

WITTE MUSEUM

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WITTE MUSEUM celebrates **BLACK HISTORY MONTH** with **BUFFALO SOLDIER RE-ENACTMENTS** Every Saturday in February

SAN ANTONIO—In celebration of **Black History Month**, members of the **9th Calvary San Antonio Buffalo Soldiers** will bring their often-untold story to life on the grounds of the Witte Museum in the Log Cabin Area **February 4, 11, 18 and 25** from **Noon-4 p.m.** The re-enactments will then continue on the last Saturday of the month March through October 2007 and are free with museum admission.

Founded by Sgt. Major Leonard Wilkerson, the 9th Calvary Association is now in its 10th year of existence. Wilkerson felt the need to start up this organization after appearing as an extra in the Mini-Series, *Heaven and Hell*. It was important to him to demonstrate the importance of the history of the brave men of the 9th and 10th Cavalry since it was not being taught in schools.

“Teaming up with the Witte Museum has been a great achievement in getting the stories out to people who would otherwise not know about the history of the Buffalo Soldiers,” said Sgt. Major Leonard Wilkerson, “People from all over the world travel to the Witte to learn about South Texas history, and now they are able to learn a little more. We are the only organization of its kind to be a part of a museum setting and we owe it all to Carol Lynn Duganne, Director of Public Programs at the Witte Museum.”

The original Buffalo Soldiers consistently received some of the worst assignments the Army had to offer. They also faced severe prejudice by many of the citizens of the post-war frontier towns because of the color of their skin. Despite this, the troopers of the 9th and 10th Cavalries developed into two of the most distinguished fighting units in the Army.

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In July 1866, Congress passed legislation creating two cavalries whose enlisted composition was to be made up of African-Americans. The majority of the new recruits had served in all Black units during the Civil war. The mounted regiments were the 9th and 10th Cavalries, soon dubbed Buffalo Soldiers by the Cheyenne and Comanche. The troopers acknowledged the title and wore it proudly. To be linked with the fighting spirit of the Indian's sacred buffalo was a measure of admiration. The original 9th Cavalry was ordered to Texas in June of 1867, where it was ordered to protect stage and mail routes, build and maintain forts and establish law and order in a vast area full of outlaws, Mexican revolutionaries and raiding Comanche, Cheyenne, Kiowa and Apache Indians.

Lesser known accomplishments of the Buffalo Soldiers included investigating and mapping enormous areas of the southwest, as well as stringing hundreds of miles of telegraph lines. They built and repaired frontier outposts around which future towns and cities sprang to life. Without the protection provided by the 9th and 10th Cavalries, crews building the ever-expanding railroads were at the mercy of outlaws and hostile Indians.

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