

## Army General Orders No. 56

The Army Reorganization Act of 1866 enacted by the Thirty-Ninth Congress was published for the information and government of all concerned in General Orders No. 56, War Department, Adjutant General's Office, Washington DC, dated 01 August 1866. Both documents are historically and militarily significant because they broke new ground in United States military history. They authorized, for the first time in the history of the United States, a place for black men in the peacetime army. In addition, a Chaplain, normally assigned to a post, camp, or station, was assigned to each regiment of black troops to perform religious and educational tasks.

Later in August 1866, General Ulysses S. Grant, Commanding General of the Army of the United States, sent instructions to General Philip Sheridan, Commanding General of the Division of the Gulf, and General William T. Sherman, Commanding General of the Military Division of Missouri, to organize a regiment of colored cavalry in their areas of command. The regiments were to be designated as the 9th and 10th Regiments United States Cavalry. The instructions from General Grant also recommended two cavalry officers with distinguished Civil War records to command the regiments - Colonel Edward Hatch of Iowa and Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson of Illinois.

On 21 September 1866, Colonel Hatch began the task of organizing the 9th Regiment US Cavalry at Greenville LA (now part of the City of New Orleans). On the same date, Colonel Grierson began the task of organizing the 10th Regiment US Cavalry at Fort Leavenworth KS.

Enlistees for the 9th Cavalry came mostly from Louisiana. A few enlistees came from Kentucky, South Carolina, and Virginia. For the 10th Cavalry, enlistees came mostly from Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts. The period of an enlistment was five (5) years. Pay for privates was thirteen (13) dollars a month. Food, clothing, and shelter were provided at no charge.

Although there were numerous difficulties to overcome, Colonel Hatch and Colonel Grierson completed the organization of their regiments. In the spring and summer of 1867, the 9th and 10th Cavalry moved westward and began over two decades of continuous service on the Great Plains and in the mountains and deserts of Texas, New Mexico and Arizona.