

## The Soldier’s Work

As military establishments in the Bay Area grew, so did the needs of maintaining these posts. A soldier’s work consisted of numerous duties, such as weapon training, drills, and manning coast artillery batteries. However, soldiers occupied jobs in various other positions as well.

### Letterman Army General Hospital

From its founding in 1898, Letterman Hospital was highly regarded for its work in treating the sick and injured who passed through its doors. Pandemics such as the measles, malaria, and typhoid fever stemming from the Spanish American War demanded the attention of doctors, nurses, and enlisted soldiers of the Hospital Corps. The outbreak of World War I brought more than 18,000 soldiers to the hospital in just two years. Treatment for the wounded also brought about advancements in neurological, psychiatric, and orthopedic care. In the years between the two World Wars, Letterman continued to care for soldiers and their families stationed in the Bay Area. When the United States entered World War II in 1941, the hospital served as a critical location for soldiers returning from the Pacific Theater, admitting over 73,000 patients in 1945 alone. Following the war, Letterman continued its care of Army dependents and conducted groundbreaking research in the development of artificial blood and the treatment of traumatic injuries.



Clockwise from top left: Three nurses pick flowers in a garden at Letterman Hospital, c1915-1920. Doctors and nurses at work in a Letterman surgical room, c1941. An Army dentist examines a soldier, c1941. Christmas time at Letterman Hospital, 1901.

### The First Park Patrol

Soldier’s orders did not always occur in the Bay Area. Some assignments sent soldiers to participate in nearby campaigns, such as the Mexican American War (1846-1848) to the south and the Modoc Indian Wars (1872-1873) to the north.

In 1891, U.S. Army Calvary units received new orders: protect the National Parks of the West Coast. In the years following the Civil War, Congress established four segregated regiments of African American soldiers. These four regiments, the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry, would come to be known as the Buffalo Soldiers.

After participating in the Spanish American and Philippine American Wars, the Buffalo Soldiers returned to San Francisco. Detachments of the 9th Cavalry became some of the first individuals to patrol California’s National Parks including Yosemite, Sequoia, and Kings Canyon. When President Theodore Roosevelt came to San Francisco in May of 1903, Companies “I” and “M” of the 9th Cavalry escorted him through the city. This was the first time African American soldiers served as an honor guard for the President of the United States.

Today, over 400 Buffalo Soldiers are buried in the San Francisco National Cemetery in the Presidio and their contributions are forever remembered as part of National Park Service history.



African American troopers of the 24th Cavalry Infantry pose for a picture at Yosemite National Park, 1899.