

For Taber Flag to honor Floyd Carr who served in the U.S. Army Cavalry

During the month of June, the 22nd Lights for Peace flag to fly at the Fort Taber – Fort Rodman Military Museum honors the memory of Floyd Carr, a New Bedford resident who attended West Point and served in the Army Cavalry.

Floyd Carr, also known as “Chick” Carr, was born in 1897 in Washington D.C. He enlisted in April 1918 at the Washington Barracks of the Cavalry Detachment of the U.S. Military Academy West Point, where he served as a riding instructor.

A recent Washington Post article sheds light on the important role of the African American history at West Point and the segregation that took place. “Amid entrenched racial segregation, units of the famous African American troops known as Buffalo Soldiers were brought to West Point to teach horsemanship. They were part of the rugged cavalry outfits that had served the Army in the west and were named by Native Americans who feared them and fought them. At West Point, they wrangled horses, cleaned the stables and sawed ice for refrigerators.” It is not clear if Mr. Carr was part of the Buffalo Soldiers but he served during the same time.

The article went on to explain how generals were trained by Buffalo Soldiers. “Every stellar general that you might name from WWII would have received their riding instruction and instruction in mounted drill from those Buffalo Soldiers. They brought excellence. They brought mastery. They brought high discipline. They brought soldiers who were exemplary in appearance... and conduct.”

Back in the late 1800’s blacks did not have as many choices for employment as whites, “so to a black young man, the Army

was a much better option than for a white young man. And the Army was a place where black soldiers received the same pay as white soldiers," according to the Washington Post. "Still, it could be a tough job. The black soldiers' barracks were adjacent to the stables, which the black soldiers had to clean. The horses had to be cared for, and the cadets – and others- trained.

In an oral history interview from 2015, Sanders H. Matthews Sr., a retired Army Sergeant, believed to be the last West Point Buffalo Soldier, explained "Monday through Friday we taught cadets to ride. Saturdays, Sundays and holidays we taught cadets to ride, their girlfriends, the officers...their children, their wives." he said. "We had no time off for ourselves."

"On March 23, 1907, the United States Military Academy Detachment of Cavalry was changed to a 'colored' unit," as described by Wikipedia. "This had been a long time coming. It had been proposed in 1897 at the 'Cavalry and Light Artillery School' at Fort Riley, Kansas that West Point cadets learn their riding skills from the black noncommissioned officers who were considered the best. The 100-man detachment from the 9th, and 10th Cavalry served to teach future officers at West Point riding instruction, mounted drill, and tactics until 1947. The West Point 'Escort of Honour' detachment of the 10th Cavalry was distinguished in 1931 by being the last regular Army unit to be issued with the M1902 blue dress uniform for all ranks. This parade uniform had ceased to be worn by other regiments after 1917."

Floyd Carr lived in New Bedford for 40 years and was known in the boxing circles in which he traveled around the country. According to his obituary, he was a classmate of the late Duke Ellington, a famous jazz composer and pianist. Carr lived at 797 Kempton St., New Bedford and was employed by Oregon Cleaners, Dyers Co. and Liberty Laundry.

Carr was the husband of the late Gladys (Biggins) Carr. They had seven children: Floyd I. of Brockton, Leroy of New Bedford, Mrs. Claudette Blake, Mrs. Floretta Eastman, Mrs. Marjorie O'Campo and Mrs. Sheila Chumack, all of New Bedford, and Mrs. Aleata Livramento of Boston. He was the brother of the late Leonard Carr and the late Mrs. Bertha M. Johnson, both of Philadelphia. He had 27 grandchildren.

Linda Ferreira, of Empire Ford of New Bedford, researches the life histories of area residents. American flags are provided by Empire Ford of New Bedford. Flags are raised by the staff at Fort Taber – Fort Rodman Military Museum. Those who would like to honor a local veteran in the future can contact Ferreira at lferreira@buyempireautogroup.com.