

Huachuca's Heroes



The Buffalo Soldiers: Those regular Army African-American regiments that called Huachuca home for some 30 years at the beginning of the 20th century. Sculpture by Don Cox, 1982, Fort Huachuca Museum



Home of the Buffalo Soldiers

What made the Buffalo Soldiers unique in history was not that they were courageous, self-sacrificing, and loved their country. Those things can be found in most military men in most times. What made them outstanding was that they should possess those qualities in a society that was determined to brand them as inferior. Their story belongs in the American classroom.



The story of African-Americans fighting under their nation's flag is older than the flag itself. First introduced as slaves by the British early in the 17th century, blacks served alongside their white masters in the first colonial militias organized to defend against Indian attacks.

By the time of the American Revolution, some freed slaves were

Above: A memorial by Augustus Saint-Gaudens in Boston paying tribute to the 54th Regiment of African-Americans commanded by Col. Robert Shaw during the fighting of the Civil War. It was unveiled in 1897. Right: A study for a Black Soldier's Head made by Saint-Gaudens in 1864.

taking a stand for independence along with the white colonists. A freedman named Crispus Attucks was among those eleven Americans gunned down in the Boston massacre of March 5, 1770, when they defied the British soldiery. When the war broke out, blacks like Peter Salem and Salem Poore were in the thick of the fighting. Salem was credited with shooting the British commander at Bunker Hill and Poore was cited for gallantry. A number of other blacks were serving in New England militia units in 1775, but when the Continental Army was officially formed in 1775, Congress bowed to the insistence of the southern slaveholders and excluded blacks, free or slave, from service. These regulations were soon overridden by the necessities of the desperate fighting and the need for



manpower. Black veterans were retained and new recruits were accepted.

In all, there were approximately 5,000 blacks who served in the American Revolutionary War. Despite the fact that they continued to make real military contributions in the War of 1812 and in the Civil War, it was not until after that latter war that blacks were accepted into the regular Army.

In 1866 six black regular Army regiments were formed. They were the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st Infantry and the 9th and 10th Cavalry. Three years later, as part of a reduction in the size of the Army, the 38th and 41st were consolidated to form the 24th Infantry, and the 39th and 40th made up the new 25th Infantry. Officered by whites, these regiments went on to justify the belief by black leaders that men of their race could contribute mightily to the nation's defense. Some of the service of each of these regiments in the latter part of the 19th century is highlighted in the paragraphs that follow.

The 24th Infantry Regiment participated in 1875 expeditions against hostile Kiowas and Comanches in the Department of Texas. One of the engagements of this campaign saw a Lieutenant John Bullis and three Seminole-Negro Indian scouts attack a 25-man war party on the Pecos River. Sergeant John Ward, Private Pompey Factor and Trumpeter Isaac Payne were rewarded with the Medal of Honor for their exceptional bravery in this encounter.

The 25th Infantry Regiment spent its first ten years in Texas building and repairing military posts, roads and telegraph lines; performing escort and guard duty of all description; marching and counter-marching from

post to post; and scouting for Indians. In 1880 the regiment was ordered to the Department of Dakota and stationed at Fort Missoula, Montana. It participated in the Pine Ridge Campaign of 1890-91, fought during the last stand of the Sioux, and quelled civil disorders in Missoula during the Northern Pacific Railroad strike in 1894.

The 10th Cavalry Regiment, or "Buffalo Soldiers," is probably the most renowned of the black regiments. At its inception, the commander, Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson, was determined to fill the



Artist Paul Rossi. From the John M. Carroll collection.

ranks only with men of the highest quality. Orders went out to recruit none but "superior men...who would do credit to the regiment." The 10th's record in several Indian War campaigns attests to the fact that Grierson achieved his goal. In 1885 the 10th Cavalry was rushed from Texas to Arizona to meet the threat from Chiricahua Apaches led by

Geronimo. They were stationed at Forts Grant, Apache, and Verde, with Colonel Grierson's headquarters at Whipple Barracks. In 1886, the Buffalo Soldiers tracked Geronimo's renegades in the Pinito Mountains in Mexico and several months later ran down Mangas, the last Apache holdout, and his band.

The Battle of Wounded Knee Creek, the last major fight of the Indian Wars, pitted the U.S. 7th Cavalry, a white regiment against Big Foot's Sioux. The 9th Cavalry Regiment also took part in this campaign and played a dramatic role in the Battle of Clay Creek Mission. Over 1,800 Sioux under Little Wound and Two Strike had encircled the battle-weary 7th. The situation looked grave until the 9th Cavalry arrived on the field and drove off the Indian force with an attack on their rear. For conspicuous gallantry displayed on this occasion, Corporal William O. Wilson, Troop I, 9th Cavalry, was granted the Medal of Honor.

The paths of all four of these regiments would intersect in a scenic canyon in southeastern Arizona, just twenty miles from the Mexican border. The place was called Fort Huachuca, and it had played an important part in the Apache campaigns since its establishment in 1877. The first black regiment to arrive at Huachuca was the 24th Infantry, which sent companies there in 1892. During the next year, the entire regiment would come together at the fort. Here they remained until 1896, a year that saw some excitement for the troops who thought that the Indian Wars had ended. It was in that year that Colonel John Mosby Bacon took Companies C and H, of the 24th Infantry out of Fort Huachuca,

to run down Yaqui Indians who had been raiding around Harshaw and Nogales. The search for these Mexico-based Indians proved inconclusive.

Companies A and H of the 25th Infantry regiment took up residence in Huachuca Canyon in 1898, after returning from fighting in Cuba, and A Company remained there until the end of April 1899.

Troops of the 9th Cavalry joined the 25th Infantry at Fort Huachuca in 1898 and rotated its units in and out of the post until 1900. A detachment of the 9th would return briefly for a short tour in 1912.

Although the 9th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry regiments had all served briefly at Fort Huachuca during the 1890s, it wasn't until the 10th Cavalry, or the "Buffalo Soldiers," arrived there in December 1913 that the era of black soldiers began at Huachuca. (The nickname "Buffalo Soldiers" was first given to the men of the 10th Cavalry by the Indians of the plains who likened their hair to that of the buffalo. Over the years this name has been extended by veterans to include soldiers of all of the original black regi-

ments.)

This proud cavalry unit had served in Arizona before, in the last century, rotating from one post to another in Arizona, New Mexico or Texas, wher-

ever they were needed to track down Apache renegades. So the startling vistas were not new to many of the veterans. Nor was the relentless desert sun a stranger to these horsemen who

doggedly followed the trail of Pancho Villa into Mexico in 1916. In Huachuca Canyon they found a home for the next eighteen years, the longest this mobile unit would stay at any one place since its formation in 1866.

Right after their arrival at Huachuca, in 1914, the men of the 10th were spread out at encampments along the Arizona-Mexico border from Yuma on the West to Naco on the east. They corralled their horses and stretched their tents at points in between: Forrest, Osborne, Nogales, Lochiel, Harrison's Ranch, Arivaca, Sasabe, La Osa, and San Fernando. Many would sweat it out under canvas for as long as ten months before being rotated back to their home station in the cooler elevation of the Huachucas.

The 10th was picketed along the border, not as some training exercise, but to enforce neutrality laws. Mexico was experiencing political upheaval



Corporal C. Thompson, 15th New York Infantry, World War I.
Raymond Desvarraux, from the West Point Museum Collection.
The 15th New York became the 369th U.S. Infantry, a part of the 92d Infantry Division (Blue Helmets) that trained at Fort Huachuca for World War II.

on a scale that alarmed statesmen in Washington, D. C., and they quickly legislated that there could be no encroachments upon American soil. They were relieved in 1931 by the 25th Infantry Regiment. First arriving at the post in 1928, the 25th continued the tradition of black soldiering there. Like the 10th Cavalry, they had seen hard combat in both the Indian Wars and in Cuba. Also like the Tenth, they were to serve there for 14 years until 1942 when they were incorporated as cadre into the newly formed 93d Infantry Division.

If the sobriquet "Buffalo Soldier" has come to stand collectively for the black men who served in the four regular army regiments from 1866 to World War II, then Fort Huachuca has earned the distinction of being "Home of the Buffalo Soldier." Fort Huachuca, more than any other installation in the U.S. military establishment, was at the heart of half a century of black military history. It was here that black soldiers came to reflect upon their worth, to remember the part they had played in subduing Comanche, Kiowa, Apache, and Sioux; in punching a hole through Spanish lines on a Cuban hilltop so Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders could dash through it; and in winning the day against Mexican forces at Agua Caliente in 1916. If their white fellow Americans did not show them the respect they deserved, their foes in battle did. The Indians called them "Buffalo Soldiers." The Germans in World War I referred to them as "Hell Fighters."

It was on Huachuca's parade field that they felt the stirrings of pride that only the soldier knows, and they marched with a growing sense of equality that their civilian brothers

would not be allowed to feel until decades later. Problems of discrimination were as widespread in the Army as they were in other parts of American society, but minority barriers fell faster in the Army where the most important measure of a man is his dependability in a fight.

Field Trip

If your class is close enough to the Fort Huachuca Museum, a field trip to that institution is suggested. It is one of the few historical programs in Arizona to include displays on the Buffalo Soldiers. Located in Fort Huachuca's Old Post, a National Historic Landmark, the museum tells the story of the U.S. Army on the Southwestern frontier. A group visit can last from between fifty minutes to an hour and a half. There is no charge for admission to the museum. The museum is open on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., on weekends from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., and any other time by appointment (602-533-3638). It is recommended that one chaperon be provided for each ten students.

Classroom Discussion

Classroom activities may center around a discussion of these questions. How was the life of the Buffalo Soldier 100 years ago different than it is today? Did the sacrifices made by the Buffalo Soldiers on the American frontier contribute to the comforts we enjoy today? Do traditions like those of the Buffalo Soldiers contribute to nation-building? Why is history important to our lives? How does history tell us who we are?

This is also an opportunity to introduce the subject of racial discrimi-

nation. How does it feel to accomplish something and not be rewarded for it? That is essentially what happened to the Buffalo Soldiers who were largely ignored by history until recently. How would you feel if you made great sacrifices for your country and were not allowed to fully enjoy life in that country? The Buffalo Soldiers remind us of the importance of guarding against injustice in our society.

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**Huachuca Illustrated*, *Fort Huachuca: The Story of a Frontier Post*, and *Buffalo Soldiers* can be ordered from the Huachuca Museum Society Gift Shop, 520-458-4716.

Remington Sketches

While the 10th Cavalry was stationed in Arizona 100 years ago, the artist Frederic Remington visited them at places like Fort Apache and Fort Huachuca. He sketched and painted scenes from their history and everyday life. Those renderings conveyed a feeling for the uniform, equipment, and lifestyles of those Buffalo Soldiers. A few of those sketches are enclosed as inserts. They can serve as classroom posters, visual aids, coloring projects, or as models for students to create their own visualizations of the Buffalo Soldier.

The John M. Carroll Collection

In his book, *The Black Military Experience in the American West*, John M. Carroll assembled a remarkable collection of art work

depicting the activities of the African-American soldier on the frontier. The artists include such leading illustrators as Paul A. Rossi, Jose Cisneros, and Lawrence Bjorklund. Over 50 percent of the art appearing in the book was specially commissioned by Carroll and became part of his personal collection. It represents the most complete art collection on the subject of the African-American fighting man in the American West. Carroll has generously granted permission to the Fort Huachuca Museum to use this artwork in its displays and publications.

The Army Art Collection

The Army Art Collection, maintained under the auspices of the U.S. Army Center of Military History, has been assembling visual representations of the U.S. Army at war and peace since World War I. From that important body of work, published in a volume entitled *Portrait of an Army*, have been culled pieces which show the African-American soldier fighting for his country in every war over the past century.

The African-American Fighting Man in the U.S. Army: A Portfolio



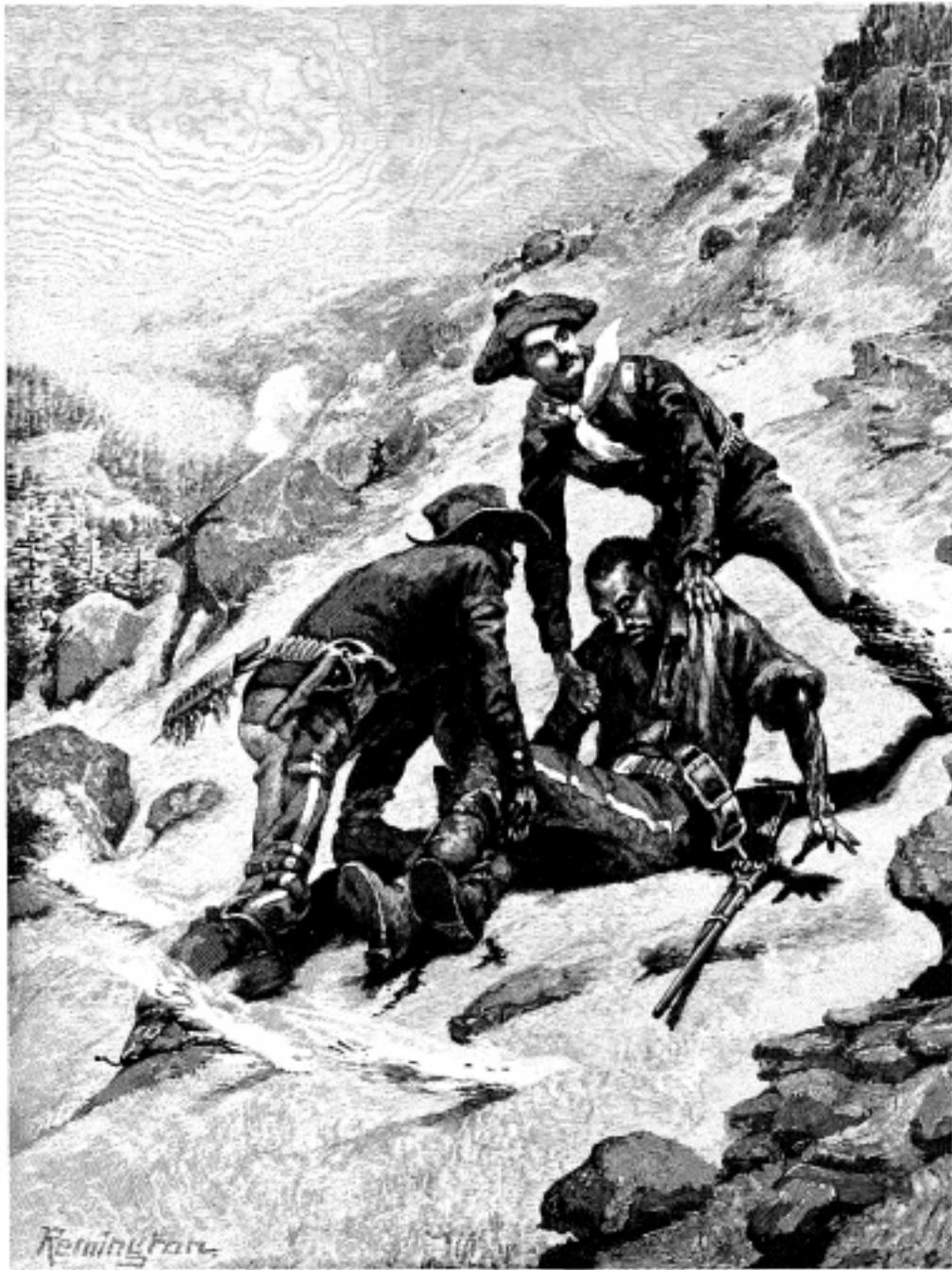
A Pull at the Canteen, Frederic Remington, The John M. Carroll Collection.



A Campfire Sketch, Frederic Remington, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Untitled Drawing Frederic Remington, The John M. Carroll Collection.



The Rescue of Corporal Scott, Frederic Remington, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Ejecting an Oklahoma Boomer, Frederic Remington, The John M. Carroll Collection.



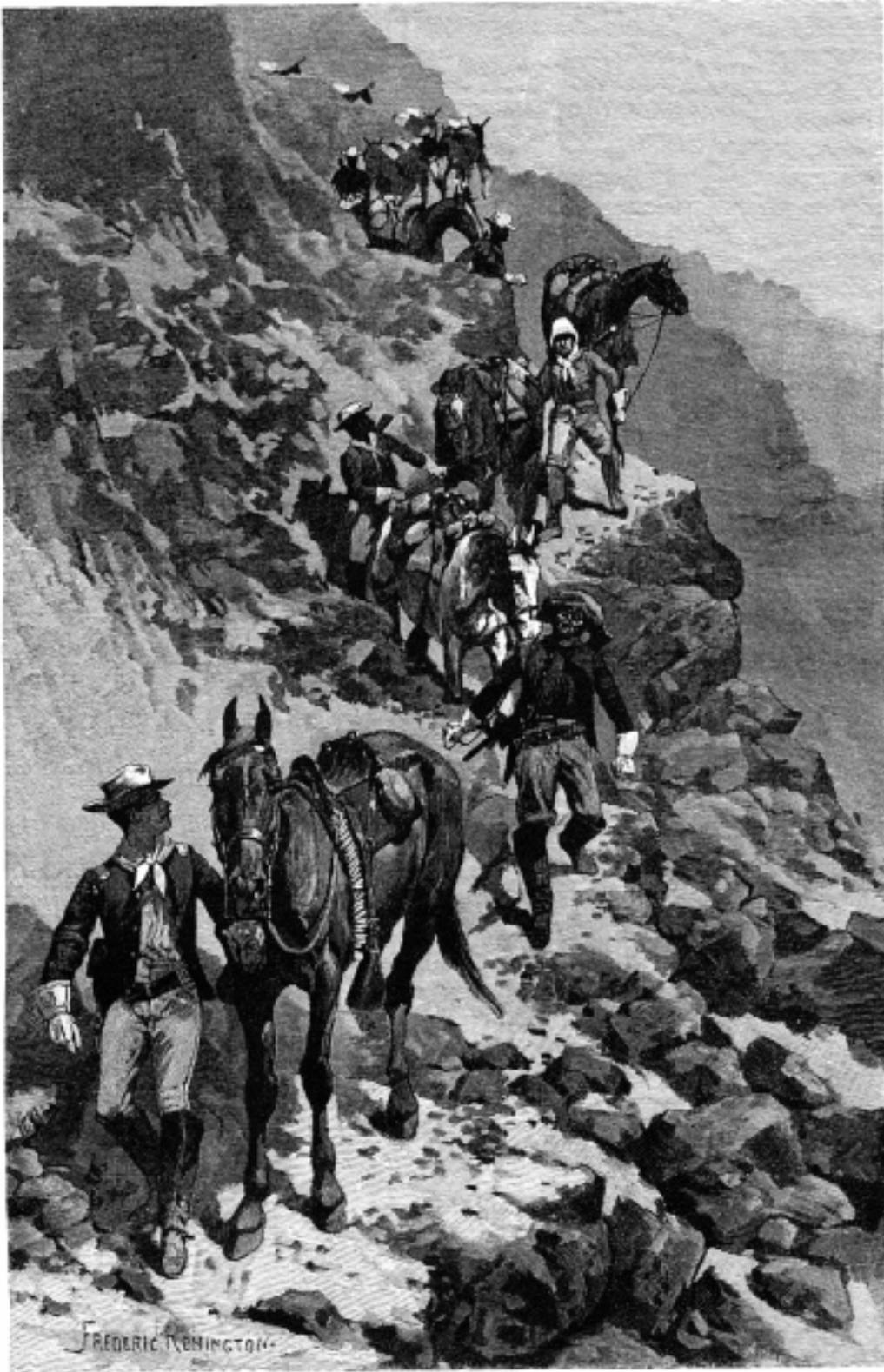
Captain Dodge's Colored Troops to the Rescue, Frederic Remington, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Untitled Drawing Frederic Remington, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Marching in the desert, (Remington is second in line) Frederic Remington, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Marching on the Mountains, Frederic Remington, The John M. Carroll Collection.



A Study in Action, Frederic Remington, The John M. Carroll Collection.



A halt to tighten the packs, Frederic Remington, The John M. Carroll Collection.



The "Dough-boys" on the March, Frederic Remington, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Recruit in Full Dress Uniform (1885), Paul A. Rossi, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Sergeant Major, Retired, Medal of Honor winner, Paul A. Rossi, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Tenth Cavalry Trooper; Paul A. Rossi, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Tenth Cavalryman, Paul A. Rossi, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Ninth Cavalryman, Paul A. Rossi, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Full dress uniform, 1880, Paul A. Rossi, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Private Adam Paine, Jose Cisneros, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Lieutenant Henry Ossian Flipper, Jose Cisneros, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Seminole-Negro Indian Scout, Jose Cisneros, The John M. Carroll Collection.



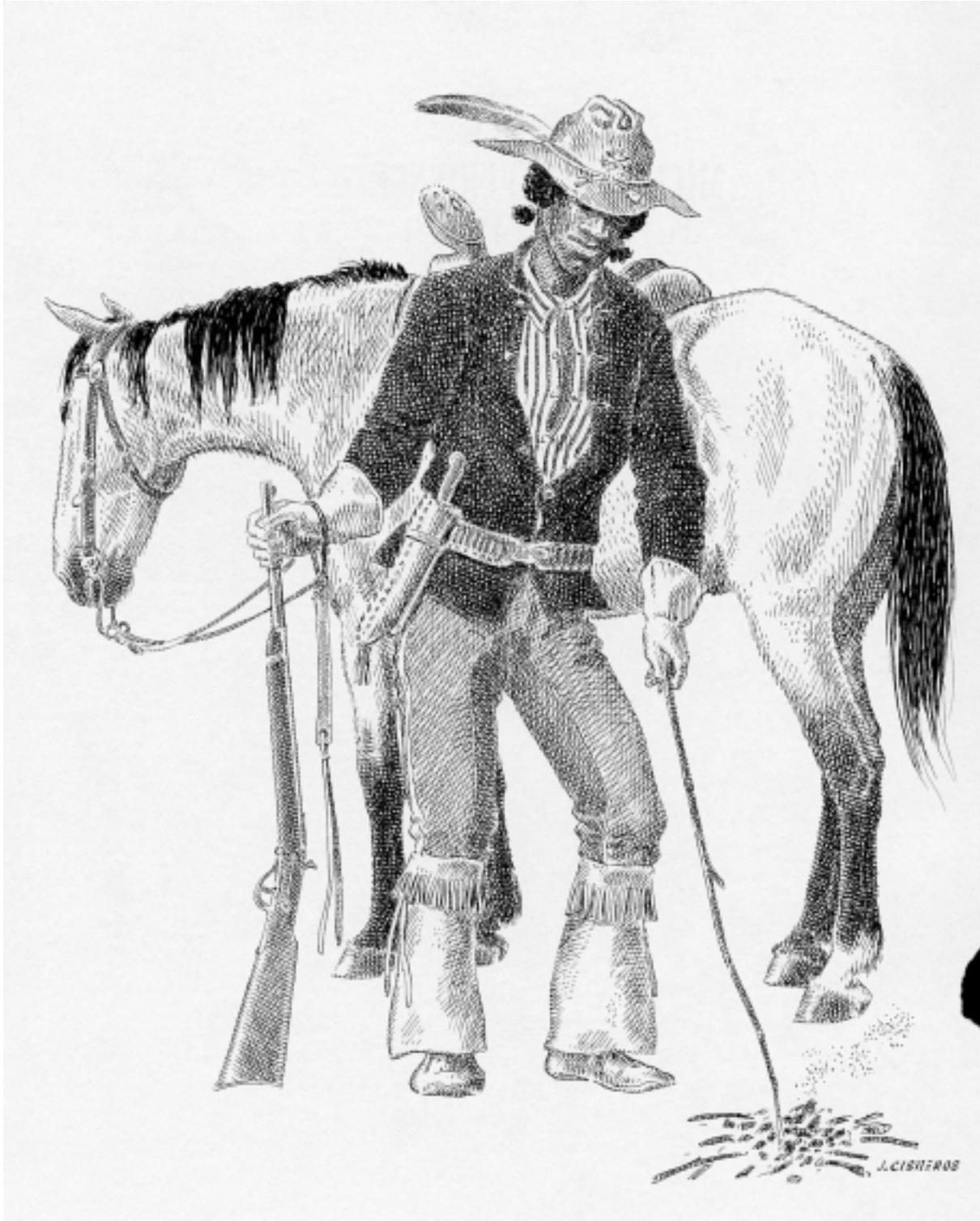
The Sioux at Pine Ridge, Jose Cisneros, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Trooper at Fort Quitman, Jose Cisneros, The John M. Carroll Collection.



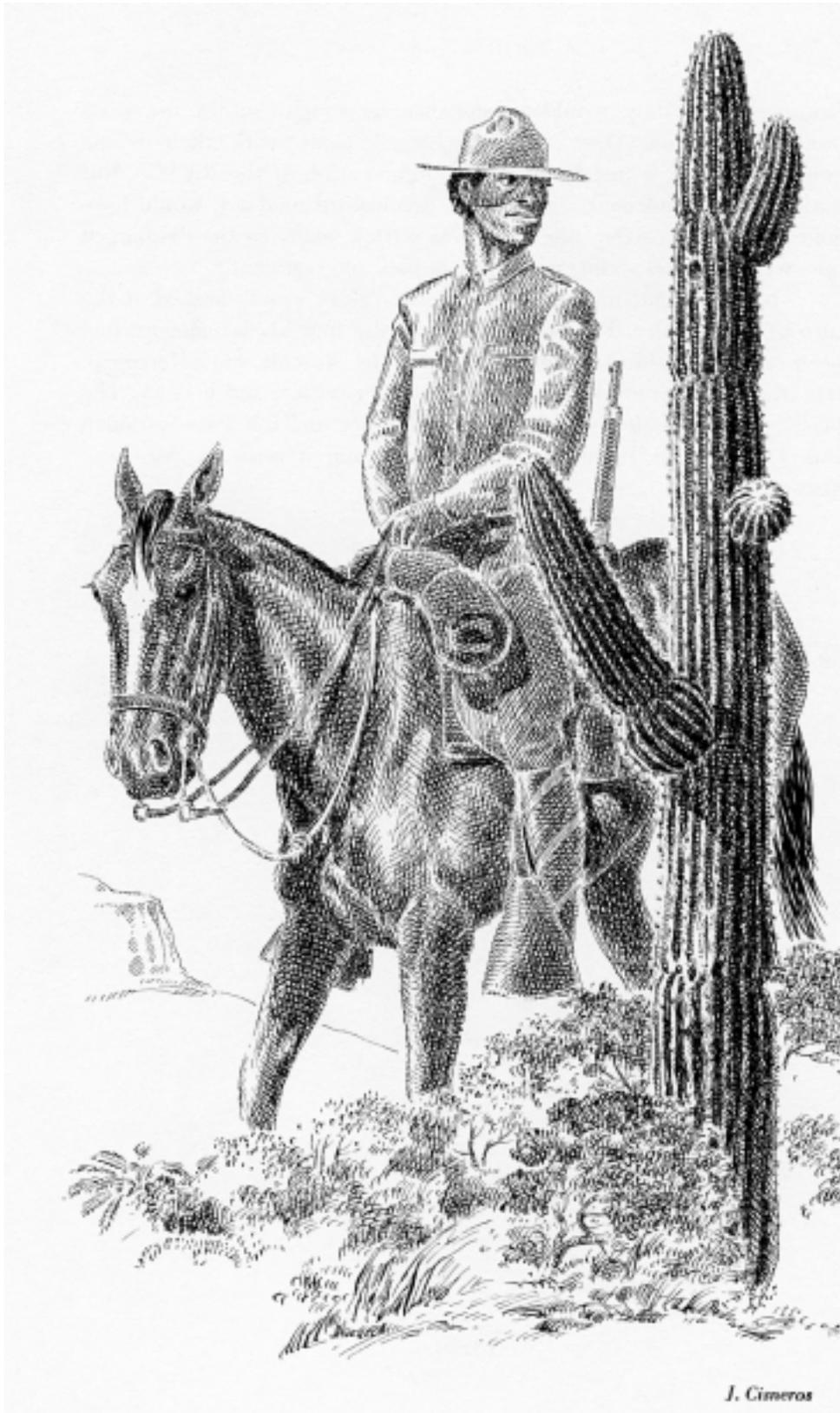
Estevanico, Jose Cisneros, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Seminole-Negro Indian Scout, Jose Cisneros, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Fire Fighting, Jose Cisneros, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Police Duty on the Frontier, Jose Cisneros, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Seminole-Negro Indian Scout, Jose Cisneros, The John M. Carroll Collection.



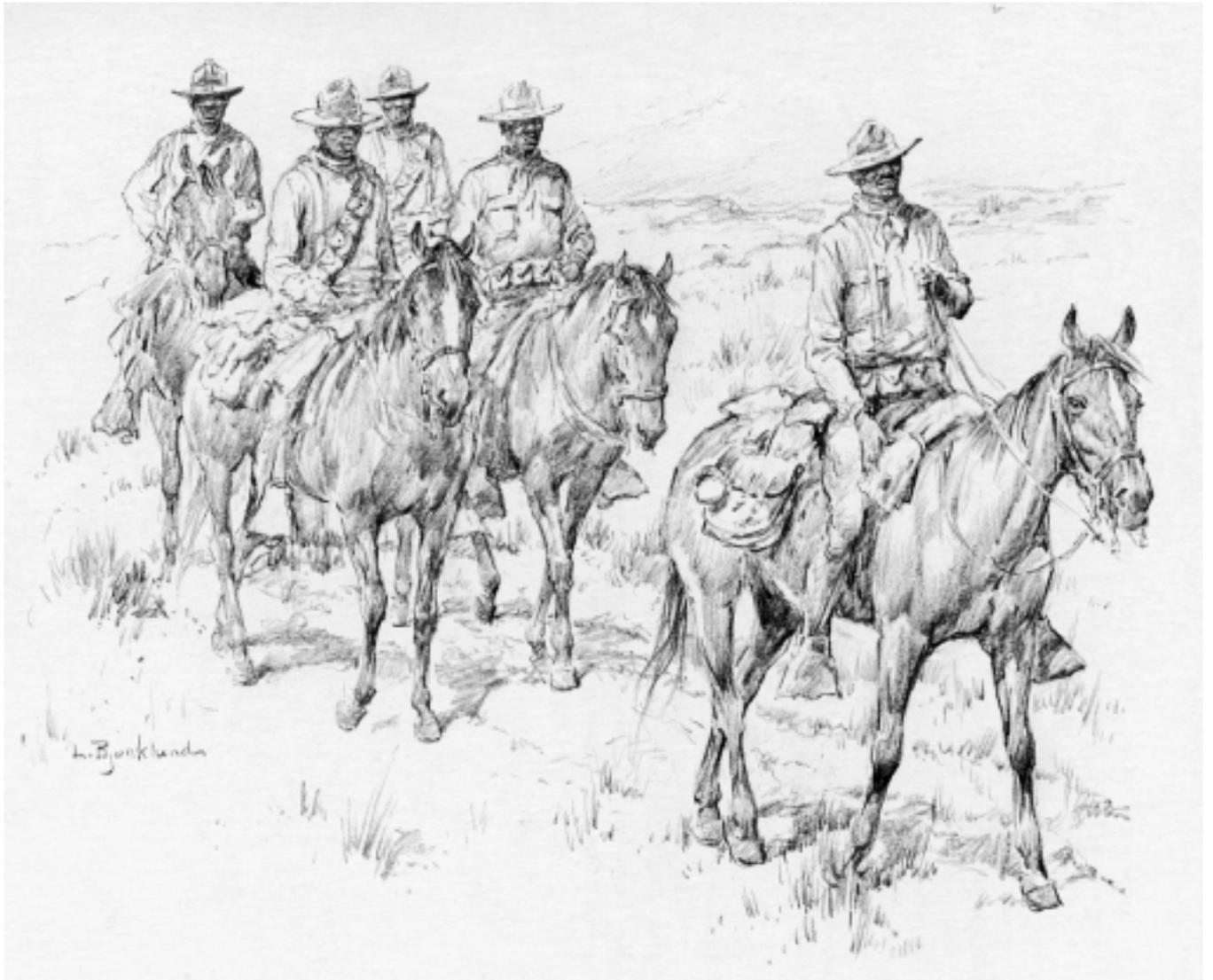
Private Factor, Trumpeter Paine, Serbeant Ward, Jose Cisneros, The John M. Carroll Collection.



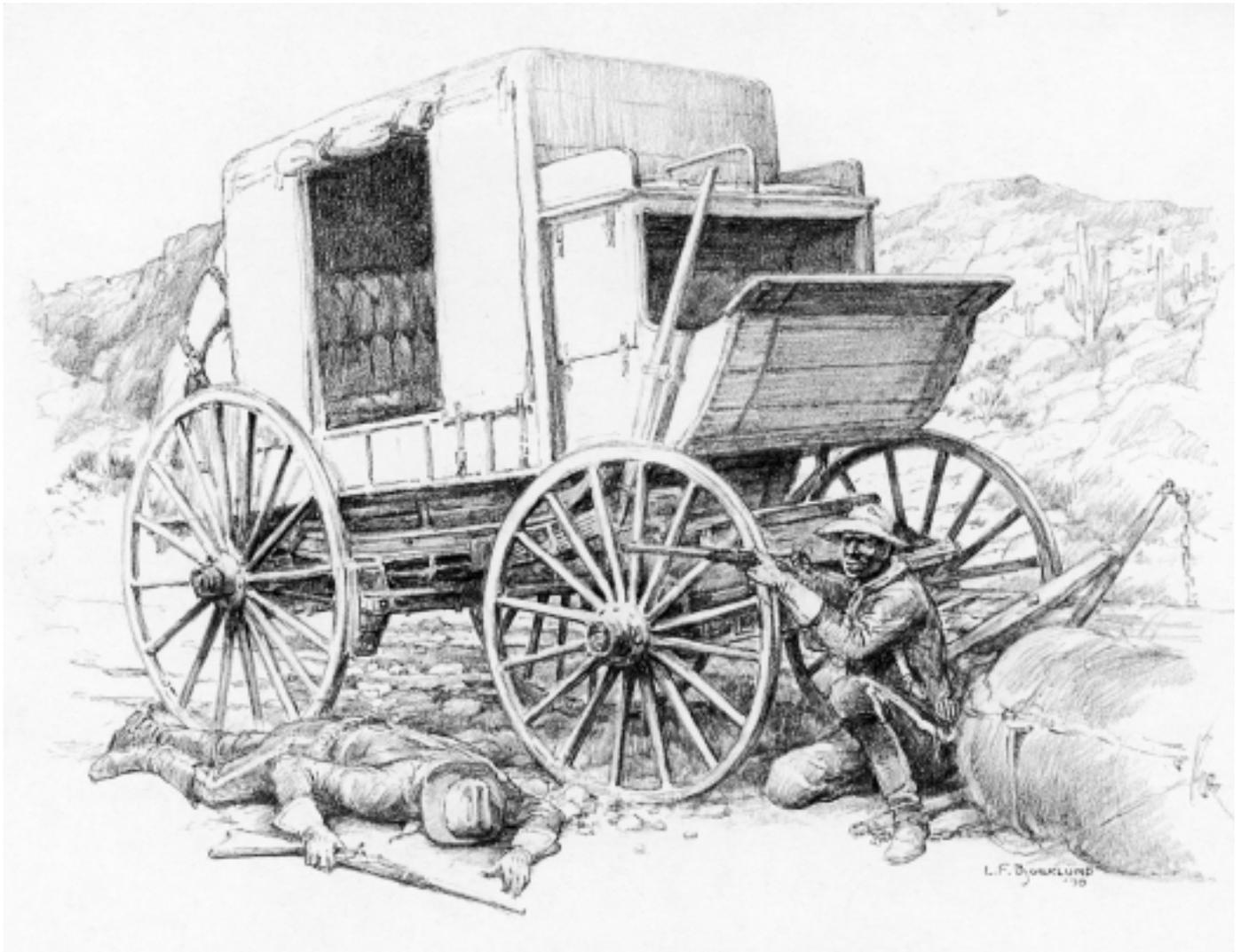
Sergeant George Jordan, Jose Cisneros, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Sergeant Henry Johnson, Jose Cisneros, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Cavalry at Carrizal, Lawrence Bjorklund, The John M. Carroll Collection.



The Wham Paymaster Robbery, Lawrence Bjorklund, The John M. Carroll Collection.



Charge of the First and Tenth Regular Cavalry, Cuba, Howard Chandler Christy, 1898, U.S. Army Art Collection.



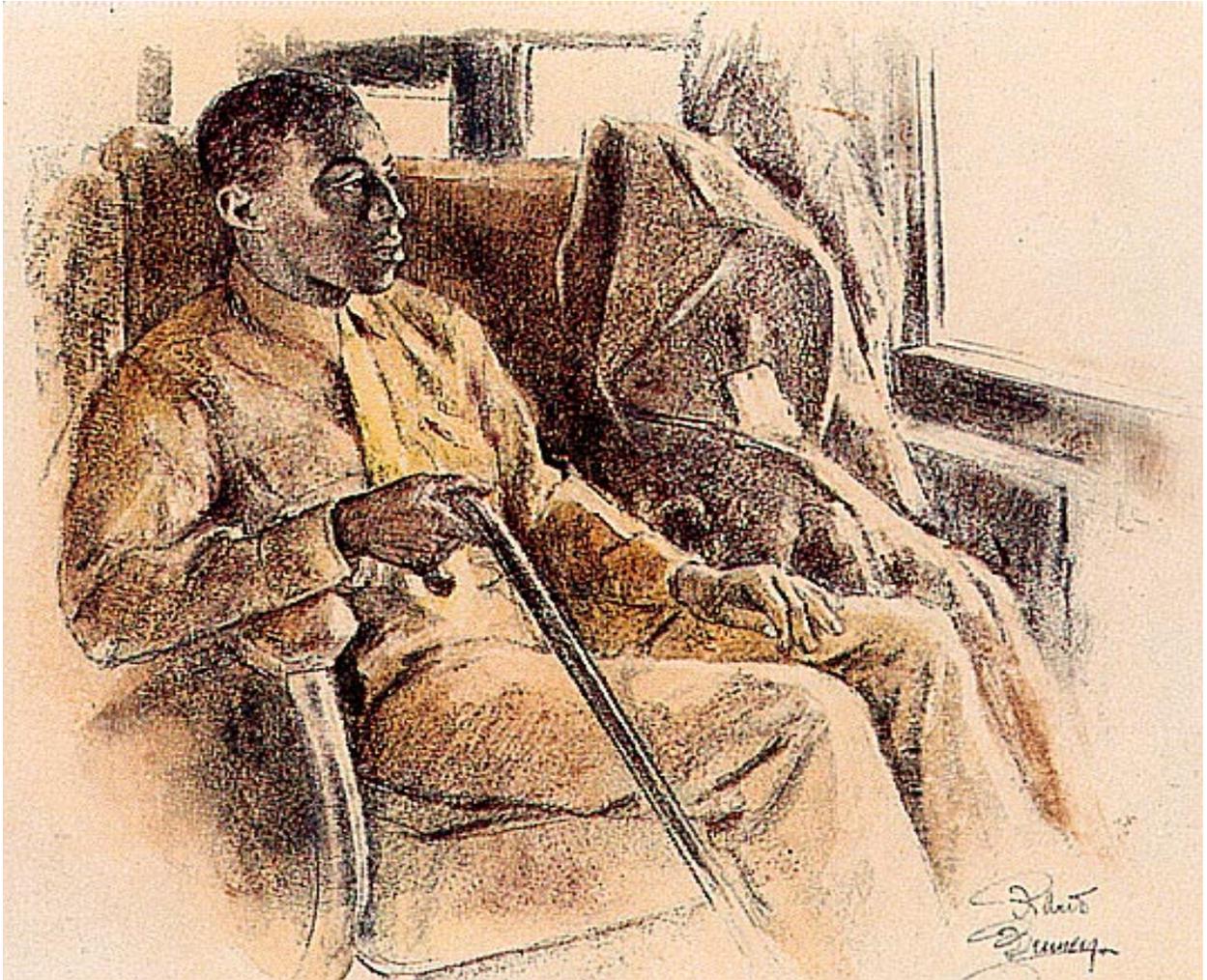
Radio Man, Italy, World War II, Ludwig Mactarian, 1945, U.S. Army Art Collection.



Sergeant Gives Orders, Guadalcanal, World War II, Aaron Bohrod, 1943, U.S. Army Art Collection.



Negro Soldier; The Pacific, Aaron Bohrod, 1943, U.S. Army Art Collection.



First Class Passenger, Hospital Train, World War II, Robert Benney, U.S. Army Art Collection.



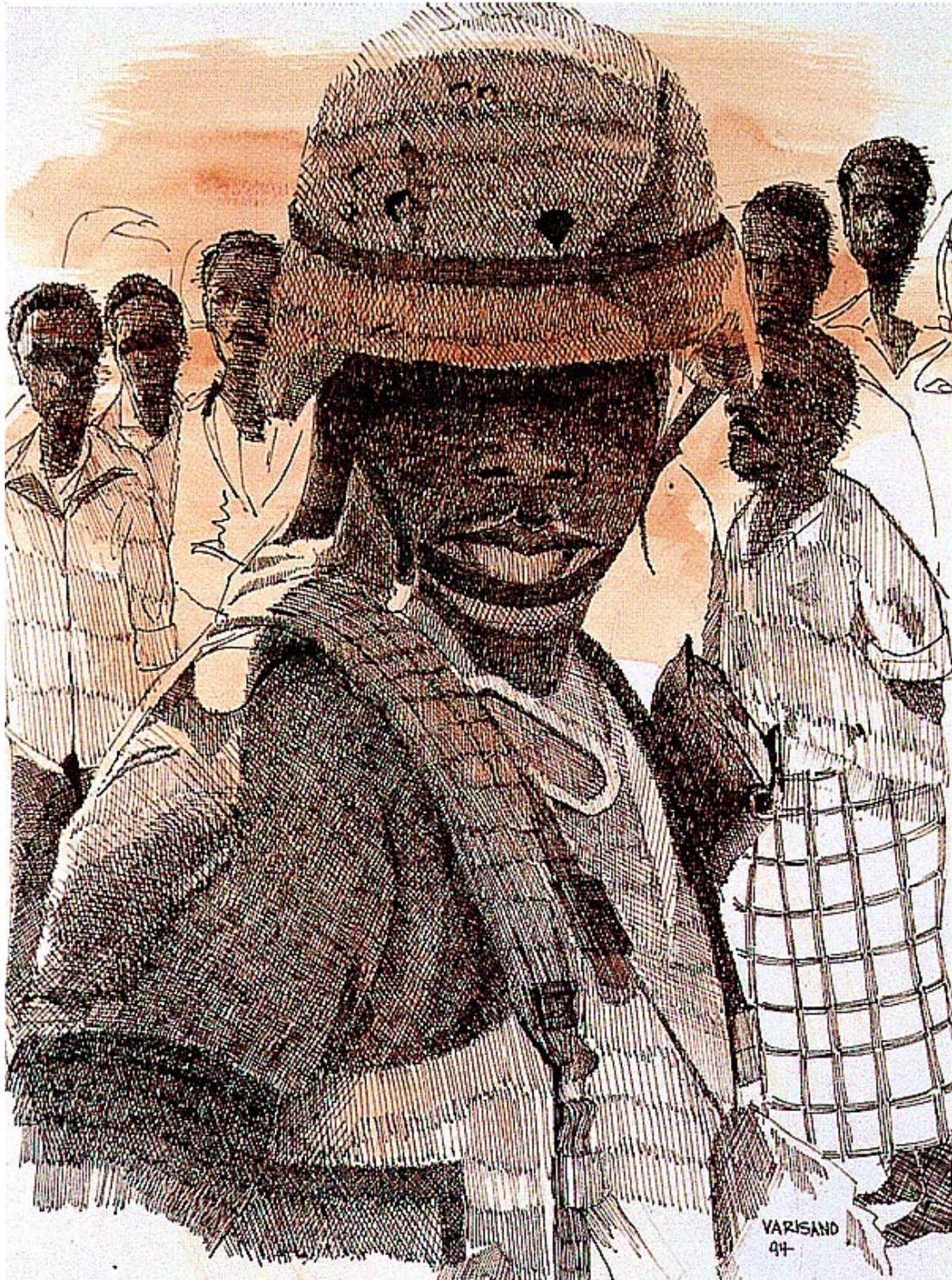
Alert, Cuba, Korea, David Grinstein, 1970, U.S. Army Art Collection.



The Pause That Refreshes, Vietnam, Dennis O. McGee, 1967, U.S. Army Art Collection.



Dust Off Crew Member, Saudi Arabia, Peter Varisano, 1991, U.S. Army Art Collection.



MP at University Gate, Somalia, Peter G. Varisano, 1994, U.S. Army Art Collection.