

News

Buffalo Soldiers Celebrate 150th Anniversary

Historian says upcoming anniversary is a milestone

By Marilyn Marshall
(Houston Defender, NNPA Member)

The Buffalo Soldiers National Museum has a reason to celebrate. A century and a half ago Black soldiers called "Buffalo Soldiers" first served in the American military.

Beginning Monday, July 25 through Saturday, July 30, the museum will be the site of activities celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Buffalo Soldiers, as part of the 9th and 10th (Horse) Cavalry Association Annual Reunion.

In addition, the Houston museum has been chosen as national headquarters of the association, the umbrella organization of more than 40 Buffalo Soldiers' chapters across the country.

Founded in 2001 by Captain Paul J. Matthews, an Army Vietnam veteran and African American military historian, the museum is dedicated to preserving the legacy of Buffalo Soldiers. The exhibits cover seven wars, along with women in the military, chaplains in the military and astronauts.

For more than 35 years, Matthews has collected military artifacts and has the largest collection of African-American military memorabilia in the world. The museum offers programs and projects that reach out to community members of all ages.

Matthews said the upcoming anniversary marks a milestone in American history.

"In 1866, the U.S. Army reorganized and established the first peacetime Army," he said. "As a part of the reorganization they created six Black units. This July 28 will be the 150th anniversary of the formation of those segregated units. We're very excited about that. We will have our headquarters at the Houston Marriott Westchase Hotel and related activities at the museum."



PHOTO COURTESY BUFFALO SOLDIERS NATIONAL MUSEUM

This July 28 will be the 150th anniversary of the formation of the first unit of Black professional soldiers in a peacetime army.

In a one-on-one interview, Matthews discussed the reunion celebration, the museum and the Buffalo Soldiers, brave African-American men who served in a variety of posts in the 1800s.

Houston Defender: What sparked your interest in the Buffalo Soldiers? Captain Paul J. Matthews: While I was

falo Soldiers and Blacks in the military? CPM: I take them back to Frederick Douglass who said at the start of the Civil War, "Give the colored man a uniform, a buckle with the U.S. on it, a button with the eagle on it and a musket and you'll make him a citizen but you'll also make him a man." He wanted

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an ROTC cadet at Prairie View A&M University I read two paragraphs in a military book about the Buffalo Soldiers and became intrigued by the Black men in blue uniforms...it was a story that needed to be told.

HD: Why is it important for African-Americans to learn about the Buf-

to make sure the Civil War was being fought for freedom and not just to save the Union.

The same thing occurred in World War I. W.E.B. DuBois said, "Put aside your differences, go overseas, come back and be first-class citizens." The military has always been a very important component of the Black community. When I was growing up in La Marque, Texas, and we would go to church, World War II soldiers would come in and people would stand up. In the '60s when you graduated from high school it was either the Army or college. That's the way it was. The military, other than the Vietnam era, was always extremely popular in the Black community.

Read the rest at TheSkanner.com

1. In 1866, through an act of Congress, legislation was adopted to create six all African-American Army units. The units were identified as the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st Infantry regiments. The four infantry regiments were later reorganized to form the 24th and 25th Infantry regiments.

2. These fighting men represented the first Black professional soldiers in a peacetime army. The recruits came from varied backgrounds including former slaves and veterans from service in the Civil War.

3. The nickname Buffalo Soldiers began with Cheyenne warriors in 1867. The actual Cheyenne translation was Wild Buffalo. The nickname was given out of respect for the fierce fighting ability of the 10th U.S. Cavalry.

4. Over time, Buffalo Soldiers became a generic term for all African-American soldiers serving in the 9th and 10th U.S. Cavalry and the 24th and 25th U.S. Infantry Regiments.

5. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the Buffalo Soldiers were assigned to the harshest and most desolate posts. Specific duties included subduing Mexican revolutionaries, outlaws, rustlers and warring Native Americans. Additional administrative duties included exploring and mapping the Southwest and establishing outposts for future towns.

The Buffalos Soldiers National Museum will celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Buffalo Soldiers in Houston Texas from July 28 - July 30. For more information, visit www.buffalosoldiermuseum.com.

The Buffalo Soldiers National Museum relies on supporters to keep its doors open. Two ways the community can help include:
1. Become a member. Museum membership ranges from \$35 for students and seniors to \$50,000 for its highest level of corporate membership. The most popular membership is \$45 for individuals, which includes unlimited free museum admission for one year, discounts on gift store merchandise and museum rentals, invitations to special events and a quarterly newsletter subscription.

2. Buy a brick. The museum's "Leave-A-Legacy... Buy-A-Brick" Paver Program allows donors to create a lasting memory by purchasing a one-of-a-kind engraved brick permanently displayed on the museum's Soldiers Plaza. Bricks start at \$175 and can honor a veteran, promote a business, surprise a friend, cheer an alma mater or commemorate a special date or event. For information, call 713-942-8920.

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