

# **History of the Battery B (formerly Sacramento Light Artillery), 1<sup>st</sup> Artillery Regiment, National Guard of California 1880-1893**

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BATTERY B

Battery B, First Artillery Regiment, Fourth Brigade (formerly Sacramento Light Artillery)

Reference: Adjutant General's Files  
Location: Sacramento, Sacramento County  
Organized October 7, 1864  
Reorganized March 19, 1880\*  
Reconstituted July 1, 1893\*\*

<u>Commanding Officers</u>		
<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Jonathan L. Atwood, Captain	Aug. 8, 1879	Aug. 20, 1879
Eugene Kueneman, First Lieut.	Dec. 26, 1879	Jan. 13, 1880
John Cook, Captain	June 19, 1882	July 27, 1882
Frank D. Ryan, First Lieut.	June 19, 1882	July 27, 1882
John Cook, Captain (Re-elected June 26, 1884)	_____	_____
Frank P. Lowell, First Lieut. (Resigned Aug. 20, 1884)	June 26, 1884	May 29, 1883***
W. E. McEwan, First Lieut. (Died April 7, 1885)	Oct. 9, 1884	Nov. 12, 1884
Thomas Wiseman, First Lieut.	May 20, 1885	June 15, 1885
John Cook, Captain (Re-elected 1886)	_____	_____
Samuel Kay, First Lieut.	June 27, 1887	July 27, 1887
John Cook, Captain (Re-elected 1888, 1890, 1892)	_____	_____
Samuel Kay, First Lieut. (Re-elected 1888, 1890, 1892)	_____	_____

Activities:

Battery B, formerly Sacramento Light Artillery, was attached to the First Artillery Regiment March 19, 1880, and remained so

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\*Battery B, formerly Sacramento Light Artillery redesignated Battery B, First Artillery Regiment, Fourth Brigade. Adjutant General Report 1880, Special Order No. 19, page 76.

\*\*Battery B detached from First Artillery Regiment and designated Battery B, Light Artillery, unattached, Fourth Brigade. General Order No. 7, July 1, 1893.

\*\*\*The commission for Lieutenant Lowell appears on record in the Historical Record Fourth Brigade, May 29, 1883.

## BATTERY B (Continued)

### Activities: (Continued)

designated until 1893 when the First Artillery Regiment was transferred to the Second Infantry.\* The activities of the corps was varied and the members always ready to be of assistance where their services were required for the betterment of the community. Among these activities the unit's conduct in connection with the prevention of violence to a person named Raten, who in April 1882 shot and caused the death of a prominent citizen, Mr. James Lansing of Sacramento, deserves favorable mention. Raten a man of little or no character had previously deserted the Russian ship "Cornistay" at Vallejo in 1877 or 1878. He had quarreled with a man named Erieckson and upon meeting him before Lansing's Hotel drew a revolver shooting and wounding a passer-by, fortunately not seriously. A crowd quickly gathered and commenced following Raten who had ran down Fourth Street and into the alley between K and L, past the rear of Mr. Lansing's Hotel where Mr. Lansing was working in the yard. Seeing the running man and hearing the crowd, Mr. Lansing immediately gave chase. He had proceeded but 100 feet when the infuriated man turned and shot Mr. Lansing who died during the following 24 hours.

At once the cry of "lynch him" diverted against Raten was heard on every side, and the Mayor and Chief of Police realizing their force was inadequate to take care of the situation called on Colonel T. W. Sheehan commanding the First Artillery Regiment, Fourth Brigade for assistance from the militia. Battery B was placed on duty to guard the armory which contained the Gatling guns and other State property, and each man was supplied with forty rounds of ammunition. Also, the Gatling gun belonging to Battery B was placed at the entrance to the prison with a detail of twelve men, six each from Batteries A and B under Sergeant Dase of Company C, to remain until further orders to guard and man the Gatlings if necessary. With the aid of the troops the angry mob was dispersed, although a detail from Company B was kept on duty guarding the jail for several days until the excitement abated. Governor Perkins, together with the City and County officials and citizens, were unanimous in their commendation of the able manner in which Battery B and other units handled the situation, avoiding bloodshed.\*\*

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\*Adjutant General Report 1893-1894, page 38.

\*\*For further information regarding the Raten Affair 1882, refer to History of Battery A, First Artillery Regiment, Fourth Brigade. Adjutant General Report 1881-1882, page 140.

BATTERY B (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

The corps also played a meritorious role when the National Guard was called out in the Railroad Strike of 1894. The trouble was widespread extending from the Oregon line to San Diego and involving practically every railroad, completely hampering the train service for several days. The troops opened and kept trains moving from Techachapi Pass to Oregon and from Oakland to Truckee. The United States Regulars' duties consisted principally of guard duty at Sacramento, and also in the mountains. Battery B, under the command of Captain Cook was ordered to guard the armory and a squad from the unit was detailed to guard the Yolo Bridge. After forty-eight hours of duty at the armory, Companies E and G of the Second Infantry relieved the unit. On July eleventh the company was ordered to search a house in the lower section of the City where ammunition was supposedly being held for the strikers, however, after a careful search the rumor was discredited as false.\* Although Battery B was held in readiness to report at once, the above activity was the last one participated in by the unit before the settlement of the strike.

Battery B benefited financially from the Military bill of 1881 which passed both Houses by a large majority, and increased the company's allowance practically 50 per cent over the former rate. The ruling granted the corps \$125.00 a month and \$25.00 for each additional gun. However, in 1884 the Board of Location and Organization cut the monthly allowance down to \$100.00, which abolished the controversy that existed among the companies who contended that Battery B and other units of the First Artillery Regiment were only nominally artillery, being armed and drilled as infantry and differing only in dress, and therefore, were not entitled to receive more money per month than the Second Artillery and other Infantry companies.\*\*

Over a period of several years a great need was felt for a suitable armory, but it was not until 1882 that one was secured.

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\*Adjutant General Report 1893-1894, page 233.

\*\*Adjutant General Report 1883-1884, page 8.

Note: With reference to Company B's finances, additional information may be found in a book on file, Adjutant General's Office. This book was the property of Mr. Ellis Franklin, Treasurer for Company B, for the period extending from 1884-1889.

## BATTERY B (Continued)

### Activities: (Continued)

A three story building, formerly the Franklin School, was purchased which provided adequate accommodations for the different companies in the community. The dimensions of the building were 44 x 56 feet and one important feature was a drill hall in which the Battalion drills could be held. The school was entirely remodelled for military purposes and the enterprise cost approximately \$18,000. The purchase of this building worked no hardships on the companies who were only expected to pay the amount per month they formerly paid for rent. The new armory was dedicated with impressive ceremonies on October fifth of that year and in the evening a military ball was given by the combined efforts of the different commands. In a later report the Adjutant General confirms the fact that Sacramento had the best armory outside of the one in San Francisco, and that the marked progress in drills and attendance by men and officers was ample proof of the wisdom of obtaining the armory site. Evidently Battery B benefited by the newly acquired armory which provided the necessary military environment, for the returns of the company for 1883 indicates an increase in efficiency in Battalion drills, discipline and soldierly bearing.\*

The unit attended encampments held annually during the years 1880 to 1892 inclusively. The Regimental Encampment of 1880 was held at Alameda County, under the command of General John F. Sheehan, commander of the Fourth Brigade, at which time Battery B took part in the procession at Oakland honoring two distinguished visitors, his Excellency Rutherford B. Hayes, President of the United States and General W. T. Sherman, commander of the United States Army. President Hayes was the first Executive of the Nation to visit the Pacific Coast during his term of office.\*\* The company's appearance among other commands warranted favorable comment from the citizens and local press.

The second encampment participated in by Battery B extended from July 31 to August 7, 1881. The site chosen was at Ismert's Grove, Nevada County and was named Camp Brown. The original plan was for Battery B to leave Sacramento Friday and arrive in camp early Saturday the opening day of the camp. However, due to the mishap of losing their way to the extent of some twenty miles, the plan was frustrated and it was only after a

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\*Adjutant General Report 1881-1882, page 140.

\*\*San Francisco Call, September 10, 1880, page 3, column 1.

## BATTERY B (Continued)

### Activities: (Continued)

forced march that the battery finally reached their destination late Saturday night. Captain J. R. Brown and his men were joked throughout the encampment for their misfortune of getting lost. The unit had with them 4 twelve pounders and the same number of wagons loaded with luggage of the other Sacramento companies. The caravan also included twenty-five horses. Battery B practiced with their guns at the 1000 yard range each day and also drilled for the Houghton Trophy on Wednesday. During the remaining period of the encampment, Battery B participated with the other First Artillery companies in the military routine of camp life, including battalion drill, guard mount and dress parade which were held daily. A sham battle on Saturday completed the activities of the encampment. Battery B was credited by Major John F. Sheehan commanding the Fourth Brigade, as having greatly increased their efficiency during this Camp of Instruction.\* The encampment of 1882 at San Rafael was the most outstanding from the point of efficiency in the camp life of Battery B up to that time. Strict discipline was enforced, and battalion drills and guard mountings took place each day. At the closing of the camp a reception was given by the Brigade Staff, and attended by officers of the National Guard in San Francisco and also several officers of the regular army.

The Legislature appropriated sufficient funds for an encampment of the entire National Guard in 1887. The site chosen was at Santa Cruz, and named Camp Sheehan for the former commander of the Fourth Brigade to which Battery B was attached. The location was ideal and offered many advantages in the way of moderate temperature, sea bathing, easy accessibility by rail and water, and the grounds being ample in size were especially suitable for camp purposes. Battery B with other companies of the First Artillery Regiment benefited by having in camp several companies of the United States Regular troops under the command of Colonel Shafter. Colonel Shafter was untiring in his efforts to assist officers and men of the battery units, and other companies in securing a higher rate of knowledge in military tactics. The friendly rivalry among the units was instrumental in the increased improvement of battalion skirmishes and brigade drills.

Target practice as a compulsory measure was a method of increasing the soldiers efficiency in the all important brand of military science. It was essential for the members of the National

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\*Daily Alta California, August 1, 1881, page 1, column 5.  
For further information regarding the Camp Grounds of 1881, refer to History of Battery F, First Artillery Regiment, Fourth Brigade.

## BATTERY B (Continued)

### Activities: (Continued)

Guard to handle a rifle properly, know its capacity, and to fire it accurately.\* The Legislature in 1865 passed a bill granting \$3,500 for this military expenditure, but as no appropriation was made at that time the situation was not relieved. Adjutant General George B. Cooby had hoped with this amount to establish targets, supply ample ammunition, and to be able to offer medals to stimulate practice and interest in this important field of military instruction. Colonel T. W. Sheehan, commander of the First Artillery Regiment, to which Battery B was attached, was enthusiastic regarding target practice, and lost no time in securing a range and erecting targets with the result that these shooting activities were held often and many of the men became excellent shots.

In 1890 the system of holding annual target practice was changed by the Legislature of 1889 and the troops were required to practice two days instead of one as heretofore. The military authorities did not approve the method, maintaining no advantages were gained by the system. As an inducement for the men to come out and take part in the two day exercises a prize was to be offered for the first day's work. Also a silver medal struck with the same die that the State decoration for "Marksmanship" was made with only having a ribbon and pin attached, and some additional ornamentation was provided and awarded to the member of each organization making the best score in the first day's practice.\*\* As National Guard duties consisted principally in quelling riots and preserving the peace more attention was given to short range firing. While the successful men were in every way encouraged, care was taken not to discourage the less efficient. Sergeant J. L. Hughes non-commissioned staff, First Artillery Regiment, made the highest score 94 per cent and was declared champion of the annual target practice held September 1887. For his award he received a gold medal and Battery B was justly proud that a member of their regiment had won the medal.

Battery B made a notable showing in the efficiency of target practice throughout the years. The commanding officer of the unit, Captain Houghton, set a good example in 1860 by being the best shot in the company. During the years 1883 and 1884 the corps was commended highly in the reports of Charles Sonntag,

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\*Adjutant General Report 1865-1886, page 8.

\*\*Adjutant General Report 1890, page 8.

BATTERY B (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

Inspector-General of target practice. In 1888 Sergeant L. Cracklon had nineteen points, the highest score. Brigadier-General T. W. Sheehan in his report to Adjutant General R. H. Orton, two years later, possibly referred to Battery B when he pointed out that there were many sharpshooter members of the various First Artillery companies; and one company taken as a whole had no superior as Marksmen in the State troops.\*

The Board of Survey acting under Special Orders, made a report February 9, 1880, that the four guns in possession of Battery B had been inspected with the following result: The two Howitzers were in fair condition, but the two Napoleon guns were not only unfit for use but dangerous and had caused several painful accidents to the members of the company. The Board recommended that the two 6 pound Napoleon guns be condemned and sold under the supervision of the Adjutant General of the State, and the proceeds of the sale to be used for the purchase of new guns.\*\* The guns, however, were not sold, the military authorities contending the small amount realized from the sale would not warrant the risk of the guns being placed in the hands of persons who might use them for unlawful purposes. Consequently, Captain J. L. Atwood of Battery B was directed to take charge of the guns which were to be shipped to the United States Arsenal at Benicia and obtain a receipt for the same.\*\*\* It is assumed Battery B obtained their quota of arms after the disposal of the condemned arms from the allowance issued by the Federal Government to the State, which consisted of the Battery of four pieces, 12 pound Napoleon guns, 2 Gatling guns, 200 Springfield rifles, caliber 45, 100 carbines, 100 pistols, 100 sabers, 80,000 rounds of ammunition for the battery of Napoleon guns, together with the extra parts and appendages were received during the year of 1882. California was the only State that had a Battery of Gatling or other machine guns, the regular army also did not possess such a battery.\*\*\*\*

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\*Adjutant General Report 1887-1888, page 280.

\*\*Adjutant General Report 1880, pages 11, 75.

\*\*\*Adjutant General Report 1881-1882, Special Order No. 88, page 120.

\*\*\*\*Adjutant General Report 1883-1884, page 11.

BATTERY B (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

Special Order No. 88, November 26, 1881, authorized Battery B to receive the Gatling guns in possession of Companies A and C of the First Artillery Regiment. The same order directed the company to return to the State Armory two of the brass pieces in their possession, thus reducing the company to a four gun Battery. A permanent detail of officers and men were to be organized to properly care for and drill with the remaining brass pieces and Gatlings. Springfield rifles were to be issued to the other members of the unit who were to be instructed in the Manual of Arms, and in company and battalion movements. This change did not meet with the approval of the officers and members of the company, who with the exception of two members, handed in their resignations which were consented to. Captain Atwood was ordered suspended by Colonel Haymond and Lieutenant Charles M. Prodger was appointed to examine the books of Battery B.\* A recruiting officer was appointed January 30, 1882, to issue honorable discharges to all the members who did not wish to remain in service under the new ruling. This officer was also empowered to swear in new members on the new muster roll which had been opened. An election of officers followed as soon as the company was recruited to the minimum required by the law. John Cook was elected Captain and Frank D. Ryan, First Lieutenant. The commanding officers had proven themselves capable, and as the new recruits were mostly young men the company had a bright future before them. Later in 1882 Major John F. Sheehan, reported that Battery B had lived up to expectations and had made rapid progress in Infantry and Artillery drill.\*\*

The State's allowance from the Federal Government for the two fiscal years 1879 and 1880 were taken out in rifles for one year and equipment for the second year. Battery B, benefited by this arrangement receiving eight new rifles, and equipment consisting of new belts, and plates, steel bayonet scabbards and McKeever cartridge boxes. The company then had a total of eighteen new guns and it was hoped that within a period of four years at the most, through the allowance from the Federal Government, the unit would have a full quota of modern rifles replacing the ones issued in 1875 which for the most part were unserviceable. Adjutant General C. C. Allen, February 12, 1892, made a requisition on the Secretary of War for a sufficient number of 3.20-inch guns for the two light batteries then in service. Battery B was one of these units. The 3.20-inch gun

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\*Sacramento Bee, May 3, 1881, page 5, column 2.

\*\*Adjutant General Report 1881-1882, page 139.

BATTERY B (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

had been tested and proved satisfactory and would replace the guns in possession of the company that were unfit for use.

Adjutant General George B. Cosby had reported as early as 1884, that the deficiency of Battery B in the execution of field maneuvers was due to the brass pieces belonging to the unit being too heavy to be drawn by hand, and the high cost of hiring horses made that course prohibitive. Due to their unsuitability the guns had not been out of the armory for over two years. However, due to the limited allotment of these guns by the War Department to the State, the requisition was not filled, and in 1893 the Secretary of War suggested two of these batteries be furnished to the State as a loan; however, this suggestion would have to be approved by Congress and as the battery was mustered out later in 1893 the corps did not receive the guns. Earlier in the year the unit was furnished with new harness, the saddles repaired and were put in as good condition as possible for these old style field pieces. The command had also been armed with new 45 caliber colt revolvers.\*

Battery B made a splendid appearance in the parades held on the principal holidays of the year, and the enthusiasm of the members was the cause of full attendance for regular and special parades. The street parade July 4, 1881, was cancelled owing to President Garfield's illness, and when he died in September the National Guard went in mourning, the officers wearing the badges on their left arms. Homage was paid to U. S. Grant, ex-President and former soldier, who died in 1886 by draping the colors of the command in mourning for thirty days. The last activities of the battery before being mustered out in 1893 was Governor H. H. Markham's inauguration, when the unit acted as an escort to his Excellency.

In accordance with the changes of the National Guard in 1893, the First Artillery Regiment to which Battery B was attached was transferred to the Second Infantry, July 1, 1893. Battery B was detached from the First Artillery Regiment by General Order No. 7, and designated as Battery B, Light Artillery, unattached.

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\*Adjutant General Report 1893-1894, page 5.