Black Ninth Cavalry, who was stationed there. These horses aided Lone Wolf in his escape back to the reservation in Oklahoma, but pursuit by detachments of the Black Ninth Cavalry under Lieutenants Cusack and Hughes, and Major Bankhead of the Fourth had Lone Wolf going so fast that he was forced to abandon the body of his son.⁴⁴

Soon after the May encounter with Lone Wolf, Generals Philip Sheridan, John Pope, Commander of the Department of the Missouri, and General C. C. Augur completed their plans for a campaign in August. Lines separating the Departments of Texas and Missouri were to be disregarded and the reservations invaded if necessary. Five strong columns were to converge on the Indians from the north, south, east, and

⁴⁴Army and Navy Journal, Volume XI, June 20, 1874, p. 708.

west in a continuing operation, until a devastating defeat had been inflicted. One column, under Colonel Nelson A. Miles, would march south from Fort Dodge toward the headwaters of Red River, while another, commanded by Major William R. Price, would move eastward from Fort Bascom, New Mexico, and effect a junction with Miles. A third command under Colonel Mackenzie would cross the Staked Plains northwest of Fort Concho and establish contact with Miles. The Black Ninth Cavalry was to form the backbone of the remaining two columns. One column was concentrated at Fort Sill under Colonel John W. Davidson, with Companies B, C, H, K, L, and M of the Tenth Cavalry, with the others organized at Fort Griffin by Colonel George Buell. Buell and Davidson were to operate between Miles and Mackenzie and drive the hostile Indians westward into their paths.⁴⁵

The five commands were scheduled to take to the field in August, but as usual the Black men were the last supplied, but the first to arrive. The delay in receiving supplies detained Buell and Davidson, and it was not until early September that they were ready to take to the field.

⁴⁵Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the Year 1874, p. 40; Post Reutrns, Fort Griffin, August-September, 1874.

Buell left Fort Griffin on September 1 and marched for Fort Sill, where he arrived a week later. At Fort Sill he completed the organization of his command and loaded supplies on thirty wagons, driven by six-mule teams. He moved out of Fort Sill twenty-three days after arrival and on September 29, 1874, established a supply camp on the North Fork of the Red River a few miles above the mouth of Otter Creek. At the supply camp final plans were made, and the command divided into two battalions. Major Morrow commanded the first, consisting of Company A, Company E, Company F, and Company K, Black Ninth Cavalry, while Companies A and E, Black Tenth Cavalry, formed the second under Captain Nolan of the Tenth. Each battalion wagon train was guarded by two companies of the Eleventh Infantry. And each battalion had a few Tonkawa scouts.⁴⁶

Early on October 3, 1874, the columns got under way with twenty-five days rations. Each man carried forty rounds of carbine and twenty rounds of pistol ammunition. The only equipment allowed consisted of an overcoat, a poncho, a shelter tent, and one change of socks and underwear. Within

⁴⁶Buell to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, November 8, 1874.

a short distance of the camp fresh pony tracks were found and shortly thereafter a small party of warriors was sighted and pursued. The Indians made their escape but lost two horses in the process.⁴⁷

Nothing else happened until late on October 8, 1874, when one of the Tonkawa scouts came in to report that a Comanche scout was some twenty miles to the south. Buell moved on in that direction with great speed, and before the day was over, his advance overtook and killed a Kiowa warrior who was spying on the column. The trails led toward the Salt Fork of the Red River, and on the afternoon of the ninth, a small party of warriors was sighted well to the front. Captain Ambrose Hooker with Company E of the Ninth, charged them at a gallop and killed one warrior before the others vanished in the banks along the Salt Fork. When the rest of the command came up, a deserted Indian camp of fifteen lodges was found and destroyed.⁴⁸

Buell moved on as signs indicated that a large body of Indians was within catching distance. It was on October 11,

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

1874, that the pursuit was taken up. The Black troops pushed relentlessly through the rough breaks and canyons of the Salt Fork, and then northwest to the edge of the Staked Plains, where a deserted camp of seventy-five lodges was destroyed. The trail now led across the Plains toward the headwaters of McClellan Creek and grew rapidly in size as small parties joined from both flanks. The track was also easy to follow, for it had been littered with abandoned camp equipment and worn out ponies as the Indians fled the oncoming of the Black Cavalry.⁴⁹

By the next day, October 12, Buell had expected to come toe to toe with the Indians. This hope was shattered when that afternoon brought him to a huge but abandoned camp of four hundred and seventy five lodges which he burned. The Indians were no doubt headed for the Canadian River, but the command was nearly out of supplies and the horses were nearing exhaustion. Buell, therefore, stopped the chase and conferred with Albert P. Morrow and Nicholas Nolan. Neither Morrow nor Nolan was willing to give up the chase without action. Their rugged Black troops were full of spirit and

⁴⁹Ibid.

eager to push on. The decision was made to continue the pursuit while couriers were sent to Fort Sill to request that a train with forty days' rations be sent out at once to catch the party.⁵⁰

Buell pressed on with horses so weak the men were forced to walk at least half the time and reached the Canadian River on October 16, 1874. While en route Buell learned from a Private Williams of Company E, Tenth Cavalry, that several hundred Indians had been driven into the arms of Miles as a result of their effort. At the Canadian the Indians had scattered in all directions. Buell sent the Tonkawa scouts to locate the main body and ordered Major Morrow to be ready with one hundred picked men to take up the chase if the hostiles were found. But the maze of trails defied the best effort of the Tonkawas, and indications were that many of

⁵⁰Ibid.; Major Albert Payson Morrow rose through the ranks from a private to a lieutenant colonel during the Civil War. He was in the Pennsylvania Sixth Cavalry, where he volunteered on March 13, 1865, and was made Brevet Colonel for conspicuous gallantry in action. He was mustered out August 7, 1865, and was made Captain of the Seventh Cavalry. On July 28, 1866, he was made Major of the Black Ninth. Captain Nicholas Nolan from Ireland, rose through the ranks from private in 1852 to a first lieutenant by the end of the Civil War. On July 28, 1866, he was made Captain of the Tenth Cavalry.

the Indians had curled around the column's left flank and fled back southward. Buell at this point was three hundred miles from his base and in desperate need of feed and rations. Buell decided to look for Miles. Miles' camp was not reached until October 24, 1874.⁵¹

Buell, with his needs partially satisfied, wasted no time. He put out his scouts and marched south to the Sweetwater, where he learned that a large body of Indians had surrendered to Colonel John W. Davidson on Elk Creek about forty miles to the front as a result of his effort.⁵²

Buell saddled up at once and marched to Elk Creek, where a large trail was struck leading east. Major Morrow, with Company A, Company D, and Company E of the Black Ninth Cavalry, was detached to follow the trail and make certain it was made by the band that had surrendered to Davidson. The rest of the column continued on south until a supply train was met on November 4, 1874. The men took a much needed rest and then reorganized. On November 16, Buell

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

took to the field again with eighty picked Black soldiers while the rest were sent to Fort Sill.⁵³

Buell's intention was to scout the headwaters of the Red River, but as soon as the journey was started he encountered "as severe weather as I have ever experienced" and was forced to hold up on the banks of the Salt Fork. The storm subsided somewhat on November 22, 1874, and Buell sent a detachment under Lieutenant Gustavus Valois to scout along the Red River, while the main column continued along the Salt Fork. The next day a deserted village of twenty-two lodges was found, along with a quantity of horse meat. This meant that the harried Indians had been reduced to killing and eating their ponies. After they had destroyed the village, pursuit was undertaken in spite of a heavy snowstorm which soon turned to driving rain and stinging sleet.⁵⁴

The Black column pushed on, turned northward, and headed for Miles' supply camp. But Buell and the Black Cavalrymen were reaching the limits of their endurance, and as the weather grew steadily worse, they soon found themselves

⁵⁴Buell to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, February 24, 1875, Selected Letters Received; Army and Navy Journal, Volume XII, December 26, 1874, p. 308.

fighting to advance in the teeth of a howling blizzard. It was even too much for the Black men in blue. The Black troopers were not clothed for this kind of weather, many of them were almost bootless, and they were forced to turn back to the supply train which was found only after a considerable search on December 3, 1874. Shortly thereafter Valois came in with his men badly frostbitten and the animals completely used up. He had gone well up the main Red River when the storm struck and turned him and his men back.⁵⁵

Buell had demanded and gotten a superhuman effort from his Black men in blue, and he could ask for no more. He broke up the expedition and returned to Fort Griffin. Buell's official report, ever sparse with praise, gave the Black troopers a well earned accolade, "I cannot give them too much credit for manly endurance without complaint."⁵⁶

The Black Ninth Cavalry Regiment's expedition was a devastating blow to the Indians. They killed only two warriors, but they destroyed nearly six hundred lodges, tons of supplies and camp equipment. The campaign had

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

broken down many Indian ponies and the will to resist of hundreds of Kiowas, Comanches, and Cheyennes. The campaign had run from five hundred to a thousand Indians into the arms of Mackenzie, Miles, and Davidson. Yet, although all the information about these men was available, prejudice caused the Ninth to receive little notice. This treatment may have seemed strange to their leader, Buell, but it was an old story to the cheerful and willing Black men of the Ninth Cavalry Regiment.

The Ninth's effectiveness was hampered greatly by prejudice and by harsh treatment from local officials along the Rio Grande who seemed to dislike anyone in a blue uniform, particularly if Blacks wore that uniform. Among minor nuisances at Fort Ringgold in Starr County there were professional gamblers. Detachments of the Black Ninth were plagued every payday by these gamblers trying to cheat the men out of their money. Hatch was determined to stop the practice, and in December, 1874, ordered post guards to bring the gamblers to his office where he gave them a tongue-lashing and ordered them out of Fort Ringgold. One of the men was identified as James Johnson, who reported the incident to the Starr County Judge. Later for this

tongue-lashing Hatch was indicted by the prejudiced Starr County Grand Jury for false imprisonment. He was forced to retain a lawyer to quash the indictment. The attorney general's office refused to pay the legal fees for the indictment. Hatch, therefore, found himself faced with a suit by his former legal counsel for five hundred dollars.⁵⁷

A far more serious case of prejudice was an affair the following month. On the evening of January 26, 1875, Hatch sent out from Fort Ringgold an all-Black patrol party consisting of Sergeant Edward Troutman and four privates of Company G. The patrol encamped near the Solis ranch house some sixteen miles from Fort Ringgold. As the troopers prepared their supper, bullets whistled near their heads. Believing the shots had come from a nearby ranch house, Troutman approached and questioned the men. Troutman returned to the patrol after receiving evasive answers from the men. He noticed while talking that the men were all heavily armed. Troutman and his fellow troopers discussed the situation and moved on. The patrol had traveled only a short distance when

⁵⁷The Adjutant General to the Secretary of War, January 7, 1875, Selected Documents, Letters Received, 1872-1876, Adjutant General's Office.

they were fired upon from ambush. In the vicious short-range fight Privates Jerry Owsley and Moses Turner were killed, Privates Charley Blackstone and John Fredericks managed to escape, and Troutman fought his way out of the ambush and made his way back to Fort Ringgold. Troutman believed his patrol had killed at least one man and wounded several others.

The next morning, an angry Hatch, with sixty troopers from Company B and Company G and Deputy Sheriff T. Davis, went to the scene of the attack and found the bodies of Owsley and Turner. In a shack nearby, the uniforms and other equipment of the slain men were found. The patrol, carrying the equipment with them, then moved on to the ranch house and, Hatch reported, "arrested every suspicious character I could find." Two of the men arrested were suffering from bullet wounds. A grand jury at Rio Grande City indicted nine Mexicans for the murders, but only one was tried and quickly acquitted. The remaining eight were permitted to go free.⁵⁸

⁵⁸Hatch to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, January 26, 1875; Major James Wade to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Texas, May 12, 1875.

The prejudice toward the Black troopers did not end here, however, for Sergeant Troutman, Private Blackstone and Private Fredericks were taken into Rio Grande City to testify for the prosecution. There they found themselves under arrest and indictment for murdering one of their attackers. Shortly thereafter Hatch and Lieutenant J. H. French were also indicted for burglary. They had illegally entered the shack from which they had taken the effects of the murdered Private Owsley and Private Turner. Starr County, Texas, was typical; it took excellent care of its own whites.

Hatch, French, and the three troopers were eventually cleared of the charges against them, but were forced to employ legal counsel and obtain a change of venue to do so. According to their attorney, Stephen Powers, malice in the area toward Hatch and his men was very great and their indictments stemmed from "gratification of purely local prejudice."⁵⁹ If the Secretary of War, William W. Belknap,

⁵⁹Attorney Stephen Powers to Major J. G. Boyle, United States District Attorney, November 27, 1875. A tragic aftermath of this affair occurred at Fort Stockton on April 26, 1876. Private Charley Blackstone shot and killed Private John Fredericks, apparently in a quarrel over attorney's fees borrowed to secure their release from the murder indictments of the year before. Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry, May, 1876.

and General Philip Sheridan drew a river line for the Black Regiment, it was also true that the people of the border drew a color line.

Under such conditions matters could only grow worse, and a report of Captain Francis Moore of Company L was typical of many:

Edinburg, Texas, March 1, 1875

To: The Post Adjutant

Ringgold Barracks

Sir:

On the evening of the 27th instant about 7 p.m. the Sheriff of this county applied to me for a detachment of men to proceed to the ranch of Fulton, about nine miles below here, a Mexican having just come in and reported that he had seen men firing and running in and around his house and store. I immediately saddled up and with 14 men accompanied the Sheriff, arriving at Fulton about 8:45 we found a group of frightened Mexicans, who reported that six men (Mexicans) had attacked the store about dark killing Mr. Fulton and his assistant, a Mexican. The body of the clerk was lying just at the door shot through the head, and Fulton's body about 200 yards distant, also shot through the head. He had evidently run from the store when he had had a struggle with the robbers from one of which he had seized a pistol and wounded one. They robbed his person and with their wounded comrade crossed the river near the ranch. It is not known how much money was taken, a small sum was found in the drawers of a counter, which was probably forgotten in their haste.

It is the general impression that one or more of Fulton's employees were accessories, as there were 7 or 8 men in and around the premises at the time of the attack who tell very contradictory stories, although all of them deny any knowledge of the perpetrators.

I placed a detachment of one noncommissioned officer and six privates at the disposition of the Sheriff to assist in taking care of the murdered man's goods. I also offered him as many men as he might require to assist him in making arrests.

Very Respectfully,
Your Obedient Servant
Francis Moore
Captain, Ninth Cavalry⁶⁰

A month after Captain Moore's investigation, on April 2, 1875, Mexican bandits crossed the Rio Grande in great force, surrounded and began looting the border town of Roma, Texas. This incident required the services of Captain Beyer and his entire Company C to drive the Mexican bandits off and free the town. Before the end of April another band struck Carrizo, Texas, murdered the postmaster, D. D. Lovell, robbed his store of seven thousand dollars, and plundered the office of the deputy collector. As usual a detachment of the Black Ninth went in pursuit and was closing fast with the bandits when it was forced to stop on the north side of the Rio Grande.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Moore to the Post Adjutant, Ringgold Barracks, Texas March 2, 1875, Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry.

⁶¹ J. L. Hayes, Customs Collector to the Secretary of Treasury, May 13, 1875; Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry, April, 1875.

Two months after the Carrizo affair, the Ninth gained some measure of revenge and satisfaction, even if indirectly. A body of Mexican bandits carried out a successful cattle raid and was driving a large herd to the river when overtaken by Captain L. H. McNelly and a company of Texas Rangers on Palo Alto prairie near Brownsville. McNelly and his men killed twelve of the raiders and recovered more than two hundred head of cattle. A strong relief force of bandits crossed the Rio Grande to attack McNelly but found itself facing two companies of grim Black troopers and retired quietly to the Mexican side of the river.⁶²

At this point, General Augur was replaced by General E. O. C. Ord, the latter under instructions not to disperse his troops in small detachments, but to keep them at posts in at least company strength. General William T. Sherman believed mistakenly that Ord should call upon sheriffs and local citizens to form posses and send word immediately to military posts as quickly as they discovered that raiders

⁶²Statement of J. P. O'Shaughnessy, Organizational Returns, Letters Received, Affairs on the Rio Grande and Texas Frontier, 1875-1881, File No. 1653.

were in the area. Sherman had a lot to learn about cooperation from citizens along the Rio Grande.⁶³

Governor Richard Coke had a far more realistic view of how to cope with the situation. He pleaded with President Grant to permit Black troops to cross the Rio Grande into Mexico in pursuit of raiders and punish them wherever caught. Ord agreed with Coke, but received unequivocal instructions that no Black troops were to cross the river without express permission from Washington.⁶⁴

Meanwhile, disgusted with lack of local cooperation on the lower Rio Grande, Secretary of War William Belknap telegraphed Governor Coke that if civil authorities did not stop discriminating against Black federal troops, he would remove all forces "from that locality." And, to lend weight to the threat, Hatch was ordered to transfer his headquarters to Fort Clark and "draw in" outlying companies of Black

⁶³Sherman to Ord, May 1, 1875; Ord to the Assistant Adjutant General, Military Division of the Missouri, Organizational Returns, September 10, 1875.

⁶⁴Coke to Grant, May 29, 1875; Ord to the Assistant Adjutant General, Military Division of the Missouri, Ibid., November 5, 1875.

troops from Fort Ringgold.⁶⁵ But discrimination and prejudice continued, and these moves only proved to be preliminary to the transfer of the Black Ninth Cavalry Regiment from Texas. Sheridan wrote his superiors that the time had come to give officers and men of the Black regiment some relief. For three years they garrisoned the worst posts on the frontier and carried out their duties under the most trying conditions. Finally Hatch received orders in September, 1875, transferring the Black Regiment to the District of New Mexico. The white Eighth Cavalry took the Black Ninth's place along the Rio Grande, and soon had the privilege denied the men of the Black Ninth -- permission to cross the river in pursuit of troublemakers.⁶⁶

From 1872 to 1875, the men of the Black Ninth Cavalry dealt mostly with the outlaws, revolutionaries, and the Indians of south Texas. The regiment's knowledge and experience of earlier campaigns to the north would have made the southern campaign relatively easy, had it not been for

⁶⁵Belknap to Coke, May 18, 1875; Sheridan to Townsend, Organizational Returns, Letters Received, Affairs on the Rio Grande and Texas Frontier, May 22, 1875.

⁶⁶Sheridan to Belknap, June 5, 1875; Organizational Returns, Ninth Cavalry, September, 1875.

the prejudice that the men encountered. The regiment used the experience that it had acquired in its northern campaign to bring in outlaws and revolutionaries by the dozens. The regiment also used its earlier experience to curtail the Indians' activities into the United States. The Black regiment attempted to use diplomatic channels to get into Mexico to bring an end to the problems that Americans were having but their efforts failed. Therefore, their southern campaign resulted in the capture and the killing of very few Indians but the Ninth Cavalry destroyed many hundreds of lodges, tons of supplies and camp equipment. They also broke down many of the Indian ponies, making the job of the Eighth Cavalry Regiment a relatively easy one.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It is right and proper that the memory of those who performed the feats that have so enriched our past should be cherished. Therefore, it was the purpose of this study to ascertain the significance of the Black Ninth Regiment of United States Cavalry in the development of west Texas during the nadir years of reconstruction.

At the close of the Civil War, nearly 200,000 Black men had served in the Union Army with distinction; however, their continued service was in doubt by the fact that most whites did not trust their record, and Congress had not provided for the use of Blacks in the United States Army. The Black man's future in the Army of the nation that he had fought to preserve remained ambiguous at the close of the war. This uncertainty was corrected, however, by the United States Congress' passage of an act to increase and fix the military peace establishment of the United States in July, 1866. This act provided for, among other things, a sizeable regular army, including cavalry that was needed

to restore civil order in some states and mend the damage that was occurring on the neglected frontier. Texas was one of the states that had serious civil and frontier problems.

We cannot express our gratitude, directly to the members of the Black Ninth Cavalry for their achievements during reconstruction, but we can preserve evidence of their struggles and accomplishments for future generations. The Black Ninth Cavalry played a major role in bringing chaotic conditions under control in Texas during the nadir years, from 1865 to 1875. Their presence in Texas was instrumental in winning Texas' loyalty to the union again. It was their effort that brought a vital pause to the killings between Blacks and whites. Their activities during the nadir years of Texas proved beyond a doubt that they could successfully re-establish the El Paso mail line and get mail into San Antonio's post office with more regularity than any other line. The Blacks had courage and durability in the saddle. The counter-attacks made by the Ninth Cavalry against the savage Indians during their early years on the frontier resulted in the killing of very few Indians. But this proved that as long as the Indians were not defeated and made to return their stolen commodities,

the people of Texas were unsafe. Yet the federal government did not deem it necessary to give the Black Ninth Cavalry a free hand in dealing with the Indians. The Indian problem was allowed to mushroom from 1868 to 1870, primarily because of the lack of government support. The unwillingness to cooperate on the part of both civilians and other military units in the area was of underlying significance, and so were the deficiencies of some of the Ninth Cavalry's own commanding officers. The white Fourth Cavalry's failure to help in curtailing the Indians even around their headquarters, Fort Concho, caused the Black Ninth Cavalry to set up a rendezvous there to protect the civilians and military units.

Once the Black Ninth Cavalry was well established in Texas, the safety of the people on the frontier was achieved in some degree. But Indian raids continued from the northwest and later from the south. It was the Black Ninth's hard work, nevertheless, that headed off or curtailed Indian attacks.

This Black unit eventually became so efficient that settlers all along the frontier called upon them whenever there was a fear of Indians, although as soon as the Indian problem was ended so was the white man's tolerance of Blacks.

The result was civil clashes. Even knowing how whites felt, members of the Black Ninth Cavalry continued to work in an effort to make Texas safe from savage marauders. It was the Ninth Cavalry's bitter conflicts with the Comanches and Kiowas in the latter part of 1869 that ended the major campaigns in the northwest and brought a turning point in settling the frontier Indian problems of Texas. The Black Ninth Cavalry Regiment's reputation was such that General C. C. Augur, the Commander of the District of Texas, informed the President that the regiment was primarily responsible for this success.

The Black cavalrymen marched up and down mountains and through plains and deserts that had never before been traveled by troops of any sort. In northwest Texas the Ninth Cavalry scored its greatest victories for peace and order on the frontier. On their marches they acquired more knowledge about the Texas frontier than any other military unit. Their knowledge enabled them to kill more Indians and destroy more lodges than any other unit in Texas.

The Black Ninth Cavalry Regiment was somewhat handicapped, however, in its southern campaign because it never received permission to cross the Rio Grande in pursuit of

outlaws and savages. Even so, this southern campaign brought a change toward law and order along the Rio Grande. The Black regiment greatly curtailed the activities of bandits, desperadoes, and revolutionaries that were driving law abiding citizens and state officials along the Rio Grande out of their minds. Law-breakers began to see the Black unit as their greatest threat. The Black troops would go to any extent to see that lawbreakers were returned for trial. The men of the regiment returned cattle and horses by the thousands that had been stolen. They put an end to the robbing of post office and customhouses in the area. They reduced the numbers of murders, so common in the small frontier towns, and probably could have put an end to them with the help of civil authorities. The problem here lay in the fact that as fast as the Black Ninth Cavalry could apprehend criminals, prosecutors and juries were turning them loose unpunished.

Seeing the Black Ninth Cavalry's success, one should consider the life they led on post and in the field. They soldiered in some of the most lonely and most isolated places to be found anywhere in the country. They served in areas that might have brought medals to white men. They

ate food that was inferior to that provided for white units. Many times there was no food at all. To add to this, the thermometer was well over a hundred degrees in the summer and well below freezing in the winter, along with the profusion of reptiles and insects, which made hunting for food uninteresting indeed.

Despite all of this, the men of the Ninth Cavalry hunted for criminals and savages while undergoing the most rigid discipline almost continually. The Black unit endured the hardships and discipline only to face another obstacle. For those men fortunate enough to get leave from duty, the major social activities were drinking and fighting. They found that they had to face hostilities in their own land due to the foolish prejudice resulting from the condition of slavery from which they had so recently emerged, and while the Blacks tried to pay no attention to the insults heaped upon them, they felt very keenly the gravity of the situation. It was public prejudice that kept the men from getting the recognition or even simple justice that was due them. This prejudice, therefore, made the men of the Black Ninth Cavalry Regiment sometime wish to remain on post, away from the humiliation sometimes suffered in

towns or settlements. Somehow, though, even with these pressures, the men were able to function as well as other soldiers of other units.

In the southern campaign, the men of the Black Ninth Cavalry dealt efficiently with outlaws, and revolutionaries. The regiment used its knowledge of dealing with hostile Indians as it had done on the northern campaign. The Indians in the south took advantage of the bad relationship between the United States and Mexico. The Black Ninth Cavalry Regiments' attempt to use diplomatic channels to get into Mexico failed. Therefore, their southern campaign resulted in the capture and killing of very few Indians but they destroyed many hundreds of lodges, tons of supplies and camp equipment, and they took many of the Indian ponies.

During the reconstruction era in Texas, the Black Ninth Cavalry Regiment emerged as one of the outstanding military units in the United States. They played an important role in bringing about reconstruction in Texas. Without this regiment's courage and durability, combined with its ability to cope with the problems at hand -- may it be lawbreakers or Indians -- it is doubtful that the state and its people could have made it through the reconstruction years as quickly as they did.

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