

A Negro Trooper of the Ninth Cavalry



HE REMINISCENCES of soldier life on the border, as given below, were related to John Warren Hunter, at San Angelo, Texas, in 1914, by a negro—a plain old time darkey, whose politeness, humility, and respectful bearing towards his superiors commanded the respect and confidence of the white people of San Angelo, among whom he had resided many years. Only a negro, but he had a military record of the which any man might be proud, a record substantiated by valuable documents in his possession and by honorable scars that he bore upon his war-battered anatomy.

Jacob Wilks was born a slave, in Kentucky, about thirty miles south of the Ohio river. While yet in infancy, his father and mother gathered their two children in their arms and fled under cover of darkness to the Ohio river, where they found concealment in the jungle until they could attract the attention of a group of fishermen on the north bank of the river. These fishermen, so it chanced, were connected with the "Underground Railroad," of which we have so often heard mention, and of the which Mrs. Harriett Beecher Stowe had much to say in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and being on the alert for runaway negroes, these fishermen soon caught the signal, and during the night, the second out from old Mastah Wilks' plantation, the refugees were taken across the river and landed in the free state of Ohio. A Mrs. Waddell stood ready to receive them and on her farm they were given food, shelter and employment. A year or so later the parents died and their last request was that their benefactress take charge of Jake, and care for him until old enough to take care of himself. Jake grew to manhood in the Waddell family and when the war came on he was among the first to join the army. He enlisted in the 116th regiment colored infantry at Camp Nelson, Ky., and served three years and nine months, during which time his regiment saw hard service under Grant in his Virginia campaigns. Wilks had been promoted to a sergeancy during this time and was pres-

ent at Lee's surrender at Appomatox, after which his regiment was sent to New Orleans and disbanded. The Ninth Cavalry, colored, was being organized and immediately after receiving his discharge from the infantry he enlisted in the Ninth, which was ordered to Texas via Galveston. When the regiment reached San Antonio, the companies were detached and sent to various posts along the border, mainly Forts Concho, McKavett, Stockton, Clark, Davis, Suitman and Fort Bliss at El Paso. Sergeant Wilks' company was stationed on divers occasions at posts in New Mexico and Arizona, where they saw hard service while campaigning against Indians.

"In 1873," said Sergeant Wilks, "I was sent with a detail of twelve men of my company to carry the mail to Fort Bliss. Each man carried a mail sack strapped to the cantel of his saddle, and we were armed with seven-shooting Spencer rifles. At Eagle Springs we were attacked by about 100 Apaches. The fight lasted several hours, during which the Indians made repeated charges. We were on an open plain without any protection whatever, but we dismounted, held our horses by the halter-reins, kept close together and withheld our fire until the Indians charged up within close range. Our rapid fire from long range guns wrought such havoc that in the evening they drew off, after killing one of our men. During the fight they made six charges and it was after a repulse of one of these charges that our man Johnson was killed. Contrary to orders, he mounted, dashed away calling us to follow him and charged right in among the Indians and was killed. When the Indians drew off they went in a direction that convinced me that they were going to ambush us in Buss Canyon, through which our route lay and several miles ahead. I decided to thwart their scheme and with the body of Johnson strapped on the horse, we left the road and struck out through the mountains for the Rio Grande below Fort Quitman. Five or six miles out where we had the fight we came to a small valley of loose sandy soil where with our

butcher knives and tin cups we scooped out a rude grave and buried our comrade. When we reached the Rio Grande we came up with a mule train belonging to Adams and in charge of a Mr. Naile, which was heavily laden with army supplies and stores for Fort Bliss. We told him that the Indians were near and that we had been fighting them all the day before and for him to corral his wagons at once. He did as directed and had scarcely finished preparations when the Indians appeared in large numbers and a furious attack followed. They were driven off and crossed into Mexico and after they were gone Mr. Naile said to me: "Sergeant, you have saved my train."

"It was while I was stationed at Fort McKavett in 1874 that orders came for six companies of the Ninth Cavalry to march to Fort Concho, where we were joined by several companies of infantry and a large supply train. General McKenzie was in command and the object of the expedition was the destruction of several Indian villages far out on the Staked Plains. We went by way of Fort Griffin where other forces joined us and after long and weary marches we came upon the main village, situated in Tule Canyon. The Indians discovered us long before we reached this canyon and employed every strategy to draw us away from the locality of the village, but General McKenzie was not so easily deceived but kept his column moving towards the canyon. The battle that ensued has been so often described that it is needless that I should go into detail here. We destroyed everything destructive in their village. They had many guns, mostly citizens' rifles, and a good supply of ammunition besides bows, arrows, quivers, lances, etc. These we destroyed. We found a vast amount of buffalo robes, of which each man made choice of the best—the rest were destroyed. Their tents were made of poles over which hides were stretched and these were all burned. We also captured a vast store of dried turkeys and buffalo meat; also a considerable amount of peculiar food made in the form of a paste from mesquite beans and other ingredients and put up in the maw of deer and buffalo. In this fight the squaws

fought like demons and many of them were killed who otherwise would have been spared. We captured 112 prisoners, mostly women, children, old "bucks" and three or four of the younger warriors. These were brought to Fort Concho and held six or eight months and finally taken to the Fort Sill reservation. While on the march to Fort Concho, three of the younger "bucks" committed suicide by butting out their brains, preferring a violent death to captivity.

"You ask me to tell you of the fight at White Sand Mountain. We were stationed at Fort Davis when scouts reported a large body of Mescalero Apaches passing out towards Mexico. Lieutenant Bullis with a part of two companies immediately took the trail. We followed them four days over a fearfully rough country and while passing their camping places, every sign showed that they had held a big war dance. Late one evening the scout came in and stated that just across the mountains in our front, the Indians had encamped for the night. This scout was ordered to return and watch the camp and report about midnight. Meantime our pack animals and extra stock were driven into the head of a narrow canyon, while a detail set to work to build a wall at the entrance in order that the stock might be secure. At about the hour of midnight our scout and trailer came in and reported to Lieutenant Bullis. He said the Indians were holding a big war dance and that they seemed to have no apprehension of impending danger. He also described the position of their horse-herd and the approaches to their camp, which was in a small valley with very little timber growth. We were ordered to mount and instructed to move with the utmost silence. The guide led us by a very circuitous route and at dawn we rode out of the valley, where the enemy lay in camp. The Indian in charge of the horse-herd was the first to discover us, and give the alarm, but too late. We charged pell mell into the encampment, killing old and young and but few escaped. Several prisoners were taken, among whom was an old chief—the most ancient-looking individual I ever saw. He might have been feigning extreme de-

crepitude, but he gave us the impression that he was utterly helpless. He was too old and venerable in appearance for us to kill; we did not care to be encumbered with him as a prisoner, so we placed a ham of venison and an olla of water near him and left him alone to face the best he could. We gathered up the spoils, such as we wanted to carry away, destroyed the rest, and with the large herd of captured horses, we started on our return to Fort Davis. Among the prisoners taken was a beautiful Apache girl whose age we took to be about 17 years. She proved to be a most vicious, intractable prisoner and sought every occasion to inflict injury on her captors. She was mounted astride behind one of our troopers who was continually exposed to her sly means of insult and torture. As was the custom, each cavalryman carried a six-shooter in a scabbard or holster the flap of which was buttoned down. Several times this girl was foiled in the act of reaching forward and trying to seize the trooper's pistol and would have succeeded but for the difficulty in releasing the flap from the button. The men reasoned and agreed among themselves that it were better to kill this prisoner than to take the risk of having one or more of their number killed by her, and the morning following this agreement, she made another attempt to get possession of the trooper's pistol and was promptly shot, and nothing was said about it, although it was expected that the offender would have to face courtmartial.

"I have often been asked about Bullis' Seminole scouts, and the general impression went abroad to the effect that these scouts were Seminole Indians, but this was a mistaken idea. Bullis' scouts were all negroes from Mexico. A number of them were ex-slaves who before and during the war, had run off from their masters in Texas and got into Mexico, while the most of them were sons of negro parents who had been adopted into the tribe of Seminole Indians in Florida and went with a branch of that tribe into Mexico when driven from Florida. Many of these were part Indian. They all spoke Spanish; only a few of them, the Texas ex-slaves, spoke any English, and were conceded to be the best body

of scouts, trailers and Indian fighters ever engaged in the Government service along the border. Their efficiency was due wholly to the skill and military genius of Lieutenant Bullis."

Governors of Texas

Name	Inaugurated.
J. Pinckney Henderson	1846
George T. Wood	1847
P. Hansborough Bell	1849
E. M. Pease	1853
H. R. Runnels	1857
Sam Houston	1859
Edward Clark	1861
F. R. Lubbock	1861
Pendleton Murrah	1863
A. J. Hamilton	1865
J. W. Throckmorton	1866
E. M. Pease	1867
E. J. Davis	1870
Richard Coke	1874
R. B. Hubbard	1876
O. M. Roberts	1879
John Ireland	1883
L. S. Ross	1887
J. S. Hogg	1891
C. A. Culberson	1895
Joseph D. Sayers	1899
S. W. T. Lanham	1903
Thomas M. Campbell	1907
O. B. Colquitt	1911
James E. Ferguson	1915
W. P. Hobby	1917
Pat M. Neff	1921
Mrs. Miriam A. Ferguson	1925
Dan Moody	1927

This record makes Moody the twenty-ninth Governor of Texas.

Captain J. L. Bomar, of Talpa, Texas, writes: "Find enclosed \$1.50 for renewal of my subscription to Frontier Times. I don't want to miss a copy. I am an old Texas Ranger, and I know something about hard times, sleeping out in the cold while chasing Indians and outlaws. I am now 75 years old and going good."

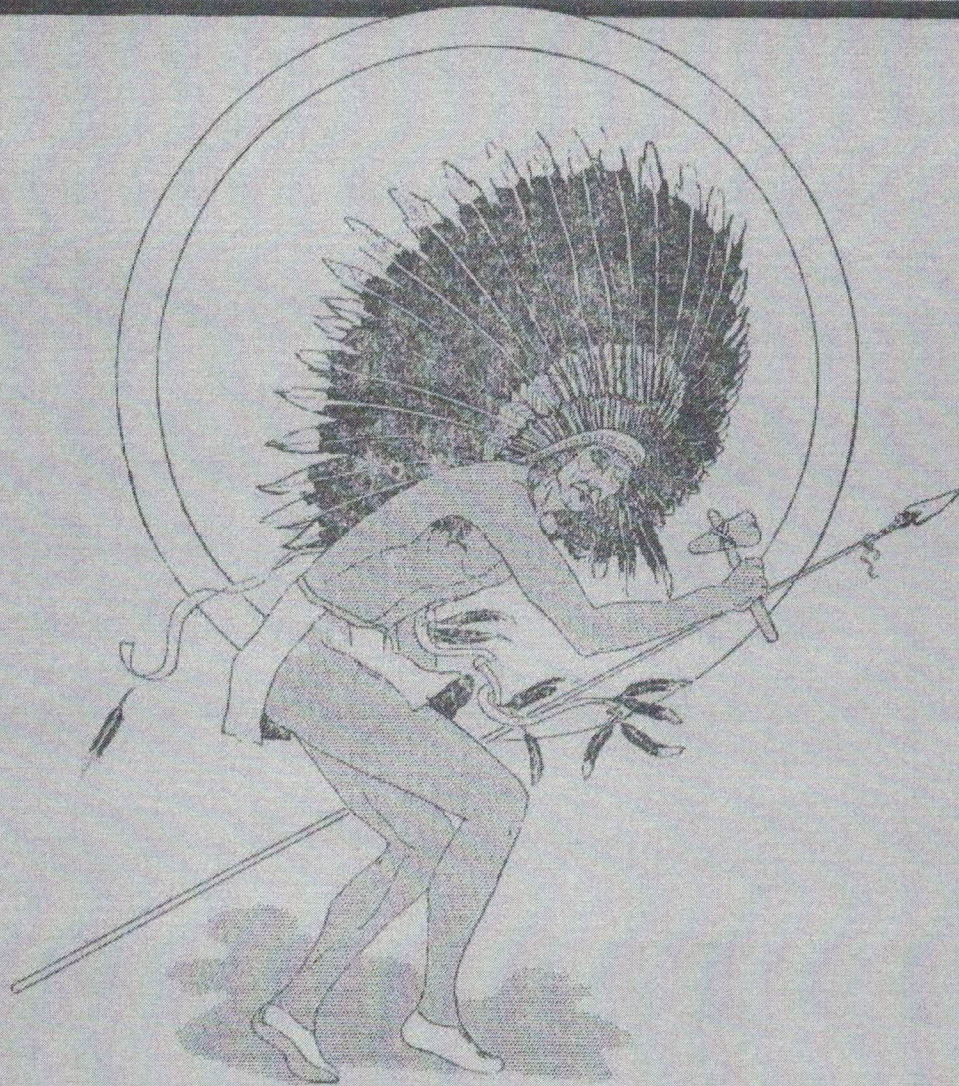
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