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**Review of *Buffalo Soldiers and Officers of the Ninth Cavalry, 1867-1898: Black & White Together* By Charles L. Kenner**

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*Buffalo Soldiers and Officers of the Ninth Cavalry, 1867-1898: Black & White Together.* By Charles L. Kenner. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. x + 384 pp. \$26.95.

Charles Kenner presents a vivid portrait of some of the men and officers of one of the four regiments of black enlisted men and mostly white officers in the post-Civil War army. This regimental cast runs the gamut from the dedicated and gallant to bigots and bullies. There is Colonel Edward Hatch, who commanded the Ninth for twenty-three years, and Major Guy V. Henry, a tireless cheerleader for the regiment and his own career. Here, too, are rankers "of all degrees of competence," such as Emanuel Stance, a Medal of Honor winner so hated he was probably murdered by fellow soldiers. Kenner also sketches the service of three black officers: West Pointers John H. Alexander and Charles Young, and Chaplain Henry V. Plummer. Such men, according to Kenner, forged the Ninth into an "elite regiment."

The Ninth Cavalry received the same arms and equipment and had the same duties as

other units in the multi-purpose frontier force. Kenner traces the Ninth's long service in Texas, followed by a shift to New Mexico and Colorado, and then a final transfer to Oklahoma Territory and posts on the Northern Plains. Constant patrols, occasional combat, pushing Indians onto reservations, preventing white incursions onto these lands, aiding civilian law officers, escorting cattle drives, and delivering the mail were all part of the regiment's varied activities. In an excellent introductory chapter Kenner notes that few desertions and frequent re-enlistments gave the Ninth a cadre of experienced veterans.

Kenner correctly places race and racism at the center of his study. This is a fascinating look at the delicate relationship, the "frail entente," between white officers and black soldiers.

The research is first-rate. Kenner has made especially good use of the wealth of information found in military records. Unlike some white observers, black soldiers wrote little; but Kenner

found their "voice" in military personnel, pension, and court martial records. This is a welcome and well-documented look at some men who might otherwise be forgotten.

Regrettably, the book is flawed by the author's admission of "a psychological affinity for underdogs." Kenner's black soldiers "thirst for honor," one suffers "martyrdom," and a "lynch mob could not have perpetrated a greater miscarriage of justice" against another. The same bias fuels Kenner's use of such terms as "elite," "esprit de corps," and "years of glory." These personal statements ignore or exaggerate the evidence. During thirty years of frontier service, the men and officers of the Ninth Cavalry compiled a creditable record. The story of these soldiers and their regiment needs telling, but embellishments are unnecessary.

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