

THE 24TH INFANTRY REGIMENT AND THE RACIAL DEBATE IN THE U.S. ARMY

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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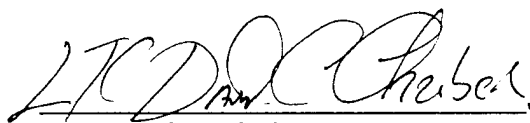
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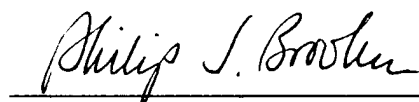
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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

THE 24TH INFANTRY REGIMENT AND THE RACIAL DEBATE IN THE U.S. ARMY
by Major Willard S. Squire III, U.S. Army, 97 pages.

The debate over the service of black Americans in the U.S. Army centered around three questions: Could they serve? Would they be allowed to serve? And, if allowed, in what capacity would they serve? This is similar to modern debates about the service of women and homosexuals in the military. The valuable service of black Americans during the Civil War coupled with Radical Republican policies ended this debate in 1866, with the formation of six regiments composed of all black soldiers led by white officers. In 1870, the Army Reducation Act consolidated those regiments into four, the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments and the 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments. Both the size of the Army and the exemplary conduct of the black regiments stilled the debate for nearly fifty years, as the four black regiments were used in many of the same missions and roles as their white counterparts. Then, on the eve of American participation on World War I, the racial debate reignited. After the war the four black regiments were all reduced in strength and never fully used again. This study follows the 24th Infantry from formation in 1866 through the early 1920's in order to determine what caused the reignition of the debate.

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The initial inspiration for this thesis came from Dr. Jerry Brown, when he suggested I walk around and see how many memorials, or how much information was available on the 24th Infantry Regiment. The answer, which was very little of either, surprised me and led me on a search for the story of these fine soldiers. For that reason, as well as the countless hours he and LTC Chuber spent editing my questionable prose, I thank him and the good Colonel.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL PAGE	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. CIVL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION	10
3. FORMATION AND THE FRONTIER	28
4. CARRYING THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN	57
5. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION	85
BIBLIOGRAPHY	92
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	97

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In modern times, the United States Army, as well as American society, continues to debate contentious social issues such as the role of women and the role of homosexuals in the service. Similarly, for much of this past century, Americans, both military and civilian, debated the role of blacks in the Armed Forces. This debate revolved around three questions. First, could blacks serve successfully in the military? Second, would blacks be allowed to serve in the military? And, third, if allowed, how would they serve, fully integrated or in limited roles?

The debate seemed to rage during times of crisis when the country faced crucial decisions about national defense, the organization of its armed forces, or its image on the world stage. In reality, the first two questions were answered during most of America's conflicts when blacks were allowed to serve (for a variety of reasons explained later): they served successfully. Sometimes they were integrated into units along with every other soldier; other times, they were set apart in segregated units, most often led by white officers. This changing role makes the third question, "how would they serve?," the real center of the debate.

In 1866, Congress attempted to end the debate with the permanent inclusion of blacks in six newly organized, but segregated units. The reorganization of the Army three years later that included four black regiments; the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments, lasted virtually unchanged until the Spanish-

American War.¹ In short, during the second half of the nineteenth century, there was little debate on the issue. The small and busy Army had little choice but to use the black regiments alongside the white regiments. When the Army expanded during the Spanish-American War, all four black Regular Army regiments, plus several black volunteer regiments, played vital roles in Cuba and the Philippines. At this point, blacks seemed to have found a respected place in the United States Army. But then in the span of less than five years, from about 1915 to 1920, the black regiments would go from full fledged fighting units to mere garrison support troops. Something happened to cause America to reexamine the composition of its Armed Forces. Suddenly the racial debate reignited.

The events that sparked the renewed debate at the time of the First World War, and the underlying causes of those events, are the focus of this study. Since the four black regiments were at the heart of this debate, it is appropriate to follow the history of one of them in order to explore the history of blacks in the U.S. Army. The 24th Infantry Regiment ultimately became the last of the segregated units and is a particularly appropriate symbol of the debate for a number of reasons. First, the soldiers in the 24th served in many of the major campaigns between 1866 and 1916. Most often, their service was not the action-filled duty of their more glamorous cavalry brothers. Instead these soldiers served, as most do, performing the ordinary and mundane tasks necessary to secure lives and property on the frontier. They served in a quiet, disciplined, and dedicated manner during the Indian Wars, helped storm the block house on San Juan Hill in Cuba, and fought well against the insurgents in the Philippines.²

Then, when the men of the 24th returned from a tour in the Philippines and were posted along the southern border in 1916, they found themselves embroiled in constant racial disputes with the citizens of Houston, Texas. This was the regiment's first return to Texas in over thirty years and the situation had changed dramatically. Life in Texas

was especially different for these black men in uniform who had been overseas for several years. What they encountered was disenfranchisement and legally sanctioned racial exclusion throughout the state. Their faithful service had not earned them the respect and privileges they expected. Consequently, after a series of minor and not-so-minor conflicts with local citizens, soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, 24th Infantry erupted. The result was nearly a full-scale rioting in Houston on the night of August 23, 1917. In the morning, several citizens and soldiers were dead or wounded, the 24th Infantry Regiment had lost its valued reputation and the simmering racial debate within the Army exploded. Unfortunately, the black soldiers would suffer from this debate for the next thirty years.³

Before moving on to the history of the 24th Infantry Regiment, we need to set the stage by looking briefly at the early history of blacks in the military. Well before the Civil War, blacks had helped defend their colonies, villages, and towns. By the time of the Civil War, blacks had established ample precedence their ability to fight when asked. Time after time, whether it was a Colonial village defending itself against hostile Indians, or the Free Black Militias in New Orleans, blacks had consistently proven their worth in battle. The historical trend, though, was only to allow blacks to fight when needed because of manpower shortages or severe crises, and then to revert back to an all-white force during times of peace. So, before the Civil War, the country knew that blacks could and would fight if asked, but the official policy was not to ask for them unless absolutely necessary.⁴

Lets start at the beginning. In Colonial America, every able bodied man was expected to help defend the small towns and villages when necessary. In fact, as early as 1652 blacks were required to join the militia and attend military training in places such as the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Even in southern Colonies where slavery became

entrenched, trusted slaves would be armed when necessary to defend their owner's plantation or the village against attacking Indians. Interestingly, as more slaves were brought into the colonies, the combined population of slaves and Indians greatly outnumbered the white colonists. In South Carolina, the white colonists traded with local Cherokees and Creeks and asked for Indian help in tracking down run-away slaves. This created the animosity between the black slaves and the Indians that allowed the colonists to arm their slaves during a crisis. When the fights finished, however, the slaves were quickly unarmed to avoid any possibility of slave revolts.⁵

Although the situation differed from colony to colony, throughout most of this time there was a distinct incentive for a black man to fight well for his master. For many that incentive was freedom, for others it was a substantial bounty in gold. For example, in 1703 the colonial legislature in South Carolina passed a law that freed any slave that killed or captured an enemy soldier during times of invasion. This law stayed on the books up until the early 1750's, when the growth of the slave population caused colonists to grow more leery of arming the slaves.⁶

Slave populations tended to be concentrated in the southern colonies where there was better farmland and larger plantations, so there were typically few blacks in the north. Consequently white colonists manned the militias, for the most part, and blacks, either free or slave, were excluded from service. Nevertheless, as confrontation with England grew imminent, militias were required to increase or at least to fill their ranks. White colonists would frequently send a black slave as a substitute. In some states there were too few whites to fill the new requirements. Free blacks were allowed to join, and some slaves were given their freedom in as a reward for enlisting. At the start of the American Revolution, most of the militias were all white, but they did include a few

black soldiers. More importantly, there was a precedent for arming slaves when necessary.⁷

Crispus Attucks, a free black living in Boston, was the first American to die in the Revolutionary War.⁸ Later, during the siege and eventual battle at Bunker's Hill, several black men, including Peter Salem and Salem Poor, participated in the fight with significant contributions. Despite the accomplishments of these black men, however, General George Washington and leaders in the Continental Congress decided not to enlist more blacks into the Continental Army during the early part of the war.⁹ Negroes already enlisted in various state militias would be allowed to stay, but there would be no new enlisting of black men. In fact, early in the war, Washington set this policy when he stated: "Neither Negroes, boys unable to bear Arms, nor old men unfit to endure the fatigues of the campaign are to be enlisted."¹⁰

This policy did not last long. In the first place, the Continental Army soon found itself facing severe manpower shortages and could not continue to limit the pool of potential recruits. Need drove the decision to reconsider enlisting blacks into the service. Their service would generally be limited to a variety of menial positions such as officer's servants, "foragers, workers and infantrymen"¹¹ Although blacks would be brought into the service, they would still maintain their usual station in society.¹²

A second, perhaps more compelling reason for lifting the ban on enlisting blacks arose in Virginia. John Murray, Earl of Dunmore and Royal Governor of Virginia, also faced a shortage of Loyal forces in the Virginia colony. He issued a proclamation that established marshal law but also offered freedom to Negroes and indentured servants if they would join the British forces.¹³

The initial reaction by representatives at the next general convention in Virginia was to declare that any slaves or indentured servants who deserted their masters and

joined the British would suffer death when caught.¹⁴ This policy did not last long, however, as the combination of manpower shortages plus the possibility of run-away slaves fighting on the British side soon forced the Colonists to bring blacks into their ranks as well. In some places, black service continued to be limited to unarmed positions, but in others blacks were trained and fought in combat units. For example, Rhode Island had such severe manpower shortages that the state organized a battalion with five companies of blacks to fulfill their requirement.¹⁵

Significantly, blacks had seen service aboard merchant and Navy ships before the revolution and there was less reluctance to bring them into the Continental Navy. Blacks had served as pilots and seamen, and their experience appears to have been needed. There was a certain acceptance among ship crews and so there were no real needs for changes in the Navy.¹⁶

Although brought into the Army during the Revolution, the secretary to the Department of War banned enlisting blacks when the Army reverted back to a militia force at the war's end. In 1803, with the purchase of the Louisiana Territory, the country inherited a militia that contained a mixture of black and white soldiers in the vicinity of New Orleans. This particular militia group had previously served both Spain and France throughout the late 1700s, and the black soldiers readily offered their services to their new country. However, fear inspired by the slave uprising in Haiti, as well as doubts about the black militia's loyalties, soon led the state legislature to remove the blacks from the militia and the U. S. armed forces returned to an all white force.¹⁷

The militia remained all white until the War of 1812 when there were several instances of blacks enlisting and fighting. Ironically, the British were the first again to recruit and enlist blacks into their ranks in substantial numbers. They placed blacks into many units and even organized an black marine unit that took part in campaigns in

the Chesapeake in 1814. On the American side, New York created two regiments of black soldiers under the command of white officers in 1814. Although they set a new precedence that would be seen again during the Civil War, they were organized too late to affect the outcome of the war with Great Britain.¹⁸

A more successful and timely organization of black units occurred in Louisiana. As stated earlier, Louisiana had several black militia units in existence when the territory was sold to the United States. These units became all white soon after the Louisiana Purchase. Then, when the War of 1812 erupted, leaders in New Orleans were forced to muster in additional soldiers and decided to call on their former militias. Consequently, prior to 1814 the State Legislature of Louisiana passed a bill creating a corps of free blacks, including many former militiamen. This unit came to be known as the "Battalion of Freeman of Color."¹⁹ By the time General Andrew Jackson arrived to fight the British in the Battle of New Orleans, a second battalion had been formed, and both black units fought well during the battle.²⁰

Once again, even though excluded during peacetime, as a matter of practicality blacks were recruited during conflict. And blacks responded for a number of reasons. Service was seen as both an economic gain as well as a citizen's duty. Soldiers were paid while in uniform, received rations, and often, a bounty of land for their service. More importantly, however, was the fact that serving in the Army was often seen as a potential way to earn greater acceptance in society. True citizenship, with all the rights and privileges it contained, was the ultimate goal. Defending those rights, fighting and even dieing for them was a means toward that goal.²¹

After the War of 1812, blacks were excluded from service and would not be accepted into the U.S. Army until the Civil War.²² But, still ample evidence of the blacks ability to fight continued to mount. For example, during the First Seminole War, fugitive

slaves combined with Seminole and Lower Creek Indians and fought U.S. Army regulars in Spanish owned Florida. Although the conflict was short lived without a great deal of fighting, the few battles proved the blacks courage and abilities.²³

Just prior to the Civil War, the U.S. Army was a small constabulary force spread thinly across a vast frontier territory in the west, or guarding coastal defenses in the east. Although the U.S. Army was extremely busy, there were few critical threats beyond the Indians on the frontier that would have required a larger force. In the opinion of Congress and the Federal Government, the white population could easily cover the service's manpower needs, so the force remained all white. Also, at the time there was speculation that allowing blacks into the military would provide motivation for slave uprisings throughout the south. Consequently, since the Southern Democrats controlled the Government, blacks continued to be excluded from the Regular Army. Regardless of the reasons for not including blacks in the U.S. Army, there was ample historical evidence that the black man could fight if needed, and would fight if asked.

²³Edward M. Coffman, The Old Army, A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 215.

²⁴L. Albert Scipio, II, The Last of the Black Regulars: A History of the 24th Infantry Regiment (1869-1951) (Silver Spring, MD: Roman Publications, 1983); and William G. Muller, The 24th Infantry: Past and Present (Ft. Collins, CO: The Old Army Press, 1972). Although somewhat biased, are two sources that provide a fairly complete picture of the history of the 24th. Scipio concentrates most of his work on the regiment's activities in Cuba and Ft. Benning, Georgia in the 1920's and 30's, while CPT Muller provides details for before the 1920's.

²⁵Garna L. Christian, Black Soldiers in Jim Crow Texas, 1899-1917 (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1995) xiv-xv.

²⁶Bernard C. Nalty, Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military, (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 4-6; and Gary Donaldson, The History of African-Americans in the Military, Double V, (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 1991), 1-8.

²⁷Donaldson, 5-6; and Nalty, 4-6.

⁶Nalty, 5-6.

⁷Jack D. Foner, Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), 10-11; and Nalty, 8.

⁸Eric Foner and John A. Garrity, eds., The Reader's Companion to American History. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991, 124.

⁹Donaldson, 13; and Foner, 7.

¹⁰Fletcher, 12.

¹¹Fletcher, 13.

¹²Nalty, 14..

¹³John Murray, The Earl of Dunmore, "Proclamation By The Governour of Virginia". in Blacks in the United States Armed Forces, Basic Documents, eds., Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty, Scholarly Resources Inc. 1977, 23

¹⁴Representatives of the People of the Colony and Dominion of Virginia, Proceedings of the General convention of Virginia: A Declaration (December 14, 1775), in MacGregor and Nalty, 51-52.

¹⁵Nalty, 14-15; and Foner, 10.

¹⁶Nalty, 14.

¹⁷Ibid. 19-24.

¹⁸Nalty, 23; and Foner, 23.

¹⁹Foner, 23

²⁰Ibid. 25.

²¹Nalty, 24-26.

²²Ibid. 25-26.

²³Maurice Matloff, ed., American Military History (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1968), 151-154.

CHAPTER 2

CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

Two watershed events that marked tremendous changes in the lives of black Americans were the Civil War and the Reconstruction Era that followed. A discussion of these events is important to this study for a number of reasons. First, each event had both conspicuous as well as subtle effects on blacks and the southern culture. During the Civil War, the emancipation of the slaves and the destruction of the Southern military, infrastructure, and economy enacted real and permanent changes in the Southern culture. In the years that followed, Radical Reconstruction policies subjugated the southern states and forced the acceptance of Constitutional changes in the form of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments. These were the very obvious and very dramatic changes.

Each of these major events involved more subtle, yet just as important developments. The Civil War, for example, gave blacks another chance to fight and prove their abilities. This time, however, they were included in unprecedented numbers and were allowed to fight in a major conflict that would directly influence their lives. But the war also placed the black man in direct confrontation with his former masters. In many cases, the use of black units to garrison towns placed former slaves in positions of authority over those same former owners. This sudden switch in social position may have been enough to fuel the resentment that would later manifest in the discriminatory statutes called the "Jim Crow" laws. If it was not then the fact that these roles were

artificially reinforced during Radical Reconstruction ensured that resentment would continue to build, that ancient racial prejudices would be maintained, and that eventually the larger white population would take whatever steps necessary to regain their position.

Reconstruction had some even more subtle consequences specific to the soldiers that would serve in the segregated regiments after the war. First, the use of Federal Army units, including black units, to enforce Radical Reconstruction policies stimulated an anti-federal government and anti-military feeling throughout southern communities. This anti-military feeling developed into deep distrust focused specifically on the black units. Consequently, as Reconstruction waned, Army units, both black and white, were moved out of the deep south in order to appease Southern states rejoining the Union. This took the black units out of the south during the development of the Jim Crow laws. Furthermore, the Army faced the threat of reduction and never really had sufficient forces to handle all the missions it was given. Consequently, at the end of Reconstruction, black soldiers and southerners, both blacks and white, were having very different experiences. These experiences were so different that conflict may have been inevitable. Reconstruction was as much the cause of those different experiences as any other factor.

It was the Civil War that gave the blacks the opportunity to fight for and earn a place in the peace time Regular Army. Therefore, it is important to begin this part of the discussion by showing why they were allowed to fight, and how they fought once given the chance.

At the start of the Civil War the United States Regular Army consisted of nineteen regiments, five cavalry, four artillery and ten infantry. This was an all-white force of about 13,000 soldiers spread thinly over about two million square miles of frontier or

coastal defenses. Of the one thousand one hundred officers, one hundred were doctors, eight hundred and fifty had been commissioned from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and two hundred and fifty from civilian life. Fortunately, this force was augmented by state militias that had about three million names on their rolls.¹

When war erupted, President Abraham Lincoln called for volunteer regiments from the states, and asked Congress to add eleven new regiments to the regular Army. The combination of the state militias coupled with great enthusiasm for what many expected to be a quick, adventurous war, enabled the northern states to respond quickly, and soon the Union Army grew to 300,000 men. For blacks across the country, either free or slave, the result was there was neither a need nor a desire to bring them into the Union Army.²

Actually, there were several strong arguments against recruiting blacks during the initial stages of the war. One major issue was Lincoln's desire not to drive the border states into the Confederacy. Maryland, Delaware, Missouri, and Lincoln's home state, Kentucky, continued to allow slavery, but remained in the union. Loss of any of these states could easily give the South additional resources and, in the case of Kentucky, a political blow to the Union effort. But, more important, loss of states such as Maryland and Delaware could directly threaten Washington, D.C.. In the effort to keep the border states in the Union, abolishing slavery took a lower priority to preserving the country.³

Another important reason to keep the goal of the war the preservation of the union rather than freeing the slaves was that it gave men in the northern states an easily accepted, and highly popular, incentive to enlist. While it was true that northern states did not allow slavery, their reasons were based more on their economic structures than on an ideological opposition to slavery. In the north there were nearly 100,000 factories operated by lower class whites, especially European immigrants. The prospect of a large

influx of poor free blacks threatened the jobs of many of these poor whites, and most were content to let slavery continue in the south.

On the other hand, many of the northern states depended on free river transport of products down the major water arteries to ports in the south and east, especially the Mississippi River and New Orleans. An independent South that could impose river tolls and tariffs on goods traveling south directly impacted the economic well being of many northerners. Consequently, although most northerners were content to let slavery continue, and many more may have cared little about either side of the slavery issue, most wanted to maintain the economic status quo. Therefore, preserving the Union was popular more because it was an economic necessity than a political ideal.⁴

As long as the war was about preserving the Union and not about abolishing slavery, there was little interest in arming blacks. Even though staunch abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass continued to call for the inclusion of black men in the armed forces, the Lincoln administration continued to resist. No one was ever against using blacks to provide labor and help the cause in other ways, but throughout the first year of the war, blacks were not to be allowed to fight.⁵

Just as in past conflicts, however, the reality of the conflict soon began to require a change in this policy. The simple reason was that the early battles opened the eyes of many in the nation and in fairly certain terms showed that the conflict would not be a short affair. As both sides mobilized and trained the largest armies in American history up to that time, simple math showed that eventually no one could be excluded from serving. Furthermore, while the early calls for volunteers were met with great enthusiasm, a subsequent request for troops in July 1862 had only a mediocre response. In fact, during the winter of 1862-63, volunteering virtually stopped, which forced

President Lincoln to support the Conscription Act of 1863.⁶ Time was on the side of the black man and inevitably he would be given the chance to prove himself.

There was also another development that pointed to the eventual inclusion of blacks in the army. As Union forces won small victories, or occupied towns in southern states, they began to free hundreds and later thousands of slaves. These newly freed people, called contrabands, needed food, shelter, and protection, and, hence, became somewhat of a burden for the military commanders in the field. Dealing with this issue required pragmatic, easily implemented solutions. Some military commanders saw these people as a potential untapped source of labor and manpower for the Union Army. Instead of inventing some new civil support type organization, which would certainly have required a percentage of military leadership, it was actually easier to bring these freedmen into the military where they could possibly handle some of the more mundane occupation and military labor tasks and free up veteran units to fight.⁷

Finally, a combination of pressure from the abolitionists and a desire to keep European nations, especially Britain, out of the war led to Lincoln issuing of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in September 1862.⁸ This set the stage for the eventual enlistment of black men into the Union Army as well as changing the focus of the war to both a preservation of the Union and abolishment of slavery.

Once again, however, the U.S. Army was not the first to use blacks in the ranks: the Confederates were first at that. When Louisiana seceded, Governor Thomas O. Moore had called out the state militia and also allowed the free blacks in New Orleans to revive their old militia which they renamed the Native Guards. These black militiamen were defending the city when Admiral David Farragut stormed his way into the harbor. Later, when Union troops occupied the city, they found the Native Guard still in the defenses around the city, despite the fact the white militia and Confederate units had

fled the city. The Native Guards had refused to leave, maintaining their loyalty was to the city, not the state. Consequently, General Ben Butler, convinced that this meant they were loyal to the Union, brought the Native Guard into his force. By the fall of 1862, these men wore Union uniforms and were in action against their former comrades in western Louisiana.⁹

Some Union generals, acting on their own authority, began to use blacks in their units before there was an official change of policy. The first was General David Hunter who formed the 1st Regiment of South Carolina Volunteers in May 1862 out of newly freed slaves in his Department of the South. Although this unit primarily performed fatigue work and labor projects, it attracted much attention throughout the country. Unfortunately, General Hunter was a little too eager for President Lincoln. A stern rebuke from the President, who wanted to keep the war's focus on preserving the union, forced the disbandment of the unit soon after its formation. Nevertheless, this unit helped prepare the country for the eventual wide spread recruitment of blacks into the military.¹⁰

The first Union black unit to see combat was the First Kansas Colored Volunteers, organized in the fall of 1862 to combat Confederate Raiders in Missouri. This unit was formed by Senator J.H. Lane who appointed H. C. Seaman and J. M. Williams to recruit regiments from north and south of the Kansas River. By October 1862, the two regiments were organized with about 500 men and ordered into Missouri. On the 28th their lead element of about 225 men encountered a Confederate force of 500, held their ground, and defeated the rebels. Although a minor skirmish compared to the major battles of the Civil War, this was the first recorded instance of blacks fighting for the Union. By all accounts, the black soldiers performed better than expected.¹¹

As the War Department began to change its official policy, more generals in the field began to organize black units. General Rufus Saxton in the Department of the South received orders from Secretary of War Stanton to organize, arm, and equip black soldiers in South Carolina. He revived the 1st South Carolina Volunteers and the unit was officially mustered into active service in January 1863. Again, this unit drew national attention as many across the country debated whether it would be an effective force. Throughout the war, the 1st SC Volunteers would see action in Florida and South Carolina, and consistently prove itself to be an effective combat unit.¹²

Other units soon followed. Blacks were recruited in greater numbers in New Orleans and fought throughout Louisiana and the Gulf Coast. Massachusetts organized the 54th Massachusetts Infantry which later became a symbol for the gallantry and valor of black soldiers. However, it was not until after Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863 that black recruitment became a wide spread policy. The Secretary of War designated the Army's Adjutant General, Lorenzo Thomas to take charge of recruiting blacks and the eventual formation of the Bureau of Colored Troops in May 1863.¹³

Throughout the Civil War, black soldiers in the U.S. Colored Troops would garrison towns, perform fatigue and labor duties, and battle Confederates. Just like their white counterparts, some black units were well trained, effective fighting forces, others were not. There were a couple of instances, though, that show that when a highly trained black unit entered combat, they went in with all the skill and bravery, and earned just as much glory as any white unit. The first was at Port Hudson, Louisiana, on May 27, 1863. In this Union assault against Confederates entrenched in the fort that controlled the lower Mississippi River, three newly formed regiments of black soldiers occupied the extreme right of the force. They made as many as seven charges over rough

ground into the Confederate breastworks. In the end, the black units suffered greatly, losing up to one fifth of their force in this unsuccessful assault. Although the Union attack was unsuccessful, the valiant charges of the black units surprised many observers and caused both Major General Nathaniel P. Banks and Brigadier General Daniel Ullman to praise their efforts.¹⁴

Despite their fine performance at Port Hudson, black soldiers did not really earn real respect until later that summer. This time the soldiers were mostly northern free blacks mixed with a percentage of former slaves that had been organized into the 54th Massachusetts Infantry in the Spring of 1863. This regiment had been one of the first to be formed after President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Led by Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, the regiment was well trained and ready for its first combat test. After several weeks of mostly fatigue and labor duties, the 54th got its chance. The 54th belonged to Brigadier General George C. Strong's Brigade which was given the mission to lead the assault on Fort Wagner. This fort controlled the entrance to the Charleston Harbor and had to be taken if Charleston were to be taken from the sea. However, the only approach into the fort was a narrow piece of land that had ocean on one side and marsh on the other. Anyone approaching the fort from this avenue had to endure devastating fire from Confederate artillery and rifles from three Confederate forts while advancing over flat, open terrain. Prior to the assault, BG Strong lost about one hundred and fifty men. The 54th, designated to lead the charge into the Confederate defenses, waited until dusk before advancing. As night fell, they charged across the open ground, reached the earthworks and moved into the trenches. They fought fiercely. Colonel Shaw was shot in the initial charge as he climbed over the earthworks, dieing at the head of the regiment. Three color bearers were shot down and most of the regiment's officers were killed or wounded. Although the regiment breached the Confederate

defenses, they were not supported and were finally forced to withdraw. Sergeant William H. Carney, G Company, 54th Massachusetts, won a Medal of Honor for retrieving the colors and bringing them back with the remnants of the regiment.¹⁵

The 54th suffered greatly in the assault on Fort Wagner. Colonel Shaw and half of the regiment's officers were buried by the Confederates in a mass grave with many of their men. But, the 54th's suffering brought new respect for the black units. Although a greater proportion of the black units would not see combat, those that did would continue to build on their reputation as soldiers. Places such as Petersburg, Virginia, Nashville, Tennessee, and others would place black soldiers in combat. When this happened, they consistently performed well. Major General George Thomas summed up their reputation best after he surveyed the scene of the battle that took place on Overton's Hill on December 16, 1864. On that day, Colonel Thomas Morgan had led black soldiers on two fierce charges up Overton Hill, finally routing the Confederates in close fighting. When General Thomas looked over the battlefield and saw black soldiers among the dead and wounded, he turned to his entourage and said, "Gentlemen, the question is settled: Negroes will fight."

Eventually, more than 185,000 blacks would serve in the Union Army in the regiments of the United States Colored Troops (USCT).¹⁷ Countless thousands more would support the Union cause as spies, or by digging trenches, hauling supplies, and other labor or fatigue duties.¹⁸ Nearly 38,000 blacks gave their lives in combat for the Union, and possibly another 30,000 died of disease and non-battle injuries.¹⁹

Despite their significant contributions, the black soldiers' experience in the war was extremely rough. They faced a series of difficult situations, including derogatory treatment by their officers, unequal pay and benefits, and a continuous assignment to fatigue and labor duties instead of combat. At the start of black recruitment, War

Department policy established boards to screen officers for assignment to the black units.²⁰ Nevertheless, there were still extensive complaints from black soldiers of the derogatory treatment at the hands of many of their white officers. Accusations of name calling, degradation, and, unusually swift and harsh judgement were constantly reported throughout the war. Unfortunately for the soldiers, these practices were tacitly accepted in most units and any complaints fell on deaf ears.²¹

In another area their complaints would eventually be heeded. Black soldiers received less pay and pensions than their white counterparts throughout most of the war. A white private earned thirteen dollars each month with another three dollars and fifty cents added in for clothing. A black soldier, on the other hand, was given ten dollars a month, but had three dollars subtracted to pay for his clothing. Pay was even worse for black laborers employed by the Army. They earned ten dollars a month, but had a clothing fee and ration fee deducted, and then the rest went into a fund set up by the local Quartermaster to care for contraband women and children. If he worked hard, the black laborer could earn two dollars of his pay in the form of a monthly incentive pay.²²

Similarly, black chaplains were severely underpaid compared to white chaplains. Commissioned in the same manner as white clergymen, these men served throughout the black regiments in very important roles. They not only performed the important religious duties, but also were the chief educators of the mostly uneducated soldiers. Regulations at the start of black service did not address the issue of chaplains, so a ruling by the War Department decided they would be paid the same as the black laborers, that is ten dollars each month.²³ Eventually, black protests were heeded in Congress and toward the end of the war legislation passed that provided back pay to the black soldiers

and equalized pay among chaplains. Also, years later, Congress passed legislation that equalized pensions among all former Union soldiers, black and white.

Other problems persisted. For example, when black soldiers were captured by Confederates, they received much harsher treatment than the white prisoners. The Confederates routinely refused to exchange or parole black prisoners. Instead they enslaved them and sent them to work in plantations throughout the southern states. So, a northern black man who may have been born a free man faced the prospect of being enslaved if captured. The Southern units would also execute captured blacks and white officers of black units. This was seen at Fort Pillow, Tennessee, where Confederate General Nathaniel Bedford Forrest was accused of executing more than 400 black soldiers of the 6th U.S. Colored Artillery his unit captured. Fortunately, President Lincoln issued orders to execute one Confederate prisoner for any Union prisoner executed and to place one Confederate into forced hard labor for any Union soldier placed into slavery, which helped to end this confederate practice.²⁴

Despite these problems, black soldiers performed well when tasked and though their experience was harsh, many did earn some benefits from their service. For example, a majority of the blacks freed by the Union could not read or write. Many commanders of black units found it in their interest to educate their soldiers during periods of inaction. Without educated noncommissioned officers and clerks, the white officers had to do all the administrative paper work associated with running a military unit. Once they taught their soldiers to read and write, they could turn over some of these duties to them. Therefore, many units hired instructors or used the chaplains to teach basic skills education. One estimate says nearly 50,000 men were taught to read and write in the Gulf Region alone.²⁵

Thus, the black legacy of the Civil War was that if allowed, not only would they fight, but they could fight with the valor and courage equal to the whites. Further, in spite of their treatment, the black man could make significant advances in his social station through his service. The country knew the black units fought well and worked hard, and America was ready to include the blacks in the Regular Army.

As stated above, the second major event that led to the eventual conflicts between black soldiers and the citizens they protect, was the Reconstruction Era. The events of this controversial time would bring the Regular Army units, both black and white into occupation and control over the southern towns and people. Then as Reconstruction waned, these units were taken out of the south for more important duties elsewhere. But, a growing resentment toward the Federal Government, Regular Army units, and blacks in the south seemed to have its focus in the four black regiments. Therefore, it is important that we examine this critical period and draw out the lessons that provide insight into the events that occur later in the century.

At either end of the social spectrum, Reconstruction was about control. At the upper end was a fight between Congress and the President over who would control and direct the rebuilding of the South and reintegration of the seceded states. At the other end, the poor southern white man knew simply that last year he had the right to vote and influence his world and the black man did not. Now, the white man could not vote, but the black man could. Control over rebuilding, reorganizing state government, reinstalling local infrastructures, and subsequently control over the local communities, were the issues of the day.²⁶

Toward the end of the War, Lincoln began planning ways to bring the conquered Southern states back into the Union. His policies, and those of his successor, Andrew Johnson, were generally moderate plans that required passage of the Thirteenth

Amendment, a renunciation of secession, and establishment of new state governments that swore their loyalty to the United States. However, for many in Congress those plans did not adequately punish the southern states for their treasonous acts, nor did they guarantee the rights of the newly freed black men and women. They wanted to ensure that the political leaders of the Confederacy were disenfranchised and could not stand in the way of their reconstruction plans.²⁷

In 1866, the Republican Party controlled both houses of Congress as it had since most of the southern Democrats left when their states seceded. Most of the Republicans were conservatives; however, a small but vocal group of Radical Republicans were gaining strength and influence rapidly. The Radicals had some distinct goals. They wanted Congressional, not Presidential control over southern reconstruction. They also wanted Congressional control over government functions, the military and their own Congressional Sessions. Most importantly, however, they wanted to ensure that no former confederate state would have national representation until they, the Congress let them.

The Radicals used a series of party politics and legislation to gain control of the party and, subsequently, gain control over the Reconstruction plans. For example, between 1867 and 1868, when they passed the majority of the Reconstruction legislation, they passed laws that established Senate approval over the President's communications with and movements of the Commanding General of the U.S. Army. They established a special session that began in March instead of December. And, they established the rules that disenfranchised the former confederates and established state governments based on Radical rule and Negro suffrage.

In all they passed four Reconstruction Acts, each designed to further tighten Congressional control over the southern states until they accomplished their

reconstruction goals. Based on the idea that no lawful governments existed within the southern states, they established military rule and reorganized the state governments mainly through the black vote. The ten former confederate states deemed unreconstructed by the Congress were organized into five military districts. The Federal commanders in these districts had greater power than the state officials. They could make arrests, direct the actions of the civil governments, and formulate state constitutions. In essence, they maintained an occupation force throughout the south that enforced the reconstruction plans and generally attempted to keep the peace.

In order for a state to return to the Union, and, as a result, gain representation in Congress, they had to do a couple of things. First, they had to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment which imbedded in the Constitution the most strenuous parts of the Reconstruction plans. Then they had to write new state constitutions that mirrored the Fourteenth Amendment permanently disqualifying former Confederate leaders from political office, and, maintaining black suffrage. Despite some initial problems, changes enacted by the last Reconstruction Act ensured that these measures would pass, and by 1870 all of the former Confederate states had reentered the Union.

As stated earlier, the military played a visible and important role in the Reconstruction plans. This is especially true of the soldiers in the USCT, many of whom remained in the service well beyond many of the white soldiers. These soldiers continued to serve throughout the South until demobilization was complete at the end of 1865. Thereafter, many regular army units, including the three of the six black regiments organized in 1866, continued to occupy key cities in the South until the end of Reconstruction. Many of these statutes were emplaced soon after Southern states began to be readmitted into the Union. These laws were intended to place the former slave owners into a superior position over their black neighbors. To regain their previous

station, they had to design these laws to counter specific black activities. For example, when the Radical Republicans controlled much of the South, they did so through a political alliance with the new population of voters, the emancipated slaves. Then, as the Southern Democrats began to win back seats, they strenthened their own political resurgence by enacting poll taxes and literacy tests that they knew many of the black population could not pass. Also, when blacks protested low wages and poor working conditions by quitting their jobs, new vagrancy laws sprang up. These laws, in effect, forced blacks to work in slave-like conditions, except now they had to feed themselves on their meager pay.²⁸

The end of Reconstruction came with what many of the Southern blacks considered an abandonment by their former political allies. The Northern Industrial Capitolists who had controlled radical reconstruction yearned to regain their old alliances with the Southern land owners. In order to do this they took no action when the new laws limiting black freedoms were passed, and they began to limit the role of the military forces still occupying parts of the South. This effort reached new levels with the electoral crisis during the Presidential election in 1876. Rutherford B. Hayes and the Republican Party were vying for the Presidency. Through a series of closed negotiations with Southern Conservatives, he was able to forge an alliance that gave him the election. Part of the agreement decided in the closed door meetings was to remove the support from Radical governments in the South, especially Louisiana and South Carolina. Since this support came chiefly from the U.S. Army, soon after the election, the six thousand soldiers still in the South were ordered out in 1877.²⁹

The next severe blow to black freedom came from the United States Supreme Court. In the early 1880's, a number of decisions by the Supreme Court curtailed Federal intervention in Civil Rights cases in the states. The Court declared many of the

Reconstruction statutes to be unconstitutional, including, the 1875 Civil Rights Act, the Ku Klux Klan Act, and parts of the laws stipulating federal oversight and enforcement of election procedures and rights guarantees. In the early 1890's, with the Reconstructionist regimes totally removed, Southern states began to enact a series of laws designed to limit the social mobility of blacks. These were the so called "Jim Crow" laws. Then, in 1896, in *Plessy vs Ferguson*, the court declared the "separate but equal" clause so often cited as justification for social exclusion and limitation for the first half of the twentieth century.³⁰

The Reconstruction Era had two significant effects important to this study. Reconstruction took away the Southern man's control over his affairs, and placed the U.S. Army and former slaves in positions of influence and authority. This lack of control and subordination to former slaves developed into a deep resentment. When Southern states reentered the Union and reconstruction ended, Southerners began to regain control by enacting a series of laws designed to limit the influence of blacks in local affairs.

The Wilson Bill of 1866 reorganized the Army of the United States into five artillery regiments, ten cavalry regiments, and fifty infantry regiments. The authorized force was about three times as large as the prewar army in order to meet the growing security requirements on the frontier and continue the Reconstruction efforts. Included in this force, for the first time in the history of the U.S. Army, were six regiments of black men, the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments, and the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st Infantry Regiments. Most of the men in these regiments came from units in the USCT, however, now they had the distinct pride of being Regulars and not volunteers.

¹The New York Times November 6, 1858, 1.

²Roy F. Nichols and Berwanger, Eugene H., The Stakes of Power, 1845-1877 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 106.

³Jack D. Foner, Blacks and the Military in American History (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974) 32; and David Herbert Donald, Lincoln (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), 344-345; and Nichols and Berwanger, 112-113.

⁴Foner, 33-34.

⁵Bernard C. Nalty, Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 34; and Martin Binkin and Eitelberg, Mark J., with Schexnider, Alvin J. And Smith, Marvin M., Blacks and the Military (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1982), 13.

⁶Foner, 34; and Donald, 416-417.

⁷Foner, 33.

⁸Ibid, 34.

⁹Nalty, 36.

¹⁰Foner, 34-35.

¹¹J. M. Williams, Letter to General T.J. Anderson, Adjutant General of Kansas (Leavenworth Kansas, January 1st, 1866), in Morris J. MacGregor and Nalty, Bernard C., Blacks in the United States Armed Forces; Basic Documents Vol. II "Civil War and Emancipation" (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1977) 51-65.

¹²Foner, 35.

¹³Nalty, 36-37.

¹⁴Ibid

¹⁵Ibid

¹⁶John McGlone, Monuments and Memorials to Black Military History, 1775-1891, (NashvilleTN: Middle Tennessee State University, 1985), 83-101.

¹⁷Ibid, 43.

¹⁸Foner, 46.

¹⁹Binkin, Eitelberg, Schexnider and Smith, 15.

²⁰Daniel Ullman, Letter to General Richard C. Drum, Adjutant General, War Department, Washington, D.C. (Rockland County, NY, April 16, 1887), in MacGregor and Nalty, 32-51.

²¹Foner, 41.

²²An example of this pay system is listed in General Order No. 34., Headquarters Department of Virginia (Fort Monroe, VA, November 1, 1861), in MacGregor and Nalty, 13.

²³Roy J. Honeywell, Chaplains of the United States Army (Washington, 1958), in MacGregor and Nalty, 26.

²⁴McGlone, 88.

²⁵Foner, 46.

²⁶James E. Sefton, The United States Army and Reconstruction, 1865-1877, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 60-76; and Eric Foner and John A. Garraty, eds., The Reader's Companion to American History (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1991), 917-924.

²⁷Foner and Garrity, 918.

²⁸Carter G. Woodson and Charles H. Wesley, The Negro in Our History, (Washington: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1925) 393-398.

²⁹Peter Camejo, Racism, Revolution, Reaction, 1861-1877: The Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction, (New York: Monad Press, 1976), 176-186.

³⁰Ibid, 187.

CHAPTER 3

FORMATION AND THE FRONTIER

The official history of the 24th Infantry Regiment as a black regiment of the Regular Army starts with the second reduction of the post-war Army in 1869. But the lineage of the 24th actually begins with the 38th and 41st Infantry Regiments formed by the Wilson Act of 1866. These two regiments formed in different locations and then operated from about June 1867 until September 1869 performing somewhat similar missions in Texas, Kansas, and New Mexico. During these couple of years many of the soldiers and officers that would serve out their careers in the 24th Infantry gained valuable experience in frontier operations. When the two regiments merged in early 1870 in Texas, they formed a new organization, but it would be an experienced unit filled with veterans of the Civil War and early frontier years. A short look at these regiments shows that the 24th Infantry began its long term of service as a veteran unit. They were never green.

A few important notes must be made about the post war Army and frontier tactics before addressing these units. In 1866, the U.S. Army was not only faced with extensive occupation and Reconstruction duties throughout the South, it also had to spread out over the vast frontier to protect citizens moving west. This called for a large number of small posts with a combination of infantry and cavalry units that provided both a secure sanctuary and a mobile striking force that could respond to emergencies. The idea was to leave an infantry company to garrison the post while one or two cavalry

companies operated in the surrounding area. Often during extensive operations one or two infantry companies would accompany several cavalry companies to secure lines of communication or supply points while the cavalry pursued the enemy.

Recruitment of officers for the new regiments was a tricky issue. War Department policy stipulated that newly commissioned officers would have two years of honorable service during the Civil War, preferably with the USCT, but it was not required. Furthermore, no former Confederates were to be considered for any positions in the reorganized Army. Instead, the officer pool would be determined in proportion to the number of troops each state provided during the Civil War. Consequently, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York ended up providing about 38 percent of the new regular officers in the post-war Army.¹

Officer placement was further complicated by racial prejudice as well as a fear that these units would not be used for any real purpose, limiting glory and promotions for their members. The first commanders of the 38th and 41st are good examples of different sides of this issue. William B. Hazen, a Brevet Major General during the Civil War, was given the rank of colonel and appointed as Commander of the 38th Infantry Regiment in the fall of 1866. It is not clear if any other officers were offered the position before Hazen. What is clear is that Colonel Hazen never actually commanded the regiment in person for more than a few months. For most of 1867 he was either on recruiting duty or detached service in Washington, D.C. or on various Military Commissions in places other than where the 38th was operating. In late 1868 he took Company G to Camp Supply, Indian Territory and was given defacto command of the Indian reservation there. The headquarters of the 38th was at Fort Craig, New Mexico for most of this time and Lieutenant Colonel Cuvier Grover was the acting commander, assisted by Major Henry C. Merriam. Although the 38th Infantry was nicknamed

"Hazen's Brunettes." by April 1869, when Colonel Hazen left to take command of the 6th U.S. Infantry, he had not actively led the regiment for more than a few months at any given time.²

While it was a fact of life for many senior officers to be called away from their units for detached service on military commissions, courts marshal, and similar duties, Colonel Hazen seems to have spent a majority of his time away from his regiment. This may have indicated that Hazen held certain racial prejudices and wanted to dissociate himself with his black soldiers. This idea may be discounted if not for later evidence. When Hazen was the Chief Signal Officer in the late 1870's, he fought the enlistment of a black man, W. Hallet Greene, into the Signal Corps on the grounds that blacks do not have the intelligence necessary. Only after the Secretary of War, Robert Todd Lincoln intervened did Mr. Greene, a graduate of New York City College, become the first black to enter the Signal Corps.³

The issue of finding a commander for the 41st points out the other side of this issue. As indicated above, many officers viewed assignment to a black regiment with distaste. The result was that many officers decided they would rather take a lower rank in a white regiment than a higher rank in a black regiment.⁴ On the other hand, some ambitious officers saw the black regiments as a stepping stone to rapid advancement. The first commander of the 41st and later the 24th Infantry, Ranald S. Mackenzie, is a case in point. Mackenzie graduated from West Point at the start of the Civil War, advanced rapidly through the ranks as a highly successful cavalryman, and was a breveted Brigadier General and Division Commander when the war ended. In 1865 he was reduced to the rank of Regular Army Captain of Engineers, a position for which he had little experience or enthusiasm. So, in March 1867, after several other officers had turned down the colonelcy of the 41st, the War Department offered the position to

Captain Mackenzie. He quickly accepted both the command and the jump in three ranks to colonel.⁵

The 38th Infantry Regiment began its short life at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. The first ten officers of the regiment had been mustered out of the volunteer force and had returned to civil life where they received notification of their appointments. Consequently, they all reported to Jefferson Barracks at different times during the fall of 1866 and real recruiting did not begin until early 1867. In order to increase the efficiency of the recruiting effort, company grade officers were dispatched to various cities that had large populations of blacks. The future commanders of companies C and D along with a lieutenant from company B were sent to Nashville and Lexington to find new recruits and send them to Missouri. As these new soldiers arrived at Jefferson Barracks, the other company commanders would organize them into companies, conduct initial training and then put them on the trains west to Kansas. Regimental recruiting teams were very efficient so that by February 1867 the 38th had more than 400 soldiers and companies began making the long trip to Fort Harker in western Kansas. Then, by June, the Regimental rolls were filled to nearly twelve hundred soldiers, all ten companies were organized, with four at Jefferson Barracks and six already in Kansas.⁶

The first Regimental Return for the 41st Infantry Regiment, submitted at the end of December 1866, reported that the first nine officers under the command of Major George W. Schofield organized the regiment on Christmas Day 1866 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Interestingly, all of these officers had been on the rolls of the 37th Infantry Regiment prior to their assignment to the 41st. In January 1867, recruiting began in earnest and company grade officers were sent to Cincinnati, Ohio, Shreveport and New Orleans, Louisiana, and Huntsville, Alabama to find soldiers to fill the ranks. In

February. Lieutenant Colonel William R. Shafter joined the 41st at Baton Rouge while the War Department searched for a Colonel to command the regiment.⁷

When Colonel Mackenzie arrived in Baton Rouge on April 26, 1867, he found nearly four hundred soldiers in the unit, though most were in the recruit detachment and not assigned to companies. Company grade officers were conducting recruiting in Vicksburg, Mississippi, Nashville, Tennessee, Louisville, Kentucky, and Cincinnati, Ohio. Apparently Colonel Mackenzie held the contemporary belief that he could find more educated blacks in northern cities. So, in May he shifted the recruiting effort to the larger northern cities such as Chicago and Detroit. As that effort continued under Schofield, enough soldiers were brought in to organize the Regimental Headquarters along with Companies A through H. By early summer, the 41st was ready for movement into the frontier territories.⁸

While the 41st was organizing in Louisiana, the rest of the 38th received orders for posts in New Mexico in June 1867. They began moving in the first week of July, taking the trains as far as Fort Harker. After debarking the trains, the Regiment marched across the rest of Kansas and into New Mexico. By the end of the September 1867, the 38th Infantry Regiment had reached its posts in New Mexico, some of the companies marching more than 700 miles in three months. At the end of that month, the Regimental Headquarters and C Company took over Fort Craig. A Company was at Fort Cummings, D and E Companies at Fort Bayard, and K Company at Fort Selden, all in New Mexico. The five remaining companies had stayed in Kansas, with B and H together at Fort Harker, E and G together at Fort Hays and I Company at Monument Station.⁹

Significantly, as the Regiment was deploying to its frontier posts, the 38th Infantry became the first of the black infantrymen to see combat. As Company K was

deploying from Jefferson Barracks to Fort Harker, Kansas part of the company was attacked by a band of Indians. Corporal David Turner was in charge of the force that defended against the Indian attack in which five Indians were killed, with no losses to the company. Although a minor skirmish in the overall history of the frontier campaigns, every unit is held in question until its first combat trial. The 38th came through their initial trial successfully and must have gained confidence and pride in their abilities.¹⁰

Although there is no direct linkage in the Regimental Returns, it is interesting to note that when the 38th received orders to posts in New Mexico, those posts were partly manned by members of the 125th USCT. It is possible that even if the 38th was not specifically ordered to relieve the 125th, they may have been better received than the companies posted to Kansas, simply because there was prior experience with black soldiers in the area.

On October 16, 1867, Captain John C. Gilmore and seventy-eight enlisted men of H Company departed Fort Harker for Fort Mc Rae, New Mexico, arriving in early December. Along the way they scouted for Indians with little success, but still gaining valuable field experience. By the end of 1867, the companies were settled into their posts and had begun to conduct small scouting expeditions, or participating in missions with other units. In June 1868, A and F Companies exchanged posts, and I Company moved from Monument Station, which was closed, to Fort Wallace, Kansas. The companies would garrison these posts until the middle of 1869 when they were ordered to begin moving to Texas to consolidate with the 41st Infantry and form the 24th Infantry Regiment.¹¹

Despite only having eight companies formed, the War Department ordered the 41st to move to and establish a Regular Army post in Brownsville, Texas. In compliance,

the 41st embarked on the transport AGNES at Baton Rouge on June 22, 1867. They transferred to the steamer ST. MARY on the 25th, which took them to Brazos Santiago. On the 30th, after establishing a camp for B Company on Brazos Santiago to guard the mouth of the Rio Grande, the regiment re-embarked on the steamer TAMGULIPAS and steamed up the Rio Grande to Brownsville.¹²

Brownsville was a fairly cosmopolitan town, very busy and prosperous during the Civil War. A major transfer point for the cotton trade and importing of war supplies for the South, the city was under Confederate control until November 1863 when the Union forces retook it. However, the small Union presence was not able to provide much control over the local citizens and for all intents the 41st Infantry would have to reestablish Federal control while also guarding fording sites along the Rio Grande against Indian and bandit movements between Texas and Mexico. They would perform these duties primarily from Fort Brown. This post was established in 1846, surrendered by the North in 1861 and then almost totally destroyed on November 3, 1863 when the Confederates burned the post and blew up the ammunition magazine. Therefore, Mackenzie's first missions were to begin rebuilding the post, deploying Companies and detachments to positions along the Rio Grande and simultaneously enforcing Federal statutes and implementing the Reconstruction policies. While doing all of this, Mackenzie had to fill his two remaining companies, so Schofield established the Regimental Recruiting Service in Chicago with officers dispatched to Detroit, Cincinnati, and Louisville.¹³

In July, Shafter lead Companies A, D, and E north, along the Rio Grande to Ringgold Barracks(A and D Co.'s) and Fort McIntosh(E Co.), while Companies C, F, G, and H were rebuilding Fort Brown in Brownsville, and B Company occupied White Ranch on Brazos Santiago. Through the rest of the summer until the fall, principal

duties continued to be rebuilding posts, picketing fording sites along the Rio Grande, and Reconstruction actions. In the first week of October 1867, a tremendous hurricane hit the southern portion of the Gulf of Mexico. Brazos Santiago was completely destroyed and four men of the 41st Infantry drowned when the island flooded during the storm. The storm hit Brownsville hard as well, flooding the city and flattening many buildings, including sixteen recently constructed buildings in Fort Brown. After the storm, B Company was moved to Point Isabel to reorganize and continue guarding the approaches to the Rio Grande.¹⁴

During the fall, Schofield traveled to Buffalo, New York and placed officers in Boston, Massachusetts and Dayton, Ohio to continue to fill the ranks. On September 20, 1867, the 41st had 711 men in its ranks, but had forty-two desertions throughout the year. Still, by November and December there were enough men to form Companies I and K at Fort Brown and then send them to Ringgold Barracks.¹⁵

Throughout 1868, the 38th performed a variety of duties in their frontier posts. Just like the 41st Infantry, a majority of their time was consumed with the building, repair and maintenance of the frontier forts, many of which either were new or had been abandoned during the Civil War. It was not until sufficient supplies could be brought in that they could begin to construct proper facilities. They did manage to participate in several scouting expeditions, especially toward the end of the summer and throughout the fall. F and H Companies were particularly busy, reporting scouts in excess of 300 miles in August, September and October, while G and I maintained security along military roads between forts and guarded the Governor of Kansas as he visited western Kansas. The Kansas companies of the 38th Infantry also spent a great deal of time providing security to the railroads being built in western Kansas.¹⁶

The short history of the 38th Infantry Regiment also included its share of tragedy. Some of these events show the conditions endured by the soldiers, black and white, on the frontier, others show perhaps more specific hardships suffered by black soldiers. For example, death was fairly commonplace and most units could expect to lose a soldier to disease or injury more often than to wounds suffered in combat. During the first couple of months of 1867, before the 38th moved to Kansas, they lost thirty-seven men, most to diseases such as Typhoid Fever, others to Cholera. Then as they were moving to Kansas and New Mexico, a Cholera epidemic struck the unit and more than one hundred soldiers died along the way.¹⁷ Finally, there is a comment listed on the Annual Return for 1868 that possibly gives an example of another factor that black soldiers encountered: "Private, Joseph Christian, Co. "C." hung by mob while in hands of Civil Authorities."¹⁸

Eighteen Sixty-Eight brought some changes for the 41st Infantry. In January 1868, F Company relieved B Company at Point Isabel, stayed one month and then returned to Fort Brown. B Company moved to Ringgold Barracks along with Company G, so that by the end of February 1868, Companies A, B, D, G, H, I and K were all at Ringgold Barracks or Fort McIntosh, while the Headquarters and Companies C, E, and F remained at Fort Brown. Then in March, the 41st received orders for Fort Clark. Colonel Mackenzie posted A Company at Fort McIntosh and I Company at Fort Duncan, near Eagle Pass, Texas and marched the rest of the Regiment to Fort Clark near Del Rio. Frontier tactics called for company size units spread out to cover vast areas of territory. Therefore, in April, after a short stay at Fort Clark, the Companies of the 41st Infantry marched to occupy a series of posts guarding the main routes of travel throughout southwestern Texas. The Headquarters and Company K moved back to Fort Duncan and joined up with I Company. A and G Companies moved to Fort Stockton, B went to Fort Davis, D to Fort Inge, H to Fort Quitman, while C, E and F remained at Fort Clark. After

the companies were deployed to the various frontier posts, the 41st Regiment formed part of a line of posts spread out throughout southwestern Texas to cover the low mountains along the Rio Grande to their south and the Staked Plains to their north and west.¹⁹

The first combat reported in the 41st Infantry's Regimental Returns happened in June 1868. During this time the soldiers continued to perform garrison duties including daily fatigues, construction, guard and so on, along with duties outside the post such as securing the mail and stage routes, road repair, hanging telegraph wire and almost whatever else required secure labor. During one of these missions, a small band of Indians on horseback approached a detachment of soldiers and attacked them. The soldiers responded well and repelled the attack.²⁰

The 41st Infantry Regiment continued to perform its various frontier duties through the rest of 1868 and into the winter of 1869. In February 1869, in compliance with orders from the Commander of the 5th Military District Companies D, F, and I marched to Fort McKavitt, Texas. By April the disposition of the regiment was as follows: A and G were at Fort Stockton, B and E at Fort Davis, C Company at Fort Clark, D and I at Fort McKavett, F at Fort Concho, H at Fort Quitman and K at Fort Duncan. The companies would remain in these locations until the fall when they would begin to consolidate with the 38th Infantry to form the 24th.

On March 3, 1869, Congress enacted the Army Appropriation Act that in effect reduced the number of Infantry regiments from forty-five to twenty-five and the total number of soldiers from 54,000 to 37,313.²¹ In order to meet this force structure, the newly appointed General of the Army, Lieutenant General William T. Sherman, ordered the consolidation of regiments across the Army. The number of black infantry regiments was reduced to two as the 39th and 40th Regiments consolidated and formed the 25th

Infantry, and the 38th and 41st merged to form the 24th Infantry. After this reduction, the four black units, the 9th and 10th Cavalry, and the 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments would remain segregated units for the next eighty years.²²

In order to proceed with the consolidation the various units of the 38th and 41st had to be gathered from their scattered outposts. In April 1869, the 38th Infantry formed a battalion of Companies B, E, G, and I and began moving them to Texas. Companies B, E and I were at or near Fort Hays and moved generally as a unit under the command of Captain John H. Clous through the Indian Territory where they picked up G Company and continued into Texas. Their ultimate goal was Fort Richardson Texas, just north of the Brazos River in central Texas. This battalion of the 38th marched between 300 and 400 miles each month, throughout the spring and arrived on June 22, 1869.²³

While this was happening, Colonel Hazen was transferred to the 6th Infantry Regiment and Cuvier Grover was placed on a list of officers awaiting orders. So, the command of the rest of the 38th went to Major Henry C. Merriam. Companies A(Fort Bayard), C(Fort Bayard), D(Fort Craig), F(Fort Cummings), H(Fort McRae)and K(Fort Selden) would remain in New Mexico until the Fall, staying busy with extensive scouts and other duties. For example, H Company would scout for eighty-one days, covering more than 1300 miles throughout New Mexico and Texas from March to June 1869. In effect, two thirds of the regiment remained on station in New Mexico while the smaller third marched into Texas to begin forming the 24th Infantry. However, at the end of July, Major Merriam was transferred to the new 24th U.S. Infantry and sent to Fort Richardson to execute the consolidation.²⁴

While the companies of the 38th had to be brought great distances, the 41st was in a much better position. Its companies were dispersed among six posts, Fort McKavett(HQ, D, F & I), Fort Stockton(A&G), Fort Davis(B&E), Fort Clark(C), Fort

Concho(F), Fort Quitman(H), and Fort Duncan(K), where they would remain throughout the summer. In September 1869, B Company was ordered to Fort Bliss Texas, near El Paso in order to consolidate with A Company, 38th Infantry to form Company A. 24th Infantry.²⁵

The consolidation began nearly as soon as Major Merriam arrived in Texas as shown in the Table 1.

Table 1
Consolidation of the 38th and 41st Infantry Regiments

24th	41st	38th	Location	Date
A	B	A	Fort Bliss	Aug. 69
B	E	D	Fort Davis	Nov. 69
C	C	C	Fort Clarke	Nov. 69
D	D&I		Fort Davis	Nov. 69
E		B&E	Fort Griffin	Oct. 69
F	F	F	Fort Concho	Nov. 69
G	A&G		Fort Stockton	Nov. 69
H	H	H	Fort Quitman	Nov. 69
I		G&I	Fort Richardson	Sep. 69
K	K	K	Fort Duncan	Dec. 69

Source: Monthly Returns. 38th and 41st Infantry Regiments. August through December 1869.

The 24th Infantry Regiment would spend the next eleven years serving at a variety of posts throughout Texas. Initially the companies of the 24th were posted along a line of forts situated between the southern border marked by the Rio Grande in the south, and the Staked Plains to the north. At this time in Texas, the biggest threats were

from Indians leaving their reservations north of the Red River and coming south into Texas, or bandits and outlaws riding north out of Mexico. Consequently these posts were intended to put U.S. Army units where they could respond to either threat. Unfortunately this also placed great hardships on the soldiers manning these frontier posts, as Texas was mostly unsettled and the climate severe.

The 24th Infantry was by no means the only unit in Texas. In 1870, both Texas and Louisiana were part of the Department of Texas, one of the Departments in the Military Division of the South. The Department of Texas was commanded by Colonel Joseph J. Reynolds, 3rd Cavalry, and included two cavalry regiments, the 4th and 9th, and five Infantry regiments, the 10th, 11th, 19th, 24th and 25th. It is noticeable that at this time all four of the black regiments were in the southwest, the three listed above in Texas, and the 10th Cavalry in the Indian Territory. Although not necessarily stated as an official position, there was a contemporary belief that black men could not survive the extreme cold weather in the northern climates and this may have lead to their initial postings. The 24th had a total of 630 officers and men at the end of 1871 and was the second largest infantry regiment in the Army, falling about ten men less than the 19th Infantry in Baton Rouge. In all, there were seventy-four companies in Texas and Louisiana, for a total of 4469 officers and men, distributed over eighteen posts.²⁹

Throughout 1870 and 1871, the companies of the regiment conducted either scouts, or made movements to new posts as the department commander established his operational organization. Since Colonel Reynolds considered the Rio Grande frontier to be mostly unsettled, he wanted the line of posts further strengthened with a series of subposts established between the major forts. At each fort there was a mixture of infantry and cavalry companies. The infantry would man the post while the cavalry would conduct extensive scouts in their operational area. With the addition of the

subposts, the companies would split their force in half, send one half to the subpost and the other back in garrison. Every thirty days they would rotate the soldiers in the subpost with those in garrison. Consequently, half the force was in the field at all times and the other half back in garrison getting ready to go back out.²⁷

The initial leadership of the 24th Infantry was filled with names made famous in the Civil War, many of which would lead the Indian fighting effort for the next thirty years. Ranald B. Mackenzie would later move to command the 4th Cavalry and become famous for his cross border raids. William R. Shafter, a.k.a. "Pecos Bill," would spend seven years in the regiment, then command the 1st Infantry and eventually lead the U.S. Army in operations in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. In fact, he would be the continuity for the regiment as the command would turn over three times in three years. At the end of 1870, Colonel Mackenzie was transferred to command the 4th Cavalry and he was replaced by Colonel Abner Doubleday. Colonel Doubleday commanded the regiment until 1873 when he was replaced by Colonel Joseph H. Potter who would ultimately command for over twelve years.

Throughout the early '70s, the companies would occupy Forts Davis, Duncan, McKavett, Quitman and Stockman. For most of this time they would serve with companies from the 9th Cavalry, the 25th Infantry and the 8th Cavalry. Their duties included securing the stages, mail and supplies along the roads between posts, scouting for Indians or bandits, building new roads, stringing telegraph wire, and all the duties necessary to run a frontier fort. In addition they also participated in operations against the Indians when directed. Shafter organized the first of many expeditions over the Staked Plains in June 1872. This area was a vast tract of uncharted land that provided a sanctuary to the Indians and a place for the Indians and Mexican bandits to meet in order to exchange money, guns or liquor for stolen stock. By crossing over the Staked

Plains. Shafter was demonstrating to the Indians that the Army could operate in harsh territory. Eventually these types of operations would overcome the Indians in the southwest. From the 24th, companies E, H, and I participated in that expedition, departing their posts on June 21, 1872 and returning at various times in the Fall.²⁶

Just as the infantry was used to guard the fort while the cavalry rode out on their scouts, on this expedition the Infantry companies were used to guard the supply camps and trains while the cavalry rode over the vast terrain. This was an effective technique as it allowed the cavalry to ride quickly to find and pursue hostile Indians, and then return to a secure base. Also, the supply base could move with sufficient security behind the cavalry at a slower pace, but fast enough to stay within one or two days ride. On this expedition it appears that E Company guarded the trains as they moved behind the Cavalry and Shafter, while H and I guarded the supply camp at Fresh Fork of the Brazos River. In July, E Company reported they were on the Staked Plains while H and I were guarding supplies. In August, K Company replaced H at the supply camp and I Company went to Fort Concho to get more supplies and restock the supply camp. By the end of August, E Company reported they had marched as far as Fort Sumner, New Mexico for a total of four hundred and ninety-six miles.²⁷

On October 12, 1872, the Regimental Headquarters and band moved to Fort Duncan near Eagle Pass, Texas. After a short stay, they moved south to Fort Brown arriving in late October. Colonel Doubleday still commanded the regiment which now occupied three posts along the Rio Grande, Ringgold Barracks, Fort McIntosh and Fort Brown. The 24th was still in the Department of Texas, now commanded by Colonel Christopher. C. Augur. The Department of Texas was one of four Departments in the Military Division of the Missouri, commanded by LTG Philip H. Sheridan. Having

seventy-six companies and four thousand, six hundred and thirty soldiers. the Department was the biggest in the Division.³⁰

These early Texas years provide some interesting insights into life in the 24th. Toward the end of 1872 the Quartermaster of the Army sent five hundred sets of new infantry equipment to the Department of Texas for testing. Thirty sets were issued to four companies in the 10th Infantry, four companies in the 11th Infantry, four companies in the 24th, and three companies in the 25th Infantry. D Company, 24th Infantry at Fort McIntosh, was issued the last seventeen serviceable sets. Orders were to put the equipment through rigorous field testing and report back monthly. This event is noteworthy because it shows that despite contemporary ideas about blacks in society, to the Army logistics system the black and white soldiers were treated equally at times.³¹

Although organized strictly as an infantry regiment, there are a few notations in the record that E Company, 24th Infantry was mounted for a period of time in the early 1870's. On April 19, 1873, Captain John W. Clous, Commander E Company, 24th, was ordered to report to Colonel Hatch, 9th Cavalry and perform what duties Colonel Hatch ordered. In the citation of this order, E Company is specifically noted to be a mounted company. This fact is not mentioned in many other sources, so it is possible that after reporting to the 9th Cavalry, E Company was mistaken for another cavalry company. This experiment may not have lasted long, as later records show E Company conducting dismounted operations.³²

Another aspect of life for the soldiers in the 24th Infantry was the occasional parade for dignitaries and senior officers. In May 1873, the regiment received a visit by the Secretary of War, William W. Belknap and the Division Commander, LTG Philip Sheridan. The units at Fort Brown were formed and ready to receive the distinguished visitors who were expected on the afternoon of the 25th of April. They waited most of

the day and into the evening. Unfortunately, the visiting did not show. Look-outs were posted in order to rouse the post if they appeared, but they failed to alert all of the units when the party did show the next morning. So, before the soldiers were formed for the morning inspection, they saw the Secretary and the Commanding General ride past and go straight to the Post Commander's home. Luckily Colonel Doubleday and his wife had been forewarned and were ready to receive the visitors. All in all it was reported to have been a grand occasion. Mrs. Doubleday was said to have been a most gracious hostess and the soldiers appeared splendid on parade. Undoubtedly the Secretary and General Sheridan left with a good impression of the 24th Infantry as well as the other units at Fort Brown.³³

Another event that happened shortly after Secretary Belknap's visit shows some of the other aspects of frontier duty, and characteristics of the black soldiers. On the 17th and 18th of May 1873, Colonel Mackenzie, Commander of the 4th Cavalry, attacked a force of Kickapoo, Lipan, and Mescalero-Apache Indians near Remolino, Mexico.³⁴ In this operation he had five companies of the 4th Cavalry and a detachment of Seminole Indian Scouts, led by 2LT John L. Bullis from the 24th Infantry. Lieutenant Bullis and his Seminole Indian Scouts are a special story that cannot be told in this study. However, he was only one, perhaps the best one, of the many lieutenants from the 24th that would lead detachments of cavalry throughout their years in Texas. What this may indicate is a level of trust in the soldiers left back at the fort, as well as a certain level of confidence in the abilities of these infantry lieutenants. In other words, the lieutenants were willing to leave their soldiers with less supervision, perhaps just in the hands of their noncommissioned officers, while they led the more mobile cavalry units scouting the countryside.

During this operation, Colonel Mackenzie received support from Shafter at Fort Duncan. This shows that even though the infantry did participate in expeditions and scouts extensively throughout the Texas years, often they were relied upon to support far ranging Cavalry operations. Colonel Mackenzie makes special mention of the good support given by Shafter and the soldiers at Fort Duncan. This is even more noteworthy when we consider the size of the force at Fort Duncan, which was normally three companies of cavalry and infantry. That was barely enough to handle their own operations.³⁵

Late in the summer of 1873, Colonel Joseph H. Potter replaced Colonel Doubleday as the Commander of the 24th Infantry. Colonel Potter would lead the regiment for the rest of its time in Texas and most of the time the 24th spent in the Indian Territory. This marks a point in the life of the regiment where things became somewhat more settled. For the rest of the decade, there would be few changes in posts, leadership or duties. The 24th continued to occupy Forts Brown, McIntosh, Duncan and Ringgold Barracks along with either the 9th Cavalry or, later, the 8th Cavalry. They built roads, strung telegraph wire, guarded stages and watering holes and secured their posts and the immediate area. They also scouted extensively and participated in major operations. In 1875, for example, Shafter took a force of six companies from the 10th Cavalry, two companies from the 24th and one company from the 25th Infantry back into the Staked Plains. These operations eventually took away sanctuaries from the Indians, while helping advance the infrastructure needed to settle Texas, gradually giving control over the frontier to the U.S. Army and settlers.³⁶

Not all of the 24th's operations were confined to Texas. In fact, they were not even confined to the United States. Prior to the operations of the 4th Cavalry in 1873, various Indian tribes, including the Kickapoos, Lipans and Mescaleros, had been

notorious for their raids out of Mexico to steal stock and other goods in Texas.

Mackenzie's attack in Remolino forced the Kickapoos to negotiate and most of these Indian raids stopped for nearly three years. However, after a series of brutal attacks in the Spring of 1876, it was clear that these raids were back on. Consequently, the Department Commander, Brigadier General Edward O. C. Ord ordered Shafter to organize a force that could counter the raids and to follow the Indians into Mexico if necessary. The primary force would come from Lt. Bullis and his Seminole Scouts, the 10th Cavalry, and the 24th Infantry. This force would continuously operate throughout the mountains and deserts along the southwest border, often crossing into Mexico.³⁷

There was little response from the Mexican government to these cross border operations. Since Shafter and Bullis avoided most of the populated areas of that part of Mexico, there was not any outcry from the Mexican citizens in the area. Also, a revolution erupted in 1876 that took the focus of the Mexican government, so Shafter's incursions did not draw any unwanted attention. Finally, Shafter and Ord believed they had the tacit approval of the Mexican government, so long as they steered clear of the Mexican towns.³⁸

Unfortunately that unspoken approval ended in early 1877 when Porfirio Diaz successfully overthrew the Mexican government. Immediately the new Governor of Coahuila, the Mexican state closest to Fort Duncan, made aiding U.S. forces an act of treason. When officials in Piedras Negras, the town directly across the Rio Grande from Eagle Pass and Fort Duncan, arrested two men Shafter had used as guides in operations during the summer of 1876, Shafter reacted swiftly. On April 3, 1877, Shafter took three companies of the 10th Cavalry and two companies of the 24th Infantry, marched them into the town plaza and demanded the men be released. Despite the swift reaction, the

two had been moved further into Mexico and so Shafter returned to the U.S. empty handed.³⁹

This incursion caused a clamor in both the Mexican government and the U.S. government. The United States was pressing Mexico for a treaty that would allow pursuit of Indians and other marauding bands across the border, where as the new Mexican government was pushing for official recognition. In order to strengthen the U.S. position in the matter, General Sherman gave orders to General Ord that explicitly allowed border crossings in pursuit of the enemy. The result was that Shafter and Bullis came face to face with the Mexican Army and possibly war with Mexico.⁴⁰

In April 1878, President Rutherford B. Hayes gave in to severe Congressional pressure and recognized the Diaz government. But, the Mexicans would not reciprocate with a treaty for cross border movements until the order to Ord was withdrawn. The U.S. was not willing to do that. Instead, General Sherman sent Mackenzie and the 4th Cavalry back into Texas. Mackenzie then organized a force with "eight troops of cavalry, three battalions of Infantry under Colonel Shafter, three batteries of artillery (including one of Gatling guns), Bullis' scouts, and a train of forty wagons-more than one thousand men."⁴¹ This huge element crossed the Rio Grande on June 12, 1878 and marched around eastern Mexico for a week before encountering any resistance by the Mexicans. They met Mexican troops on the 19th at Remolino, and on the 21st at Monclova Viejo. Both times Mackenzie and Shafter forced the Mexicans to back down. After sufficiently embarrassing the Mexicans, Mackenzie brought his force back across the Rio Grande.⁴²

Had war with Mexico come at this point, clearly the 24th Infantry would have been right in the thick of it. Luckily for both countries, cooler heads prevailed, and, although tensions would stay high for another two years, eventually the U.S. and Mexican governments would negotiate treaties satisfactory to both. However, in 1878

the trouble with Indian raiders coming out of Mexico was not over. In particular, one Apache named Victorio, would confront black soldiers in New Mexico and Texas and be forced back into Mexico four times. In an extensive operation that involved the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th Infantry, Colonel Ben Grierson, commander of the 10th Cavalry, orchestrated a masterful campaign. He posted detachments of infantry and cavalry throughout the rugged terrain of west Texas, covering every watering hole known in the vast wasteland. By covering the water holes, Grierson knew that he would encounter Victorio somewhere in the gigantic trap. He was not wrong. In late July 1880, Victorio was chased into Texas by Mexican forces and soon stumbled into Grierson and a small detachment at Tinaja de las Palmas, a watering hole in Quitman Canyon. Grierson's small force held off Victorio's band of one hundred and fifty warriors until relieved by more Cavalry later. Again in early August, Grierson and his black soldiers met Victorio and forced him back into Mexico. Not able to move into Texas because of the black soldiers, Victorio was forced to stay in Mexico. In October he was trapped in the Tres Castillo Mountains and killed by Mexican forces.⁴³

Operations against Victorio demonstrate not only the valor of the black soldiers, but also their stamina and ability to endure extended movements in the harshest terrain. The climate of west Texas in the summer time is some of the worst in the world. Time after time, lesser men had tried to endure the hardships there and failed. Yet, the black cavalymen and soldiers operated throughout the area for months at a time, enduring thirst, heat, scorching sun and searing wind. These men took the Staked Plains away from the Indian. They took away his water and his sanctuary. Although the black soldiers played a vital role in operations in Texas, rarely do they get mentioned in popular histories.

The 24th Infantry is rarely praised in the official records. Nevertheless, the regiment continued to succeed in its missions, while also showing its qualities in other ways. In one particular area the 24th led the Army for most of the frontier years: desertion rates. It is a fairly well known fact that the black regiments had low desertion rates than the white units. Of these regiments, the 24th had the lowest desertion rates for most years between 1870 and 1896. For example, in 1877, the average number of desertions for an infantry regiment was thirty-one, and the average among cavalry regiments was one hundred and twenty-eight. But, the averages among the four black regiments were only ten soldiers for the year. That year the 9th Cavalry had the lowest in the Army with only six desertions, followed by the 24th with seven. The total for all branches for the year was two thousand five hundred and sixteen soldiers who went over the hill, of which the black regiments accounted for forty, or 1.6 percent.⁴⁴

Eighteen seventy seven was not an unusual year. Most years the statistics are similar. However, it is interesting that most years various Department Commanders, Adjutant Generals and others comment about the desertion rates and discuss reasons why so many soldiers, nearly 10 percent annually, leave the ranks. Not once, though, do any of these individuals look to the black units for possible solutions or explanations. The reasons cited for desertion included the low pay, poor food, poor uniforms, harsh duties and locations, and even fraudulent activities of some who enlist repeatedly for bounties, only to desert and enlist elsewhere under a different name.⁴⁵ The black soldiers endured all the same hardships, but deserted significantly less often than their white counterparts. Why this was so is not clear. Perhaps they gave greater loyalty to their unit. Records show that reenlistment rates were also high and many officers stayed with the units for their entire careers, so there is evidence of a desire to remain part of the organization. Maybe there was no place for the black soldier to desert to. The posts

were fairly isolated, especially once they moved to the Indian Territory, and far from large black communities. Also, life in the Army may have been better than life in their home towns. So staying with the unit may have been the better choice and desertion a less viable option.

Regardless of their reasons for staying, the facts are that the black regiments performed well in both garrison and the field, were led by capable officers and continued to grow into efficient units with a core of experienced veterans. After the Victorio operations, Shafter was transferred out of the regiment and later promoted to Colonel and given command of the 1st Infantry. His replacement was John E. Yard who commanded in place of Colonel Potter, while the latter was on detached service as the Governor of the Soldiers Home in Washington, D.C.⁴⁶ Yard would lead the 24th through the next few years in Texas as they continued to perform most of the same frontier duties. In late 1880, the 24th received orders to move north to the Indian Territory, and by mid-1881 they occupied their new posts at Fort Reno, Fort Sill and Fort Supply.⁴⁷

The soldiers discovered mixed blessings at their new posts. The accommodations were deemed to be much better than the Texas forts. For example, Fort Sill had stone barracks and heated baths and washrooms. Unfortunately, the posts were severely isolated as the Indian Territory was off-limits to all settlers. So, at the new posts there were no local communities to house families or for entertainment. Since soldiers were forbidden to marry unless their wife accepted a job as an officer's servant or company laundress, there was no family housing for the junior enlisted. Consequently the soldiers that were married were forced to house their families in whatever they could erect next to the post. Often this meant wives and children were living in relative squalor just outside the post gates.⁴⁸

The 24th Infantry continued to perform many of the same duties that they performed in Texas. However, they generally stayed closer to the post than in the past. Most of their efforts were directed toward either maintaining control over the Indians occupying the reservations throughout the Indian Territory, or keeping settlers out. One individual, called Captain Payne in most accounts, makes a living by organizing bands of settlers to invade the Indian Territory and attempt to stake a claim. If caught, their punishment is generally a small fine, if they are punished at all. Payne would continue to frustrate the soldiers and leaders of the 24th for most of their time in the Indian Territory.⁴⁹

On the fourth of May 1886, Colonel Potter was promoted to Brigadier General and given command of the Department of the Missouri, further proof of the competence and reputation of the leaders of the 24th. His replacement was Colonel Zenis R. Bliss, who had extensive experience with black soldiers through his time in the 25th Infantry. Colonel Bliss and the 24th would spend the next two years in the isolated Indian Territory, before moving further west to the Department of Arizona in 1888. Here they occupied Forts Apache and Grant, and the San Carlos Indian Agency, in Arizona, while the Headquarters went to Fort Bayard, New Mexico. Now, while the conditions in Texas were somewhat meager, and the accommodations in Indian Territory, better, the posts in Arizona and New Mexico were down right primitive. No bathing facilities, buildings falling down from rot, and the locations just as isolated and remote. San Carlo was especially bad. The heat was an unbearable 110 degrees on a cool day. It was a dry and barren post, over looking Indians at the San Carlos reservation who just wanted to leave. The soldiers at San Carlos were rotated every six months in order to keep them from deserting or revolting. At Fort Bayard the post Quartermaster offered to put up hospital tents until they could repair the buildings.⁵⁰

The men of the 24th endured this bleak situation for eight years before receiving any relief. During this time there were the normal frontier duties: escorts, fatigues, guards, and Indian watching. Now, however, since the real Indian threat had died down, the soldiers went on practice marches to maintain their fighting skills. Several years earlier the Army began pushing marksmanship training among the line units. So the 24th had a myriad of duties to keep their minds off the heat.

Despite the conditions, 1889 proved to be a banner year for the regiment. First, when the Adjutant General tallied the statistics for the decade, the 24th clearly stood out. The roll up of soldiers lost for disability, desertion or death showed that while the regiment had an average number of deaths and disabilities, they had the fewest desertions of all units. In the past ten years they had only fifty desertions, which was fifty fewer than the closest unit.⁵¹ That was a statistic enviable by any unit, even those serving today. Of course this fact is not mentioned by the AG in his written comments.

Also, 1889 brought glory for some soldiers in the 24th. On May 11, 1889, Major Joseph W. Wham, U. S. Army Paymaster was traveling between Fort Grant and Fort Thomas, escorted by soldiers from the 24th Infantry and 10th Cavalry. In charge of the escort was Sgt. Benjamin Brown and Corporal Isaiah Mays. As the party moved down the road, they suddenly came upon a large boulder blocking their way. As they attempted to move the boulder they were attacked by fifteen to twenty bandits. The outlaws shot the driver and two horses, immobilizing the wagon, wounded Brown, Mays and several of the Privates. Sgt. Brown attempted to get the soldiers behind cover and defend the pay wagon, but they were overcome by the superior numbers. Meanwhile, Cpl. Mays, though bleeding from his wounds, walked two miles back to a local ranch and brought help. The bandits got away with more than \$28,000 dollars, but, Major Wham was so impressed with the coolness of Sgt. Brown and Cpl. Mays and the rest of

the small escort party, that he recommended them all for the Medal of Honor. In the end the War Department awarded the Medal of Honor to Brown and Mays, and Certificates of Merit to the nine Privates in the group.⁵²

1889 was a good year for the 24th, but it was not really that unique. The soldiers performed the same level of high quality service, no matter where they were. This can be attributed to their leadership as well as the quality of the black soldiers. Of all the Regular Army regiments, black and white, the 24th spent the longest amount of time in the southwest, in some of the harshest locations. Yet they continued to make the best of their situation. By the middle of the 1890s, they had built gymnasiums, bowling alleys and canteens at most of their posts. They organized theater productions, music shows and even debating societies. Then, in 1896, the Army rewarded their long service on the frontier by posting the 24th to a new, northern location. This time, however, some things would be different. The regiment was to be together in one location for the first time in its twenty-six-year history. Also, they were to be posted in a garrison adjacent to a fairly large city. This was an unexpected reward that the soldiers were joyfully anticipating. So, in the middle of Oct. 1896, the 24th arrived at Fort Douglas, Utah on the northern edge of Salt Lake City.⁵³ When the regimental commander formed the regiment, together as a unit for the first time, he closed a chapter in the regimental history. Their frontier battles were over.

¹Edward M. Coffman, The Old Army. A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 218; and The New York Times, August 10, 1866, 5-6.

²Monthly Regimental Returns, 38th Infantry, 1867-1869. Curiously, Hazen is listed as "Absent without leave", or "Whereabouts unknown" on several monthly returns during this time.

³Nalty, 58

⁴Fletcher, 21. Perhaps, the most famous of these officers was George A Custer, who reportedly opted for a position as a Captain in a white unit instead of the Colonelcy of a black regiment.

⁵Charles M. Robinson III, Bad Hand, A Biography of General Ranald S. Mackenzie (Austin, TX: State House Press, 1993), 41-42.

⁶Monthly Regimental Returns, 38th Infantry, December 1866: January through June 1867.

⁷Monthly Regimental Returns, 41st Infantry, December 1866: January, February 1867.

⁸*Ibid.* April through July 1867.

⁹Monthly Regimental Returns, 38th Infantry, June through August 1867.

¹⁰The United States Army and Navy Journal and Gazette, (Volume IV), April 27, 1867, (New York: Publication Office), 569.

¹¹Monthly Regimental Returns, 38th Infantry, October 1867 through June 1868.

¹²William E. Gorham, "Buffalo Soldiers: The Formation of the Twenty-Fourth Infantry Regiment: October 1866-June 1871," (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Master's Thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1993), 47-50.

¹³Robinson, 46

¹⁴Monthly Regimental Returns, 41st Infantry, July through November 1867: and Robinson, 47.

¹⁵Monthly Regimental Returns, 41st Infantry, September through December 1867.

¹⁶Monthly Regimental Returns, 38th Infantry, January through December 1868.

¹⁷Gorham, 42-44: and Monthly Regimental Returns, 38th Infantry, January through December 1867.

¹⁸Annual Return for the Year 1868 of the 38th Infantry Regiment.

¹⁹Monthly Regimental Returns, 41st Infantry, January through December 1868.

²⁰*Ibid.* June 1868.

²¹Utley, 15.

²²A good summary of the consolidations of all of the Regular Army regiments to meet the drawdown objectives is listed in the introductory material in the National Archives and Record Service Microfilm Series, "Adjutant-General's Office. Returns from Regular Army Regiments, June 1821-December 1916." (Washington: National Archives and Records Service, 1966)

²³Monthly Regimental Returns, 38th Infantry, April through June 1869.

²⁴Ibid, June through July 1869.

²⁵Monthly Regimental Returns, 41st Infantry, September 1869.

²⁶U. S. Congress, House Executive Documents, Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, 1871, 65-70.

²⁷Ibid, 65.

²⁸Monthly Regimental Returns, 24th Infantry, June through August 1872.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰U.S. Congress, House Executive Documents, Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 44th Congress, 1873, 62.

³¹Army and Navy Journal (Volume X), October 27, 1872.

³²Army and Navy Journal (Volume X), April 19, 1873, 564

³³Army and Navy Journal (Volume X), May 17, 1863, 597.

³⁴Utley, 347.

³⁵Army and Navy Journal(Volume X),June 28, 1873, 728.

³⁶Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1875, 94

³⁷Utley, 350-353.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid, 354.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1881, 158-163; and Utley, 356-365.

⁴⁴Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1877, 49.

⁴⁵The problem of desertion is discussed almost every year by either the Commanding General of the Army or the Adjutant General.

⁴⁶Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1879, 20.

⁴⁷Annual Report of the Secretary of War. 1881 50.

⁴⁸Fowler. 74-78.

⁴⁹Mr. Payne is mentioned almost annually in the Secretary of War Reports from 1882 to 1886.

⁵⁰Fowler. 80-85.

⁵¹Annual Report of the Secretary of War. 1889. 82-85. In the Commanding General's Report there is an extensive discussion and analysis of the desertion statistics. Reasons why soldiers desert and possible solutions are given. However, even though two units clearly stand out on the statistical charts, the 9th Cavalry and 24th Infantry, no mention is made of their good record.

⁵²Ibid. 185-186; and Fowler. 85-86.

⁵³Fowler. 85-87; and Michael J. T. Clark. "A History of the Twenty-Fourth United States Infantry Regiment in Utah, 1896-1900" (Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1979).

CHAPTER 4

CARRYING THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN¹

When the 24th Infantry came together at Fort Douglass, Utah, they began a new era in their history. For the U.S. Army and the men of the 24th, this would be the time when they would carry the country's colors to far away places. Once again, the soldiers would lead the way as the American society expanded to new interests and territories across the oceans. The 24th would be in the thick of these operations and at times would take their place in the van guard of the Army. During the first part of this new era they would deploy unexpectedly to Cuba and then the Philippines. Then they would enter a period of regular two to three year rotations back to the Philippines. Finally, this era would end with their participation in the Punitive Expedition in Mexico.

Their successes in these operations would continue to enhance their soldierly reputation. Unfortunately, as their fighting reputation would grow, so would racial discrimination grow both inside and outside of the Army. Perhaps their successes directly threatened white supremacy, perhaps this was just a reflection of the attitudes and mores of American society. Whatever the reason, this must have been most frustrating for the men of the 24th. To have their successes discounted and to face insult and injury at the hands of the very citizens they guarded must have built up a certain level of anger within the rank and file of the regiment. Consequently, the end of this era would not be marked by a dramatic victory in combat. Instead, it would be a night of

rioting in Houston, Texas, and the Court Marshal of most of the Third Battalion of the Twenty-fourth that would end the glory days of the black soldiers.

The era starts with the 24th's move to Fort Douglass Utah in 1896. Although they were not welcomed with open arms by the citizens of near-by Salt Lake City, the soldiers found a pleasant life at the new post. The buildings were modern, sufficiently comfortable, and certainly better than what they had left in Arizona and New Mexico. Throughout their first year in Utah, they trained together, paraded for the local citizens, and the regimental band held a number of public performances. In addition, the soldiers seemed to realize they were in the spotlight and were on their best behavior whenever they went out in public. Their public deportment, as well as the events the unit held in the community, gradually turned the locals around until they began to view the regiment with pride. The people in Salt Lake City began to view the 24th as their regiment and were glad to have them in their neighborhood.²

Unfortunatley, this life of pleasant duty was short lived. Just over a year after they arrived in Utah, the United States became engaged in political trouble with Spain and seemed destined to go to war. In anticipation of this eventuality, the War Department issued a series of orders to various regular army regiments on April 15, 1898, and began moving them to southern ports. The 24th was ordered to New Orleans, but that port proved to be unsuitable and they were diverted to Camp Thomas in Chickamauga, Georgia where they gathered with a large part of the Army.

They were scheduled to depart on April 19, 1897. On that day, thousands of people from Salt Lake City gathered to give the soldiers a rousing send off. Unfortunately, as happened with many units heading south, the 24th was delayed and did not leave until the 20th. Still, as they pulled out of the station, "15,000 to 20,000 people wer on the depot grounds" to see them leave and wish them well.⁴ The image the

troops had of themselves and their country must have been grand as they pulled down the rail line. They were a trained and ready regiment called to carry the flag to far away and exotic locations. The people they fought for openly expressed their love and admiration and gave them a most spectacular bon voyage. What a great day this must have been for the black soldiers of the 24th Infantry Regiment!

If their departure was so fantastic, their arrival in the south must have been a severe blow to their pride and morale. All of the four black regiments reported a distinct difference in their receptions in southern cities. For example, in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, black soldiers saw the crowds divided across the tracks, whites on one side and blacks on the other. As blacks cheered the soldiers, the whites were quiet. In Nashville, Tennessee the crowd was all black and kept away from the train so the soldiers could not shake their hands as they had in northern cities. Later, when in the southern towns in Georgia or Florida the soldiers found the color line drawn boldly across their path. They could not enter certain businesses, theaters, and the like. They were prevented from using the same streetcars and public facilities as their fellow white soldiers, and were often insulted and abused when out in public. This was new treatment but the black soldiers had certainly heard of it. It is remarkable that they were able to restrain themselves as much as they did before they reacted.

The 24th Infantry Regiment, along with a large part of the Regular Army was part of the 5th Army Corps, commanded by their old leader, now a major general, William R. Shafter, old Pecos Bill. In the second week of May Shafter's 5th Army Corps was moved to Tampa, Florida, and ordered to begin preparations for a campaign against the Spanish in Cuba. This Corps consisted of two infantry divisions with three brigades of three regiments each, a cavalry division with two brigades of three regiments, an independent brigade with two regiments and a battalion of light artillery with six batteries. The 24th

Infantry was part of the 3rd Brigade, 1st Division. Originally, Colonel Jacob F. Kent, the commander of the 24th was designated as the 3rd Brigade Commander, but when the division was formed he was promoted to brigadier general and given command of the 1st Division. Lieutenant Colonel Emerson H. Lipscomb then took over command of the 24th. The division comprised eight regular and one volunteer regiments organized as follows: First Brigade, 6th and 16th Infantries and the 71st New York Volunteer Infantry; Second Brigade, the 2nd, 10th and 21st Infantries; and, Third Brigade, the 9th, 13th and 24th Infantries. In addition to the 24th, the three other black regiments were part of the 5th Corps, with the 25th Infantry being in the 2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, the 9th Cavalry in the 1st Brigade and 10th Cavalry in the 2nd Brigade of the Cavalry Division. All four regiments would play key roles in the campaign in Cuba.⁵

Once they moved to Tampa, life became a mixture of confusion, rumor, and boredom. The confusion came from the unplanned, hasty preparations being done to get the corps deployed to Cuba. Thousands of tons of unmarked supplies arrived at the train depots to be transloaded onto transports and had to be sorted and organized. The rush to get just the bare necessities identified and loaded would later cause severe shortages of food, ammunition and clothing during the campaign ahead (and eventually force the total reorganization of the War Department). Also, the campaign plan went through a series of evolutions as pressure from the White House and War Department continuously debated the best approach to defeating the Spanish in Cuba and Puerto Rico. With each change, a new round of rumors would fly through the camp. To compound the problems, there was little for the soldiers to do except fatigue and labor details. The intent in bringing the corps to Tampa was not only to prepare for movement, but also to conduct some large scale training. Unfortunately, there was little room for that kind of exercise. Furthermore, the officers were probably too busy with

either the planning or sorting out the logistics effort to direct any thought to unit training.

The best example of how chaotic the situation was in Tampa was seen in the loading of the troop transports when the corps finally began to leave. Locating and outfitting an adequate number of ships was a severe problem. When ordered to board, some units found they were manifested along with two or three other units, which was more than the ship's capacity. So, in the end, many of the units that made it into the campaign were those that actually ran the fastest to their ship and arrived ahead of other units.⁶

Without a lot of training to do, the soldiers had ample opportunities to leave camp. The soldiers of the 24th found a situation worse than any they had experienced prior to this. The problem was only partially the separate but equal statutes that divided the society along racial lines. The soldiers had experienced this before. However, racial attitudes of the people, and the direct, belligerent manner they displayed their attitude, seemed especially provocative to the black soldiers. Consequently, in the days and weeks the soldiers waited in Tampa, there were several clashes with local civilians. For the most part, the soldiers in the black regiments seemed to show considerable restraint when dealing with the white population, but the cases where they reacted drew national attention. Early on they complained when not allowed to "purchase of the same counter in some stores that the white man purchases over."⁷ Then, they protested the treatment of local blacks at the hands of whites. A few times, when they were insulted directly, they retaliated. The press carried stories of blacks taking over street cars and tearing out partitions, or blacks forcing their way into stores, threatening the owner and beating him when he refused to serve them. The 10th Cavalry, which waited in nearby Lakeland, was accused of forcibly rescuing a black prisoner from a white sheriff, although later

claims indicated it may have been white soldiers helping out their fellow cavalryman. The most serious incident took place inside the 5th Corps camp on the day before the departure. Members of the 24th Infantry and other black soldiers witnessed drunken white soldiers from an Ohio regiment using a black infant for target practice. They reacted violently, rampaging through the camp tearing up tents and fighting with white soldiers. Several soldiers, black and white, were hospitalized after the fight. To many, it seemed as if pressure was building and only the fortuitous departure for Cuba saved Tampa from more racial violence.

The press made much of these incidents between white locals and black soldiers, and openly debated the pros and cons of having black soldiers. Most of the time the press sided with the whites. They also consistently failed to mention any trouble caused by white soldiers or that in many cases white soldiers reportedly came to the aid of their black comrades. The situation in Florida also caused many blacks, soldiers and civilians, to debate whether blacks should want to fight to free the people in another country when there were still oppressed people in their own. Regardless of the debates in the newspapers, the soldiers in the 24th Infantry and the other black regiments were professionals and would do their duty. So, on June 13, 1898, after a couple of fitful starts and several days waiting for the Navy to chase down a ghost squadron, the 24th Infantry, embarked on the transport *City of Washington* and departed for Cuba.

Along the way, the campaign plan became somewhat clearer. Ordered to assist the Navy by taking the Cuban forts at Santiago de Cuba, Shafter decided the best approach would be a landing east of city and an inland maneuver. There were many operational and tactical problems with this approach, all studied in detail by a Presidential Commission after the war. For the infantry soldier-and since most of the horses were left behind everyone was an infantryman in Cuba-this meant a tortuous

march through the thickest jungles, ridden with Yellow Fever and other tropical diseases, during the hottest tropical weather. It also meant weak supply lines, questionable communications, and faulty artillery support. These were the conditions the 24th and all the other units would endure in Cuba.

The trip from Tampa to Cuba took six days, but the 24th and a large part of the corps remained on their transports until June 25th. The cavalry division and part of the infantry had landed on the 20th and fought an initial engagement at Las Guasimas on the 22nd. This battle involved three cavalry regiments, the 1st and 10th from the Regular Army, and the 1st Volunteer Cavalry, otherwise known as the "Rough Riders," led by Colonel Leonard Wood and Teddy Roosevelt. The cavalry successfully engaged a larger Spanish force left to delay the approach of the American forces. Popular accounts at the time said the Rough Riders, too far forward, had been ambushed and only the quick reaction of the regulars, especially the 10th Cavalry, saved them. This may not be entirely correct, as later evidence showed that all three units were somewhat aligned and expecting enemy contact. Further, although the Spanish force did move off the ridgeline at Las Guasimas, it appears they did so intentionally and in good order.

Regardless of what later evidence showed, when the 24th got off their transport, the air was ripe with war stories about how the 10th Cavalry had saved the Rough Riders and Teddy Roosevelt. The victory elevated the mood of 5th Corps soldiers who had just suffered twelve days of deprivation aboard the hastily prepared transports. Now that the cavalry had done their part, the infantry wanted in on the action. They did not get their chance right away, as Shafter wanted to build his force and logistics before moving west to attack the main Spanish forces outside of Santiago de Cuba. Around the 28th of June, however, Shafter received word that the Spanish forces, which numbered just over

10,000, were being reinforced from the west. He decided he had to act quickly to defeat the Spanish forces before they outnumbered his Corps of 17,000.

Outside of Santiago de Cuba there were three pieces of key terrain held by the Spanish that blocked the American approach. These were the small town of El Caney, and two hills, Kettle and San Juan. Once taken, Shafter planned to continue on and take the city itself. He was concerned about the force in El Caney as it threatened the flank of the main effort, so he sent the 2nd Division under General Henry W. Lawton there. The Cavalry Division was sent against Kettle Hill, and the 1st Division under General Kent, against San Juan Hill. The only route to an attack position was along a single narrow road which caused the units to get backed up and extremely congested. The intended line up of the 3rd Brigade was to have been the 9th leading, then the 13th and finally the 24th Infantry. General Kent had found a small trail that led along the front of the hills on the opposite side of the San Juan River and was using it to line up the division. Somewhere along the way, Lipscomb had led the 24th past the 9th and 13th Regiments, so that when finally put in position they were on the extreme left of the division.

The congestion on the road caused the attack to begin in a piecemeal fashion. The 1st Brigade had been in contact for some time before the 3rd was close to being able to attack. The 71st New York Infantry and 16th Infantry had initially led the assault up San Juan Hill but were stopped. The 16th was reported to have made several attempts to seize the Spanish trenches without success, however, the 71st seems to have been routed in their first attempt and retreated in disorder. As the 24th approached their attack position they encountered General Kent trying to get control over the 71st. He was happy to see his old unit and quickly ordered them into place. They dropped all of their excess equipment and carried only their canteens, rifles and ammunition. With the regimental Chaplain's words "quit yourselves like men" ringing in their ears, the 24th

faced to the right and waded into the San Juan River. They took a brief moment in the security of the river bank to make one last check of their weapons, and charged out over the field. Initially ordered forward one hundred and fifty meters, they had to cut through a barbed wire fence and then move out into a wide open field about 500-600 meters in front of the Spanish trenchline. Lipscomb recognized they could become pinned down if they stayed in the open and decided to sound the charge. After a few steps he was wounded and command went to Captain Ducat, commander of D Company which was leading the way. He too fell quickly and the company First Sergeant, William H. Ellis, then took the lead. After he fell, the troops followed Sergeant Lewis W. McNabb into the Spanish trenches.

During the fight, many of the officers in the 2nd Division were killed or wounded, units became mixed up and for the most part the units were led by junior officers and noncommissioned officers. Official accounts acknowledge these facts but only indicate that eventually the efforts of the 16th, 9th and 13th would eventually force the Spanish from their trenches. However, soldier accounts of the battle clearly place companies from the 24th in the lead. What matters is that once again, the 24th was in the thick of the fight, reearning their reputation in blood. As one volunteer soldier remarked about the 24th, "They knew no such word as fear, but swept up the hill like a legion of demons."⁶

The 24th spent the next two weeks in the Spanish trenches overlooking Santiago de Cuba. When they finally moved out it was not to rest and recuperate. Instead, the 24th moved to the Yellow Fever camp at Siboney to help nurse the massive numbers of men who had succumbed to the disease. Prior to their arrival, eight other regiments had refused the duty, but the 24th voluntarily accepted the assignment. When they arrived at Siboney, their commander called for volunteers. At first fifteen men stepped forward,

then, just as quickly, enough volunteers came out to fill the need. In the camp, the soldiers nursed the sick, cleaned up the area, moved tents as sites became spoiled, burned refuse, burned buildings thought to house the disease and buried their comrades. The duty was extremely dirty, depressing and fatiguing. In many cases it was also deadly. The daily duty rosters continually fluctuated as men became sick with the fever and others filled their places. At one point nearly 250 soldiers from the 24th were on the sick list. Of the more than 400 that marched into the camp, only 24 did not get the disease, proving that the black man was no more immune than any other race. From July 16 until August 26, the men endured the Yellow Fever camp. Through it all, the men maintained their professionalism, often working while sick, rarely complaining.

When the 24th left Cuba on the 26th of August, 1898, they could look back with pride. The storming of the block house on San Juan Hill and the hell of the camp at Siboney would certainly rank as some of the finest moments in their fine history. When the 24th ended their duty in the Yellow Fever Camp on August 26, 1898, they sailed for Montauk Point, New York, arriving on September 2. Most of the regular and volunteer regiments were brought here to recover from the fever or the stress of the campaign before being mustered out or sent back to their peacetime locations. Sadly, many of the men did bring back the tropical diseases, and life in the sterile environment was often marred by deaths of cherished officers and men. By the 23rd, most of the regiment was ready to return home, but, only part of the 24th returned to Fort Douglas. Whether it was because of the new, larger size of the regular regiments, or the fact that other posts in the area remained vacant due to the large Philippine contingent, the 24th was split between Douglas and Fort D.A. Russell, Wyoming. Therefore, when the regiment moved back west, half of it, companies A, B, D, G, H and K, went to Fort Douglas, while the rest, companies C, E, F and I, went to Fort D. A. Russell in Wyoming.

Although the Army was once again reduced to a peacetime strength by the end of 1898, in early 1899 the situation in the Philippines grew worse and the Army expanded again to nearly 65,000 regulars. It was clear that a larger force would be needed to quell the insurgent uprising, so an additional 24,000 regulars and 35,000 volunteers were sent to the Philippines in late spring and early summer of 1899. Two battalions of the 24th were in this force, receiving orders for one battalion to depart from San Francisco, California beginning on June 22, with the last battalion arriving in Manila on August 10, 1899. Many of the duties of the soldiers would be similar to those in Cuba, but this war would have a different flavor. Whereas in Cuba the soldiers were fighting to free a people right along side Cuban insurgents, in the Philippines they were fighting to suppress an insurgency. The individual soldier could draw many parallels between the conditions of blacks back home and the conditions he was imposing on the Filipinos. Although it was disheartening at times, a majority of the black soldiers did their duty well and their desertion rate remained remarkably low.

One of the reasons the black soldiers were able to handle their duties in the Philippines as well as they did had to be the relationship they developed with the local civilians. When they left Manila for operations against the insurgents, they were met with enthusiastic welcome from most of the small villages and towns along the way. To the black soldier, the Filipinos were also colored, and were becoming part of the American society. Consequently, there was an immediate identification with the people. Conversely, the reaction of the people was distinctly different from that of the insurgents. Which allowed the black soldiers to focus their combat skills on the insurgents while maintaining friendly relations with the locals. This fact was discussed at the higher levels and there was some fear that the black soldier would not want to fight against the insurgents. Even the insurgents tried to play on this by distributing

propaganda leaflets urging the black soldiers to desert and join the insurgency. Though the few who did desert gained notoriety among the senior leaders, very few black soldiers actually left the Army. Clearly, this relationship between the black soldiers and the Filipinos helped the overall effort. They were able to handle additional missions throughout the islands that were not traditional military missions, such as organizing police forces, helping run towns and so on, simply because of the trust they engendered with the local civilians.

The list of duties handled by the 24th in the Philippines reads like their duties during the Indian Wars twenty years before. They garrisoned small posts, built roads, strung telegraph wire, secured supplies and lines of communication and occasionally took part in combat operations. Most of the real campaigning took place between May of 1900 until June of 1901. During this time the 24th performed a couple of important missions in addition to their normal duties. One of these missions was the remarkable march of a battalion from the 24th under the command of Captain Joseph B. Batchelor, Jr. and the other was their part in the capture of the insurgent leader Aguinaldo.

Batchelor's march was remarkable not only because of its hardship, risk and outstanding success, but also because of the controversy it caused afterwards. Batchelor was a veteran of twenty years in the regiment and had served through the Indian campaigns and in Cuba. When he met with his division commander, General Lawton, he was given instructions that he interpreted to mean he was to take a light infantry battalion across the mountains north of the town of Bayombong, live off the country, and push up the coast of Luzon, and "render great assistance to their cause". This would mean a march of several hundred miles through uncharted insurgent territory at the risk of a battalion of infantry. Lawton claimed afterwards that he only ordered Batchelor to move twenty-eight miles further to the town itself and that anything done after that was

Batchelor's own idea. The controversy was further fueled when the brigade commander, acting under Lawton's orders, sent couriers to stop Batchelor, which Batchelor refused because the order came from the brigade commander and he was acting under direct orders from General Lawton, his division commander.

Regardless of who ordered what, the march itself was remarkable. On November 23, Batchelor's force of two companies from the 24th Infantry, detachments from two other regiments and fifty Tagalog Scouts under Lieutenant Joseph C Castner, nearly four hundred men, started their movement into the mountain jungle. It took them six days to complete the first part of their journey of ninety miles. Reportedly they crossed a number of rivers and climbed along steep cliffs and finally reached Bayombong. Here they found that the 4th Cavalry had already rounded up the few insurgents in the town, but gained intelligence indicating there was a force of eleven hundred insurgents in the Cagayan River Valley further along their route.

At this point, Batchelor sent a message back to Lawton asking for supplies to meet him at Aparri, which was a town on the Luzon coast about one hundred and fifty miles away. On the first of December, Batchelor, now with only three hundred and fifty men, headed back out into the mountains. Over the next couple of days, Lawton sent couriers through the brigade commander to try to stop Batchelor, but Batchelor twice refused to obey these messages. Again, his justification was the orders had come from the battalion commander, and included a caveat that said, "unless acting under orders from the division commander." Since he thought he was executing his commander's orders, he continued on. As the force continued on their march, they began to meet the enemy. On December 3, they fought and defeated two hundred and fifty insurgents near the town of San Luis. On December 7, they encountered a strong force entrenched at the junction of the Cagayan and Magat rivers. During this fight, eight men swam the river

with nothing but their rifles and out flanked the insurgents, driving them from their positions. Finally, on the 9th, Batchelor accepted the surrender of the regional commander of the insurgent forces, General Daniel Tirona. On December 14, 1899, the American flag was raised over the Provincial Capital, Tuguegarao.

Because of the controversy surrounding the mission, when Captain Batchelor reported to the American Commander in Chief, Major General Elwell S. Otis, he was severely reprimanded. In all, Batchelor's force of between three hundred and fifty to four hundred soldiers captured or forced to surrender, over eleven hundred men, eight hundred rifles, liberated four hundred prisoners and brought three Philippine provinces under American control. They did this by marching over three hundred miles through unknown territory that proved to be extremely hazardous. While undergoing their journey, this force made friends with the local citizens so that future U.S. forces operating in the area were received with enthusiasm.⁹ Later, both the American Commander, General Otis and General Lawton did concede that the march, though questionably ordered, was a remarkable feat.

Another event that shows some of the nature of the operations in the Philippines occurred in February 1901. Lieutenant James D. Taylor and the company he commanded, C Company, 24th Infantry, were in charge of the post at Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija Province in Central Luzon. Working in concert with the Provincial Presidente, Francisco Villajuan, Taylor was able to accept the surrender of seven insurgents in the town of San Juan on February 8, 1901. He then interrogated them over the course of the next few days and obtained information about a number of letters written between the insurgent leader, Emilio Aguinaldo and his subordinate leaders. Acting quickly, he retrieved the letters from where they had been hidden and

determined the location of Aguinaldo's headquarters. On the 10th this information was sent to the District Headquarters and Aguinaldo was captured soon thereafter.¹⁰

The 24th Infantry participated in many engagements in the Philippines, but most were bloodless and unremarkable. Their biggest challenge both during and after the fighting was dealing with the terrain, as they continued the duties necessary to establish and maintain American control in the Philippine Islands. They operated in the Philippines from June 1899 until June 1902 when they redeployed back to the United States.

At this point, the Army had been reorganizing and regiments were routinely organized into three battalions. The Twenty-fourth was not sent back to Fort Douglas, but was instead posted to three bases in Montana. The First Battalion was stationed at Fort Harrison, the Second at Fort Assiniboine and the Third at Fort Missoula. Their return to the United States in 1902 began a decade of rotations between the U.S. and the Philippines. In December 1905, the 24th went back to the Philippines, staying until February 1908. Then, remarkably, in March 1908, upon return from the Philippines, the regiment was posted to its first stations east of the Mississippi River. That month, the 1st and 3rd Battalions were sent to Madison Barracks, and the 2nd Battalion to Fort Ontario, both in New York State.

Regimental life in New York was certainly different than that in the Philippines. Instead of manning provincial posts, and performing guard and fatigue duties in almost an occupational role, the unit turned to more peacetime activities. Training consisted of field exercises, annual marksmanship training and the normal garrison duties. They continued to hold their band concerts and parades on holidays, maintaining their reputation as a valued part of the Regular Army. For the first time in their history, they also had a black population in the neighboring towns. Here it seems the regiment must

have recruited heavily from the black populations in the northeast that would later contribute to their actions in New Mexico and Texas. Except for the two months spent in Georgia and Florida before the Cuban Campaign, the 24th had now been out of the south and southwest for nearly twelve years. Certainly, the junior enlisted population had been replaced a couple of times by now. In less than a decade, members of the regiment would state that certain laws did not apply to them as they were from New York.

After three and one half years in New York, the regiment steamed once again for the Philippines. This time they would spend from January 1912 until September 1915 performing various garrison duties in the island nation. When they returned to the U.S. in the fall of 1915, however, the situation for the Army and the country would be somewhat different than when they left. World War was raging in Europe and the country was debating its responsibilities among the world powers. Also, a side light affair of the World War was happening to our south with the revolution in Mexico. It was in this context that the 24th returned to the United States, spent a few months in the Presidio, California and then occupied Fort D.A. Russell, Wyoming in February 1916.

Their stay in Wyoming was short, to say the least. On March 9, 1916, Poncho Villa raided Columbus, New Mexico in retaliation for the U.S. support to his rivals in the Mexican Revolution. The Army was ordered to secure the border and prepare for a possible operation into Mexico to punish Villa and his rebels. On the 21st, 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry (companies A, B, C and D), along with a detachment of Sanitary Troops and Quartermaster soldiers was ordered to southern Texas. The regiment had returned after thirty-six years absence.

The 24th was split into two groups, with the 1st Battalion going to small posts at Marfa, Fabens and Del Rio. Then, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, consisting of companies E

through M, the Machinegun and Supply Companies, and the Regimental Headquarters. was ordered to Camp Furlong, New Mexico on 26 March. The 1st Battalion maintained its stations, while the rest of the regiment followed Pershings expedition into Mexico on the 28th.

The regiment's return to Texas was marred by a racial incident that seemed to foretell some of the problems that lay ahead. As the 1st Battalion deployed to locations along the Texas border, they did so at the request of the local citizens. They needed protection from possible Mexican raids such as the one in Columbus, New Mexico, and were willing to set aside their opinions about the soldiers color in order to gain that protection. Therefore, when the Battalion Headquarters and Companies B and C arrived on March 26, 1916, their reception, though unremarkable, was not protested. But, just like Florida during the Cuban Campaign, the racial barriers and social exclusions of blacks in Texas established the conditions necessary for conflict. All that was needed was a spark to ignite the tense situation. That spark came on the night of April 8.

April 8th was a Saturday and a group of soldiers from the 24th were enjoying some time off in the restricted area of Del Rio. A part of this group approached an establishment called "Greentop," a local house of prostitution, where they were denied entrance due to their color and decided to force the issue. They went back to their camp, retrieved their weapons, and then returned to the brothel. At this point they pelted the building with rocks and a few shots from their Springfield rifles. The local police were alerted, including several Texas Rangers and Sheriff's Deputies. The events of the remainder of the evening are somewhat disputed. Confusion and chaos resulted in the restricted area, with local citizens claiming that the soldiers shot hundreds of rounds indiscriminately in the town. During the fracas, Deputy Japinto Vann was accosted and

disarmed by some soldiers, and Private John Wade was shot to death by Ranger W.L. Barlor, reportedly while resisting arrest.

The incident was widely reported by the press over the next several days. Most of the press accounts were somewhat sensationalized and often contradictory. There were differing reports about how Private Wade was killed, but most reported he had grabbed Ranger Barlor from behind and that Barlor had taken a shot over his shoulder and hit Wade in the neck, killing him. Many of the news stories also reported statements made by the soldiers when they disarmed the Hispanic Deputy Vann. They reported statements such as "We are only after the white folks." and "we'll get all the whites." Both the story of Wade's death and the alleged statements by the soldiers increased the tension surrounding the incident.

Unfortunately, none of the stories reported the facts determined by the Army officer ordered to respond to the incident. That officer, Lieutenant Alexander W. Chilton, found facts that contradicted many of the popular accounts and should have dictated further investigation by either the Army or local officials. For example, Lieutenant Chilton, and the Medical Officer, Captain J. A. Wilson, found several wounds on Private Wade, including one in the groin, one in the belly, one in the left arm and one in the back, between the shoulder blades. But, they found no neck wound. The wounds clearly indicated Wade was shot several times at close range and then in the back, possibly as he stumbled away. Yet, the Army chose not to refute, or investigate further, the report that Wade was shot while resisting arrest.

When alerted to the trouble in town, Chilton took a guard detail to the restricted area around 11:00 pm. While investigating, he heard three rounds of shots, but not hundreds of rounds being shot. He recovered Wade's body and returned to post. Later, two soldiers, Privates Gay and Wilson, were brought in by the post guards, weapons in

hand. They openly admitted to leaving post with their weapons, but claimed they were trying to catch up with the lieutenant's guard detail. They also reported they were shot at and returned fire, accounting for some of the shots that Chilton heard earlier. Plus, they admitted they were the ones who encountered Deputy Vann and disarmed him after he had taken a few shots their way.

A bed check and rifle inspection led Chilton to conclude that only six soldiers had been part of the group that accompanied Wade with their weapons back into town. All were subsequently punished. Chilton's investigation cleared up much of the story; however, his report never reached the public through the press. In fact, the press did not interview any of the soldiers involved, made no mention of the possibility that the racial barriers may have contributed to the incident, nor did they mention any of the regiment's historical record. The Del Rio incident followed the pattern that the black soldiers had seen before and would see again. The soldiers were accepted when their presence was needed. But, if the soldiers protested against the Jim Crow laws, the public demanded harsh retribution and quick removal. The soldiers rarely received any support from the local officials or their own chain of command, and facts that would explain and even clear the soldiers reputation were never presented to the public. Instead, the black soldiers gained a reputation of being uncontrollable when placed in southern towns. The soldiers, on the other hand, learned that they would rarely get true justice from their own leaders.

From the end of March until July 1916, the 24th secured the lines of communication for the expedition in Mexico, ensuring the more mobile cavalry forces would not be cut off from the U.S. On the 1st of July, the entire regiment was brought together in Colnia Dublan, Mexico where they stayed until January 1917. On January 27, they marched to Palomas, Mexico across the border from Columbus, New Mexico.

Finally, on February 4, 1917, the 24th Infantry marched back into the United States, ending the 24th Infantry's part in the Punitive Expedition.

Returning to the U.S. the soldiers in the Punitive Expedition faced a new reality. The country was on the brink of war against the Central Powers in Europe and the Army was once again on the verge of expansion. This time, however, it would expand to a size not seen since the Civil War. The Army anticipated a need for large amounts of training space and began making arrangements for land in the south where space was available, and the weather would support the training. Once again, the country also debated the composition of its force. Would blacks be part of the American Expeditionary Force? This was the debate of the day.

This debate was fueled by many factors. Black community leaders were once again citing service in the war as a means of earning full citizenship. These leaders, especially W.E.B. Dubois, called for blacks to put aside their protests and "close our ranks shoulder to shoulder with our own white fellow citizens."¹¹ White leaders with experience with black units supported plans for up to sixteen infantry regiments of black soldiers formed from the initial draft response of 75,000 blacks.¹² These plans would be scrapped soon after their approval, and 80 percent of black soldiers would serve in support and labor battalions far from the front lines. In fact, only forty-two thousand black soldiers would be assigned to combat units. These would be formed into two divisions, the 92nd Infantry Division and the 93rd Division (Provisional). Both units would see combat, but their results would differ greatly. The 92nd, which had a complete compliment of infantry, artillery, engineers and other divisional units, served under U.S. commanders with disappointing results. On the other hand, the units of the 93rd, which went to France with only two infantry brigades of two regiments each, fought under French command. The French treated the black Americans fairly. They

demanded and received combat success from these American units. While debating the future of blacks in the U.S. Army, white leaders had a number of factors to consider. However, of all the factors influencing the debate, the most provocative would be the racial incidents involving the members of the 24th infantry, including a minor incident on July 28, followed by the mutiny of the 3rd Battalion, 24th Infantry on August 23, 1917.¹³

The first event involved a few members of the 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry who were stationed temporarily to guard the construction of Camp MacArthur in Waco, Texas. When the 24th was ordered to guard camps in Texas, notification of local authorities was delayed until the last possible moment. But, town leaders in Waco, interested in the economic benefits the camp would bring their city, met the troop train at the station and established prudent procedures to prevent racial clashes. They agreed to allow black military policemen to patrol the colored quarter and establish a guard at the police station. In response, the battalion commander, Captain Charles F. Andrews agreed to limit passes and maintain an 11:00pm curfew.

Unfortunately, as often happens a clash between black soldiers on pass and local police ignited an armed response by a handful of black soldiers. The initial clash was typical. Black soldiers enjoying a night on the town were accused by whites of blocking the sidewalk. A small fight broke out and the police were called. The police forcibly removed the black soldiers from the sidewalk. Later, a small group of soldiers returned to town with their weapons looking for the police officers. Captain Andrews was notified about 11:15 and sent a guard force into Waco to bring back the armed soldiers. At one point, Captain Higgins, the commander of C Company, encountered an unidentified group of men in an alley. He placed the guard force he was leading behind cover and attempted to approach the group in the alley. They fired a salvo towards him,

but missed, and then escaped into the night. Eventually, the men were captured, most as they returned to their camp, and were punished for desertion and assault.¹⁴

The next morning, local papers presented a sensational story of black soldiers rampaging through town. At a Rotary Club meeting on the same day, Captain Andrews presented a very different story of a few undisciplined soldiers responding to provocation by a few unruly whites. His quick action to clear the air, as well as deliver justice on the guilty soldiers was applauded by local leaders, and the affair was quickly put to rest. Afterall, the citizens of Waco were willing to accept the actions of a few bad apples in order to continue to reap the financial benefits of Camp MacArthur.¹⁵

The actions of a large part of the 3rd Battalion, 24th Infantry were not so easy to accept and would, in fact, have far reaching implications on black service in the military for years to come. The arrival of the 3rd Battalion's six hundred and forty five black soldiers and seven white officers went much like that of the 1st Battalion. The newspapers in Houston tried to downplay the racial question by describing the 24th's past glories and record of discipline. They also explained about curfew and pass policies similar to those enacted by 1st Battalion. The 3rd Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel William Newman, was well respected by his soldiers and expected to be able to keep them under control. Also, the city of Houston enjoyed a measure of racial harmony among its citizens which included between 35,000 to 50,000 blacks. So, initially things looked bright for the 3rd Battalion's temporary service guarding Camp Logan.¹⁶

Unfortunately, several things would happen that would contribute to an unstable environment in the 3rd Battalion camp. First, in the late spring, the battalion received a batch of new recruits as part of the Army's expansion to wartime strengths. Then, twenty-five of the best NCO's in the battalion were selected for officer training and

departed the regiment. During this time there were also any number of minor flareups between black soldiers guarding Camp Logan, and the white workers building it. Finally, Newman was transferred to a new assignment and Major Kneeland S. Snow took command.¹⁷ For Major Snow, the combination of the large amount of new recruits, and the the lack of experienced NCO leadership would be added to his own severe lack of experience and understanding of black soldiers. The result, as he would later put it, "Hell has broken loose in my camp."¹⁸

Once again, this incident started with a minor clash between a local policeman and a black soldier. Early in the morning on August 23, police officers Lee Sparks and Rufus Daniels broke up a group of young blacks in a dice game. They chased one into the home of Sara Travers, and when she protested, Officer Sparks beat her and arrested her while she was still in her bathrobe. By chance, Private Alonzo Edwards of L Company happened by and interrupted Sparks' arrest of Mrs. Travers. So Sparks beat and arrested Private Edwards. Then, the most serious incident occurred. Corporal Charles Baltimore, acting in his capacity as a military policeman found Sparks and Daniels and inquired about Private Edwards. Sparks then went after Baltimore, pistol whipping him, then shooting at him as he fled. Finally, Sparks found Baltimore in a nearby house and took him to jail.¹⁹

Immediately, rumors flew back to camp that Baltimore had been killed. Major Snow heard of the incident and sent his adjutant, Captain Haig Shekerjian, to the jail to retrieve the two soldiers. Shekerjian did so, and also talked the Police Chief into punishing Lee Sparks. Upon his return, Major Snow called the senior NCO's together and explained what happened. He then cancelled all passes for the night and doubled the guard. Finally, he then made plans to leave the camp, thinking the situation was handled.

Later events proved that neither Major Snow, nor any of his officers had any understanding of the mindset of the black soldiers they commanded. None of them imagined the deep resentment that had built up in their men, or the way Sparks' actions could touch off such a violent response. These were not the same types of officers that led the regiment through the long years of the Indian Wars, or fought with them at San Juan Hill or in the Philippines. These were a different brand of officer, who grew up in a time when blacks were supposed to accept the harsh treatment delivered under the justification of the Jim Crow laws. Once orders were issued, Major Snow thought his soldiers would meekly comply, as the common stereotypes would imply.²⁰

Later in the evening, Major Snow was warned by Sergeant Vida Henry that he could expect trouble that night. Snow then spotted several soldiers arming themselves and called a formation and weapons inspection. The soldiers were able to convince him that no loose ammunition was unaccounted, but as he was confronting some soldiers at the back of the formation, a warning was yelled out that someone was coming to attack the camp. Shots rang out, and Major Snow hastily left the area thinking the shots were aimed at him. It appears that most of the soldiers were not part of any larger scheme and merely thought the camp was under attack by local citizens. Consequently, they took up posts around the camp to ward off the attack. But about one hundred soldiers left the camp in combat formation, heading for the nearest police station. Along the way, they shot at anyone and anything in their way, killing and wounding several people. At one point they were confronted by Captain Joseph Mattes from the Illinois National Guard, who was riding in a car with a local policeman and three soldiers, all looking for the rioters. The soldiers fired a deadly volley killing Captain Mattes and the policeman, and wounding the soldiers.²¹

When they heard the shots in the vicinity of their camp, fifteen of the 3rd Battalion, 24th Infantry guards at Camp Logan deserted their posts and ran to help their comrades. Along the way they shot at a bus that refused to stop, killing the driver. These soldiers were later tried in a separate court marshal.

After two hours, the rampage ended with the killing of Captain Mattes. At this point, many witnesses reported that the leader of the mutiny, Sgt. Vida Henry, took his own life when he realized the full extent of their actions. The results of these two hours were fifteen civilians, including four policemen, killed, and twentyone wounded. Four soldiers, including Sgt. Henry were killed several were wounded. Eventually, a combination of forces from the Illinois National Guard, the 19th Infantry Regiment and a Sheriff's posse of two hundred and fifty citizens restored order in the city, and prevented hundreds of whites from enacting revenge the next morning.²²

The news papers had a field day. Sensational stories ran with their largest type, depicting the horrors enacted by the soldiers in graphic detail. Further, they criticised the actions of the police chief, sheriff and the battalion commander, all of whom were found to be highly ineffective in preventing the bloodshed. Later, that criticism was leveled at the higher military leadership for its policies of stationing black soldiers in the south. Only the leaders of the forces that responded to the emergency were applauded, everyone who had a chance to prevent the incident was criticised severely.²³

After the riot, the 3rd Battalion was moved back to Columbus, New Mexico to rejoin the regiment. Three courts marshal were held at Fort Sam Houston between November 1917 and March 1918. The first tried sixty three of the soldiers in the main column and found fifty-four guilty of mutiny, murder, and felonious assault. On December 22, 1917, thirteen of these soldiers, including Corporal Baltimore, were hanged in secret in San Antonio. The second court marshall tried the fifteen soldiers

who had deserted their posts at Camp Logan. Of these, five were given the death sentence. The final trial in March 1918, brought forty more soldiers from the main column before the court. The overall results of the three trials were one hundred and ten convictions, dealing out twenty-nine death sentences(nine later commuted to life), fifty-three life sentences and twenty-eight sentences ranging from two to ten years. Seven soldiers were acquitted because of lack of sufficient evidence, and one released due to insanity.²⁴

The Houston Riot had far ranging effects on the service of blacks in the military. The War Department was in a delicate position. The National Defense Act of 1916 and subsequent conscription laws did not limit the number of blacks that could be drafted. Also, the four black regiments in the regular army were there because of long standing, and therefore, irrefutable laws. Finally, they needed black support for the war in Europe both in manpower and the buying of war bonds. Therefore, the War Department could not, and did not want to, prevent blacks from joining the military. However, they had to respond to the desires of southern leaders who did not want any large groups of armed blacks in their towns and cities. So, they scrapped the plan for the sixteen black combat regiments. They then hastily organized the elements of the 92nd and 93rd Divisions and sent them to France with little to no weapons training in the U.S. The majority of blacks draftees or volunteers served in labor and support battalions and never fired a shot, neither in training nor in combat, for the entire war. After the war, the black regiments would be used as service units, or garrison troops in the Philippines. It would be many years before they would be used as front line troops the way they were for their first fifty years of service.²⁵

The Houston Riot had a devastating effect on the 24th Infantry Regiment. After one final hurrah against Villista forces in Juarez Mexico, the Regiment was transfered out

of New Mexico in the Fall of 1922. Prior to their transfer, the 3rd Battalion was disbanded and then reformed from soldiers at the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia. On September 22, 1922, four hundred and seventy-one soldiers from the 1st and 2nd Battalions were transferred to the 25th Infantry at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Then, on October 5, 1922, a train carrying sixteen officers, three hundred and twenty-two men and their families, departed New Mexico for Georgia. They kept the shades drawn the entire trip for fear of retribution as they passed through the heart of the Jim Crow south. When they arrived at Fort Benning, they were a different unit. No longer would they drill as a combat unit. Their days would be spent building gymnasiums, sweeping horse stalls and cleaning up after the white army. The 24th would have to wait until 1950 before they would once again take their place in the front, shoulder to shoulder with their white comrades. For forty-eight years they had fought along side the rest of the Army. But, one night in Houston, a night of protest against the awful discrimination of the Jim Crow practices, sacrificed their place in the line.

¹When the 25th Infantry got off the boats in Manila, PI, they were asked what they were doing there, to which one infantryman remarked, "We're here to carry the white man's burden." Russel Roth, Muddy Glory: America's 'Indian Wars' in the Philippines, 1899-1935, (W. Hanover, MA: The Christopher Publishing House, 1981), 60.

²Clark, Appendices F & G.

³Report of the Commission Appointed By The President to Investigate the Conduct of the War Department in the War With Spain, (Volume 1) (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1900), 113.

⁴Deseret News, Salt Lake City, April 20, 1898, in Clark, 90.

⁵Scipio, 18-20.

⁶David F. Trask, The War With Spain in 1898, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1981), 178-186.

⁷Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., "Smoked Yankees" and the Struggle for Empire: Letters from Negro Soldiers, 1889-1902, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 28.

⁸Trask, p 237. Trask mistakenly places the 24th at El Caney. Also, the rest of the quote shows some of the anecdotal treatment of the black soldiers. "When asked why his unit had taken no prisoners, one soldier replied, 'What you talkin' 'bout, boss: we didn't come here to play basketball.'"

⁹Roth, 68.

¹⁰Scipio, 38.

¹¹Nalty, 107.

¹²Ibid, 108.

¹³Ibid, 107-124.

¹⁴Garna L. Christian, Black Soldiers in Jim Crow Texas, 1899-1917, (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1995), 132-137.

¹⁵Ibid, 137.

¹⁶Nalty, 101; and Christian, 142-148.

¹⁷Nalty, 101.

¹⁸Christian, 154.

¹⁹Ibid, 150-151.

²⁰Ibid, 151.

²¹Nalty, 103.

²²Christian, 155.

²³Ibid, 156.

²⁴Ibid, 165-166.

²⁵Nalty, 106.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters we saw that the first two questions, 'Could they fight?' and, 'Would they be allowed to fight?,' were answered fully and completely. When trained as a soldier and expected to perform as a soldier, the black man proved time and time again that he could indeed fight for his country. Also, the Congress dictated that there would be a permanent place for black soldiers in the U.S. Regular Army when they formed first six, later reduced to four regiments, the 9th and 10th Cavalry, and the 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments. The third question seemed to be answered for nearly fifty years as these units were used right along side the rest of the Army. But, obviously the question was not answered to the satisfaction of everyone in the country. Otherwise, the debate would not have reignited in 1917.

So, the question remains, why did the debate reignite? There are many possible answers, but three need to be addressed here. On one hand there are two obvious reasons: first, the Houston Riot reinforced some ancient, deep seated fears among the white population in America; and, second, the reemergence of the political clout of the southern states forced the Army to accept the Jim Crow practices at the expense of the black regiments. The third reason combines the first two but adds another, somewhat more subtle factor. That reason is simply that American society is an exclusionary society, and the U.S. Army reflects the exclusionary attitudes of the society. For most of our history we used race, religion and social standing to determine the boundaries. In

modern times we use gender, religion, and sexual orientation as our exclusionary markers.

To address the first reason, we need only to look back to the colonial days. During those times Colonial leaders often armed their black slaves or freeblacks in their towns during emergencies. However, once the emergency passed, the blacks were generally disarmed and resumed their subordinate station. The white population in areas where there were large concentrations of blacks, either slave or free, lived in constant fear of black revolts. They pointed to uprisings in Haiti, an island nation formed by former American slaves, as examples of what could happen. Consequently, as the United States formed and grew into a viable nation, blacks were kept in this unarmed state, except during emergencies.

The biggest emergency in the nation's history was the Civil War. When President Abraham Lincoln decided to bring the tens of thousands of blacks available into the Union Army, Southern fears were realized in the most horrible way. These fears were reinforced during the period of Radical Reconstruction, especially in Texas where all four of the black regiments served. After Reconstruction ended, nearly every time a black regiment would pass through Texas, there would be some sort of confrontation with the local citizens. The hatred of black soldiers in Texas was a well known fact. That hatred stemmed from those ancient fears and the subsequent desire to maintain control over the black population.

Second, there is no question that the south reemerged as a political factor with the end of Reconstruction. The political arrangements necessary to bring Rutherford Hayes into the presidency started the South on its rise. Then the Supreme Court gave the South new justification to organize the southern society back along its racial boundaries, regardless of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution.

The new political strength of the South was fully supported by the country-wide acceptance of the segregation laws. In fact, not until *Brown vs The Board of Education* in 1950 was there a serious challenge to Southern discriminatory practices. The crisis of the First World War, brought the black soldiers and the political clout of the Southerners into direct conflict. The soldiers lost.

The final reason can, perhaps, provide some insight into the factors of our more modern debates on the rolls of women and homosexuals in the military. There is no debate that the American society sets certain boundaries based on race and ethnicity. Despite historical claims of being a melting pot, our towns and cities are still divided into neighborhoods of African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, Jewish-Americans, Italian-Americans, Irish-Americans, Chinese-Americans, and so on. We actively limit the freedoms of fringe religions and radical political factions, denying our own history of being a country formed by fringe religions and radical politics. This exclusionary factor has been part of our society from the beginning. For most of our history, we established boundaries based on race. Today, those boundaries have taken on a new form.

When you establish a boundary around a person or a group of people, you give them a number of choices. They can accept the boundary of their own volition, or accept the fact that it is imposed by a stronger entity. If they accept the boundary, they can then function solely within the boundary or attempt to expand the limitation whenever they see an opportunity. This person, or group, can also decide not to accept the boundary, and either fight it at every turn, or find ways to cause its removal. Finally, it must be said, that often the person or group imposing the boundaries does so for a variety of reasons. They may be based on fear or arrogance, but are most often deep seated beliefs that cannot be overcome without a significant paradigm change. Most often that paradigm change can only take place over generations.

So how does this apply to the 24th Infantry and the black soldiers in general? Well, certainly the blacks had fairly definite boundaries imposed around them. This was also true for most of the population who were not white males with European ancestry. During their time of slavery, blacks were forced to accept the boundaries placed on them by the stronger white owners. Those who fought the boundaries were either whipped, deliberately crippled, or killed. Once emancipation came, those boundaries were momentarily lifted and blacks enjoyed a short period where the only limitations they had were those due to the lack of education that resulted from their days in slavery. As blacks emerged into a new part of the American society and began to gain greater education, they stretched those boundaries. Unfortunately, just as they were realizing real freedoms, Reconstruction ended and new boundaries were imposed by the reemerging powers in the south in the form of Jim Crow laws.

Although many blacks were forced to accept the boundaries of the Jim Crow laws if they were to live in peace, especially in the deep south, some groups of blacks escaped those limitations. These groups included the educated blacks, some of the blacks who had migrated to the North and the black soldiers in the Regular Army. The black soldiers lived in their own small communities far away from the segregational practices in the south. Although they had limitations, such as the relatively few black officers, the belief that only whites could effectively lead them, and the propensity to be stationed far away from populated areas, these limitations were not nearly as harsh as those imposed upon black citizens throughout the South.

The men in the 24th Infantry accepted their limitations, but took every opportunity to stretch the boundaries. When calls for black volunteer regiments went out at the beginning of the Spanish-American War, black soldiers saw another opportunity to earn the rights they were denied. Many of the NCO's were selected to be

officers in the new volunteer regiments and served with distinction. They also saw themselves as one of the few groups able to stand up for the ordinary black citizen, and so protested in words and actions whenever they encountered discriminatory practices. Consequently, nearly every time the 24th Infantry entered the south, they engaged in some sort of conflict with white Southerners.

The military need to station the 24th Infantry in Texas came at a time of crisis in American society. The war in Europe had finally touched America and brought the U.S. into armed conflict on a major scale. There was a growing fear of the influence of Communism and Socialism among the minority classes. Along with that, there was an ever increasing out cry against the discrimination of groups based on their race or ethnicity. On top of it all, the United States was trying to emerge from the World War as a major player in the international arena. How we would be viewed by our European ancestors was a critical factor in stretching our own limits as a country. Since one of the characteristics of the American military was this dichotomy of Jim Crow and historically successful black units, we presented a contradictory picture to our European allies. This started the debate again after nearly fifty years of dormancy. Then, when the soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, erupted in their two hour rampage on August 23, 1917, they provided an easy answer that effectively ended the debate.

Finally, what can this tell us about our modern debate? First, we have to expect that when we place limitations upon a group of people, they will make one of the choices stated above. The two major debates that seem to occupy a lot of thought today involve the service of women and homosexuals. Currently, we have answered the questions about female service as follows: Yes, they can serve successfully; Yes, they are allowed to serve; And, finally, they will serve only in a limited capacity. As far as homosexuals go, these answers are somewhat different. First, we assume that they cannot serve

successfully, we do not allow them to serve, and, if they do serve, it is only so long as they keep their sexual preferences hidden.

This study is not about issues such as morality or religious beliefs. Instead, it is about the imposition of barriers and the attempt of a group to expand or remove those barriers. If we accept the premise that we have indeed imposed barriers upon these two groups, eventually, we must be prepared when they decide to stretch or cause the removal of those barriers. That is not to suggest that we should find ways to stifle these attempts. Conversely, as an institution that has imposed the limitations, the Army can also lift them. Before we do either, we have to determine the validity of the limitations. For example, the limitation that was imposed when the 24th Infantry was formed as a unit with white officers and black enlistedmen was probably a valid limitation at the time. The other choices were to either integrate blacks throughout the units, or find sufficient numbers of educated blacks to be officers in the black regiments. Neither of these options were really suitable at the time. However, that limitation certainly became invalid as more of the society became integrated, and as a significant portion of the black population became educated. At some point the Army needed a way to reexamine that limitation, test its validity and change if it proved to be wrong.

Unfortunately for the 24th Infantry, they were forced to live with an invalid limitation for another thirty-four years after the Houston Riot. When the regiment disbanded on October 2, 1951, they did so among rumors of their disgraceful conduct under fire during the Korean War. A recent reexamination of their behavior has since proven most of the accusations false, but the fact remains that during their last chance at glory, this limitation contributed to the belief they were not an effective fighting force. For the first half of their existence, the black soldiers of the 24th Infantry built a reputation as one of the best regiments in the army. Through the Indian Wars, Cuba, the

Philippines and in Mexico with Pershing's Punitive Expedition, the 24th Infantry served in a quiet, disciplined and highly effective manner. Then one night in Houston, Texas, the limits imposed by society and the Army became too much and they reacted.

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