

# **History of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Coast Artillery, National Guard of California 1901-1907**

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FIRST BATTALION COAST ARTILLERY

First Battalion Coast Artillery, Second Brigade  
 Reference: Adjutant General's Files  
 Location: San Francisco, San Francisco County  
 Organized April 19, 1901\*  
 Mustered out May 11, 1907\*\*

<u>Commanding Officers</u>		
<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Hyman P. Bush, Major	May 4, 1901	May 8, 1901
Edward G. Eisen, Lieut., Adj. (retired May 9, 1904)		June 8, 1901
Aloysius P. O'Brien, Capt., Surgeon (promoted Col. and Division Surgeon Oct. 30, 1903)	May 17, 1901	June 7, 1901
Francis V. Keesling, Major	Mar. 25, 1905	May 3, 1905
Joseph M. O'Hara, Lieut., Adj. (resigned Sept. 19, 1906) (reappointed Oct. 19, 1906 declined)	Feb. 21, 1906	Mar. 21, 1906
Frank Seely Masal, Lieut., Asst. Surgeon	Nov. 25, 1903	Dec. 31, 1903 Sec. 31

Activities:

The events leading up to the organization of the First Battalion Coast Artillery, began on April 2, 1901, when companies C, F, G and K, of the First Infantry Regiment presented a petition to the Adjutant-General requesting that they be organized as a battalion of artillery. One reason set forth for the need of such an organization was that a sea port city, like San Francisco, should have a citizen soldiery, not only drilled as expert light artillerists ready to take the field intelligently at the call of duty, but also

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\*Companies C, F, G and K, First Infantry Regiment, redesignated  
 Companies C, A, B and D respectively First Battalion Coast Artillery,  
 April 19, 1901. Adjutant General Report 1901-1902, page 66.

\*\*First Battalion Coast Artillery ceased to exist on May 11, 1907,  
General and Special Orders and Circulars 1907, General Order No. 10,  
 Par. 5.

FIRST BATTALION COAST ARTILLERY (Continued) ✓

Activities: (continued)

Federal to be able to handle at need the great guns that had been placed by the Federal government about the Golden Gate to defend our homes and families from the always possible incursion of a hostile fleet. The United States has furnished these guns to California. Let California prepare to furnish the trained minds and skilled hands to operate them at the country's call.

For several years prominent military men have considered the fact that sea coast cities, and particularly those where fortifications are located, should have a portion of the National Guard drilled and instructed in the handling and care of the coast defense guns; as in event of necessity, the guard could be utilized to care for the guns mounted in their respective localities. The correctness of this view was proven during the Spanish-American War, when a large number of raw recruits had to be hurriedly enlisted to fill up the regiments. While it takes time to drill and discipline infantry, it is nothing in comparison with that required for the men in the artillery branch of the service. Thus while the National Guardsmen would not be as efficient as the regulars, he would far excell any raw recruit.

Several quotations of authorities on Artillery were cited, one in particular that of General Miller, made the following remark regarding the First Regiment, Massachusetts National Guard at Fort Warren:

"The heavy gun drill included the forming of companies into detachments, marching them to the eight inch converted rifle casemate guns, posting detachments at same, and drill at the manual of the piece; also mechanical maneuvers dismounting and mounting a ten inch Rodman with gin, slinging the piece for the purpose by the sling from cascabel to muzzle, and by trunnion and cascabel sling; also actual target practice with the eight inch converted rifle. In 1892 this same regiment encamped at Fort Warren and in my report of the firing I made the following remarks:"

"The angle measuring and plotting was done by the regular garrison. The officers and non-commissioned officers of the militia should be familiar with that kind of work. A few practical lessons in the company armories is all that is necessary to cause the method to be learned. Since then the Adjutant General of the State has had put in the armory at Boston, two transits,

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Activities: (continued)

two-eight inch protractors, a plotting board, one model eight inch S.B. gun, one model S.C. mortar centre pintle. The result is that enough of the officers and men trained them themselves in reading the transit and protractors, laying off lines by scale, etc., to do their own angle measuring, signaling and plotting of shots at the artillery firing this year. I think this work a very profitable one, both for the State and the United States, as this regiment would certainly be able to handle heavy guns in case of need."

The petition of Companies C, F, G and K, then closes with the following paragraph:

"To organize four new foot batteries would require the enlistment of nearly three hundred men, with the attendant expense for uniforms, fitting up an armory which under the present condition of affairs would be extremely difficult. While by the changes suggested and the enthusiasm created they could recruit their companies up to the maximum from ex-members and other desirable recruits, at no expense to the State, as these companies would cheerfully bear all the expense necessary to carry the proposed change into effect.

That these four companies are and have been for several years past located in one armory, separate from the other companies of the regiment, and such change would greatly benefit said companies and be more satisfactory to the members thereof. That the armory occupied by them is a brick and stone structure strongly and securely built for said purpose, and is amply suited for all the military and administrative requirements of a battalion."

Three days later April 5, Colonel Thomas F. O'Neil, First Infantry Regiment entered a protest against the petition stating:

First; that he did not believe the formation of an Artillery Battalion would stimulate new enthusiasm in the National Guard, believing that new companies should be organized.

FIRST BATTALION COAST ARTILLERY (Continued) ✓

Activities: (continued)

Second: that at that time no rules or regulations existed whereby the contemplated organization could use the coast defense guns in conjunction with the regular army.

Third: that the First Infantry Regiment which was a twelve company organization should not be disturbed by taking away four units. The regiment had fought through the Spanish-American War in 1898-1899, with honor and should be retained in its entirety.

Although the petition of companies C, F, G and K was disapproved by Colonel O'Neil, it was approved by both Brigade and divisional commanders. Thus on April 18, 1901, the Board of Location and Organization reached the following decision:

"That Companies C, F, G and K be detached from the First Infantry Regiment, and organized into batteries of artillery as follows: Company F to be Battery A, Company G to be Battery B, Company C to be Battery C and Company K to be Battery D. It was also ordered that the four batteries of artillery thus formed be organized into an independent battalion to be designated First Battalion of Artillery, and that until further ordered the individual batteries of the First Battalion of Artillery shall be organized as batteries of coast artillery. All expenses incurred through the change will be borne by the companies concerned."

The next day April 19, 1901, General Order No. 5 was issued providing for the organization of the First Battalion of Coast Artillery as recommended by the Board of Location and Organization. Hyman P. Bush, former Colonel of the First Infantry Regiment and retired in 1896, was elected Major of the new battalion. The Major had already spent twenty-five years in the National Guard of California.

A few months later June 25, 1901, Major Bush applied for permission to organize a band for his battalion. After a few adjustments regarding the financing of the band, an order was issued on July 21, 1901. It appears the law at that time made no financial allowances to organization for a band unless said organization consisted of more than four companies. So the order for the band contained this clause:

"This band is authorized with the provision that no allowance for the same will be made the commanding

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FIRST BATTALION COAST ARTILLERY (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

officers of the First Battalion of Artillery reference being made to Section 2094, of the Political Code, which governs such allowance."

Thus the First Battalion of Artillery was organized and also had their band ready for whatever duty they might be called upon to perform.

The official name of First Battalion of Artillery was given the battalion until such time as arrangements could be made with the War department at Washington for the use of the big guns of the coast defense. The necessary arrangements were finally completed in the latter part of 1902. After the annual inspection of the Battalion by Colonel Thomas Wilhelm, Inspector General of Rifle Practice, National Guard of California, on May 19, 1902, made a special report to the Adjutant General which is as follows:

"I have observed this command in its attention to duty, care of public property and the unusually large number of men who find their way to the drill halls at the stated times for instruction and inspection, and regard it as exceedingly commendable, energetic and valuable as a military organization.

I have yet to see troops who excel this body of men in military appearance. They are careful of their clothing, accoutrements and equipments generally. Their discipline or subordination to command and requirements is excellent and no pains should be spared to further their accomplishments in the exercise of the work pertaining to their corps. I therefore recommend that the War Department at Washington be applied to for authority to the end that this Battalion may have instructions for a season at the Presidio of San Francisco at such heavy gun drill as may be designated by that department and at such times may be best suited and most convenient. I further recommend that upon the occasions allowed for this instruction an artillery officer of the regular service, with several well instructed non-commissioned officers be designated to superintend the exercises.

I make these recommendations on account of the well directed ambition of the Battalion which is in the hands of excellent and responsible officers and which deserves every facility for improvement,

FIRST BATTALION COAST ARTILLERY (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

and also on account of the convenience of the Presidio and the equipment at that place, and the known friendly relations existing between the permanent service and the National Guard."

The letter of Colonel Wilhem led to an arranged meeting with Colonel J. B. Rawles, United States Army, commanding the Artillery District of San Francisco, Major B. H. Randolph and Captain W. G. Haan, Artillery Corps, United States Army, and Major H. P. Bush of the First Battalion Coast Artillery, National Guard of California. The meeting or conference was held on October 23, 1902, in San Francisco, and the following procedure was decided upon:

First: A course of lectures on technical theoretical instruction preliminary to practical instruction. Lectures to be given voluntarily by regular officers stationed at the Presidio.

Second: Practical instruction for officers and non-commissioned officers on Sunday mornings. (This being the only day on which these men are available for instruction.)

Third: Practical instruction during the drill hours of the regular troops for such officers and men as may be able to attend such drills; such instructions will necessarily be primarily by observation. It was thought that individuals might occasionally have leisure time during these hours and by being provided with proper permits may visit the works during the drills.

Four: Practical instruction for a week during which time the battalion is to be in camp near the guns.

Major Bush was delighted with the kindness and aid offered by Colonel Rawles, Major Randolph and Captain Haan, who spent considerable time in explaining and discussing the subject before reaching the agreement mentioned above.

The agreement was then forwarded to the War Department in Washington where on January 3, 1903, the agreement was approved by the Secretary of War, with the one exception of the second paragraph which provided for instruction for officers and non-commissioned officers on Sunday Morning.

FIRST BATTALION COAST ARTILLERY (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

Consequently on May 29 and 30, 1903, the first Camp of Instruction was held at the Presidio by the Battalion. The Battalion met at the armory at eight P.M. May twenty-eighth uniformed and equipped with blanket, canteen, haversack and mess kit, gloves, soap, towels etc. and marched to the Presidio. *Artillery* The Artillery Battalion reported to Lieutenant F. T. Hines, Artillery Corps, United States Army and was assigned to quarters in one of the brick barracks. The men were given instructions as to the conduct, of the men and service during their tour of duty at that post. The men messed with the regular troops, detachments being distributed among the units of Regulars. On May twenty-ninth to thirtieth the officers and men were continuously under instruction at Battery Cranston from eight A.M. to five P.M. with a short interval at noon for mess. The course of instruction concerned the manual of the gun, the use of the emergency range finder, predicting and all the duties pertaining to the manning of a battery of ten inch breach loading rifles, Captain Hinkley and Lieutenant Hines being in command and acting as instructors. On the morning of the thirtieth-first the guns were turned over to the detachments of the Battalion and they took complete charge in manning the same for over three hours with marked and effective results.

This three day instruction camp was to be followed by a course of instruction once a week and detachments were to report at the guns at the Presidio once a month.

*James f* The next practice at the Presidio was on September 9, 1903, when the battalion received instruction at Battery Slaughter with the eight inch guns, from ten A.M. until four P.M.

On May 28, 1904, the Battalion again marched to the Presidio in the evening and established camp. On the twenty-ninth the officers and men were under instruction from nine A.M. until five P.M. at Battery Slaughter, the course of instruction being in the manual of the piece, use of the range finder, predicting and plotting. Instruction was also given at Battery Baldwin in handling the fifteen pounder R. F. guns, balance-pillar mount, the command loading and firing strings of ten shots in from one minute thirty-five seconds to one minute forty-five seconds.

2 On May thirtieth the command was again under instruction at Battery Slaughter from nine A.M. until three-thirty P.M. The Battalion also received instruction with the six pounder R. F. guns, parapet mount, during this instruction target practice was had, sub-caliber ammunition being furnished and so very fine scores were made.



FIRST BATTALION COAST ARTILLERY (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

Thus it can be seen from the above information that the First Battalion Coast Artillery was indeed a coast artillery organization.

During their six years as an Artillery Battalion, the organization attended three encampments. Their first encampment was a battalion held at Goodwater Grove near Stockton June 14 to 21, 1902. The Camp was designated Camp Bangham in honor of the Assistant Adjutant General. The Battalion left their armory at 818 Ellis Street headed by the Battalion Band and marched to Clay Street wharf where they boarded a steamer for Stockton. The encampment consisted of the usual drills, sham battle parades and instructions. The commissary department evidently was a success judging by the ration which was as follows:

Breakfast: Beefsteak, Mutton chops, potatoes, eggs, mush, bread, butter, tea, coffee, milk, stewed fruit.

Lunch: Cold meats, bread, butter, tea coffee, fruit, berries.

Dinner: Soup, roast meats, stewed meats, fish, potatoes, bread, butter, fruit, tea, coffee, milk.

While in camp the Battalion was reviewed by Brigadier-General R. H. Warfield, was inspected by officers of Major General Dickinson's staff, the General also visiting the camp. Adjutant-General W. H. Seamans also reviewed the battalion, while Assistant Adjutant-General N. S. Bangham spent several days at the camp.\*

One year later from July 4 to 12, 1903, another battalion encampment was held at Oak Park, near Stockton. With flags flying and its band playing a lively quick step the First Battalion Coast Artillery left San Francisco on the river steamer "Columbia" bound for Stockton. The encampment was similar to the one held the year before. While all the rigor and discipline of military life was maintained for the eight day camp, still there was many hours of games and pleasures indulged in by the men. A minstrel show by talent from the battalion, baseball games and a grand military ball furnished many of the hours of pleasure. On July seventh Colonel Thomas Wilhelm, Inspector National Guard of California, inspected the Battalion and found their drill and general efficiency satisfactory, although some criticism was made. The Colonel was

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\*Adjutant General Report 1901-1902, page 152.

Activities: (continued)

accompanied by Major A. C. Ducat, Seventh United States Infantry who was observing the Battalion in every detail, and was to make a report to the War Department at Washington.

The Medical and Sanitary Corp received warm praise from Colonel Wilhelm. His remarks were as follows:

"There was present one hospital steward and three men of the Sanitary Corps. Captain A. P. O'Brien of the Medical Corps was present at the beginning of the camp service. The hospital consisted of two hospital tents connected by a fly, and was delightfully located upon a lawn adjacent to the camp and in the shade of great oak trees. I will say that in my long experience with troops in the field I have never seen a neater establishment of the kind. The medical facilities were ample for the probable sick of the command. The operating table was new and modern; the operating litter was a splendid contrivance and entirely new to the inspector."

He also mentioned all other equipment of the medical corps and found it all unusually efficient and sanitary. They closed on July twelfth and the Battalion returned home by boat to San Francisco.

This was the last encampment held before the passing of the Dick Miltia Law. In 1904 a joint Army National Guard encampment was held at Atascadero, San Luis Obispo. Major H. P. Bush, commanding the First Battalion Coast Artillery during the maneuvers expressed the same views as all other commanders when asked his views of the encampment. All agreed that before another extensive camp was held the National Guard should be equipped with army shoes. The Major also thought that a United States Army officer should be assigned to each organization prior to the maneuvers to instruct and act as an advisor during the maneuvers. This encampment was the last one held by the Battalion, none being held in 1905 and in 1906 as the San Francisco Earthquake and fire prevented the holding of an encampment.

The First Battalion always made a good showing at target practice. That should be expected since all four units were old established units in the National Guard. Company C usually was first in the Battalion. In 1906 all the Riflemen and Distinguished Marksmen or Medal men were from Company C. Whether the fact that the Battalion was Coast Artillery in name and caused them to become careless in rifle practice is not known although that probably accounts for some of the failure of the other three companies to make a showing in 1906.

Activities: (continued)

Probably the overnight camp and parade in San Jose should be mentioned here. San Jose had arranged for an elaborate celebration on July 4 and 5, 1905. The credit for securing the attendance of the Battalion in San Jose was given to Colonel Whitton, Fifth Infantry Regiment. The troops arrived in San Jose on the evening of the third at 10:45 P.M. and established camp at Agricultural Park. The routine while in camp was as follows:

5:45 A.M. Reveille

8:00 A.M. Company drill

9:00 A.M. Guard mount

10:00 A.M. Parade

In the evening at seven P.M. the Battalion was reviewed by Brigadier-General John A. Koster, commanding Second Brigade, National Guard of California. The first division of the parade was of the military, which was led by the First Battalion Coast Artillery Band, followed by the Battalion. Company B, Fifth Infantry Regiment. Company C, Cavalry Troop, from Salinas gave the celebrants a pleasant surprise by marching into San Jose, fully equipped, including a camp wagon on which rode their Chinese cook. On the back of the wagon was a cage containing a big bald eagle. The presence of the Salinas Troop of Cavalry was a welcome addition to the military Division.\*

Another joyful occasion for the Battalion was on September 21, 1905, when the Battalion acted as escort to the First Infantry Regiment, when that organization was presented with a new stand of colors. The colors were a present from Louis Rosenfeld, an honorary member of the Regiment. The ceremony took place in the Mechanics Pavilion during the Regiment's Annual Ball. The regiment, escorted by the First Battalion Coast Artillery and led by the two military bands, passed in review and returned to the stand where the Governor and his staff were waiting to receive them. The companies were well drilled and when they passed the Governor's stand in line of company front not one man lagged behind to spoil the effects of the command.

Governor George C. Pardee's address was short and to the point. He told how glad he was that such an honor had been conferred upon him, the son of an ex-Confederate soldier who had turned his back on that flag and fought for what he thought was right, the honor

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\*San Jose Mercury July 5, 1905, page 2, column 1.

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Activities: (continued)

to present the flag to a regiment that had already proven itself worth of its protection. He recited some of the brave deeds of the regiment while in the field, and said if its history in the future was as good as that of the past there was little danger of the flag meeting with disgrace. After the address of acceptance by Reverend Father McQuaid, the regimental parade was reviewed by the Governor, and then many military athletics followed. After the sporting events were concluded, dancing was indulged in until morning.\*

Under the theme of colors, the First Battalion when ordering their new colors soon after their organization requested that they be permitted to use the ring of meritorious service designations the same as the First Infantry Regiment. The designations referred to are described in General Order No. 3, paragraph 8, issued April 29, 1900, which reads as follows:

"Service in which organizations of the National Guard have borne a meritorious part maybe engraved upon silver rings, fastened on the pikes or lance of the colors, standards, or guidons, the rings to be one inch wide and placed one inch apart, commencing one inch from the spear head.\*\* The rings allowed the First Infantry Regiment, namely: Spanish-American War 1898: Malate Trenches July 31 and August 1, 1898: Manila August 13, 1898: Filipino Insurrection, February 5 to March 21, 1899: Island of Negros, March 23 to July 4, 1899.\*\*\*"

Since the four companies of the Battalion were units in the First Infantry in the War with Spain, they asked for and were granted the right to place the same five silver rings of meritorious service on their colors.

On October 18, 1901, the Battalion was presented with their new colors, which had been purchased with money donated by friends of the Battalion. The National color had the words "First Battalion of Artillery National Guard of California", embroidered in yellow silk on the center strip, with yellow fringe and red and yellow cord and tassels. The battalion color is of scarlet silk, bearing two crossed cannon in the center, with the words "California" above and "First Battalion of Artillery National Guard of California" below, in scarlet letters on a yellow scroll, the cord and tassels being red and yellow. On the pike of the National color were the five silver rings for service during the Spanish-American War. The presentation was made by General William R. Shafter, United States

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\*San Francisco Call September 22, 1905, page 6, column 3.

\*\*Adjutant General Report 1899-1900, General Order No. 3, page 80, par. 8.

\*\*\*Adjutant General Report 1899-1900, page 80.

FIRST BATTALION COAST ARTILLERY (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

Army, and was followed by a review of the Battalion by General R. H. Warfield, National Guard of California. After the review, dancing was next in order and continued into the wee small hours of the morning.

And now comes the only call for active service the Battalion received during the six years the four companies were in the First Battalion of Coast Artillery, namely the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire in April 1906. The Battalion is entitled to praise for their splendid work. Without orders from Brigade or Adjutant-General's office this fine organization started to save food supplies from the path of the fire and in every way possible restore order and quiet. As soon as Brigadier-General John A. Koster arrived in the city on the evening of April eighteenth the First Battalion of Coast Artillery reported to Brigade Headquarter's and remained on duty until May 31, 1906, when they were relieved from duty.\*

The concluding paragraph will describe several other parades participated in by the Battalion. Each year Memorial Day, May thirtieth was observed by the organization usually as an escort to or in conjunction with one of the local Grand Army of the Republic posts. Also Independence Day, July fourth was a parade day for the National Guard. A few of the special occasions will be given. Funerals of notable persons especially of military rank was the occasion for escort of the Guardsmen.

The first funeral in which the Battalion participated was that of Brigadier-General William Henry Seamans, Adjutant General National Guard of California on January 12, 1902. General Seamans died in Washington D.C. on January third. His life was a long and useful one, having held many assignments from both State and Federal Governments, was also a member of the Grand Army of the Republic, having served in the Massachusetts Volunteers during the Civil War. The large funeral cortege in which the First Battalion of Artillery took part testified to the popularity of the departed General.

Another funeral cortege participated in by the Battalion was that of General W. H. L. Barnes, National Guard of California, retired on July 24, 1902. Major-General Barnes before his retirement was in charge of the California Division National Guard of California.

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\*For further information refer to the California National Guard and the Earthquake and the Fire of 1906. Adjutant General's Office. Adjutant General Report 1906. Field Orders No. 17, page 64.

FIRST BATTALION COAST ARTILLERY (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

From the solemn side of life this history jumps to the very demonstrative and hilarious time when President Theodore Roosevelt visited San Francisco. For two days May 12 and 13, 1903, the First Battalion of Artillery paraded in reception and honor to the President. No President was ever more enthusiastically received than he, and the military display in his honor was the best ever witnessed in San Francisco.\*

Another jolly occasion was that of April 14, 1906, when Governor-General James F. Smith of the Philippine Islands was welcomed home to California. Governor-General Smith was Colonel of the First Infantry Regiment, National Guard of California when the regiment entered the Spanish-American War and sailed across the sea to help capture Manila. From Colonel of the First Regiment to Governor-General of the Philippine, in seven years was his attainment; and now the Governor was visiting his native State. In the parade that started at the Ferry Building and ended at the City Hall, was the famous First Regiment that the Governor-General once commanded on the battlefield. The First Battalion of Artillery represented by four companies were also in the parade, and they also were a part of the First Regiment during the War of 1898. The Governor-General's old command was not the only organization in the procession. Two battalions of the United States Coast Artillery with their band headed the parade. Troop A, First Squadron Cavalry, Second Signal Corps, and the California Greys were also in line.

In the rotunda of the City Hall Governor George C. Pardee, welcomed General Smith on behalf of the State, and Eugene E. Schmitz, Mayor of San Francisco, welcomed him on behalf of the city of San Francisco. The tower of the Ferry Building was illuminated with thousands of electric bulbs, as was also the dome of the City Hall. Above each building with its many lights floated the American flag, in tribute to Governor-General James F. Smith, a former National Guard of California member from a private in 1883 to Lieutenant, Captain, Major, Lieutenant Colonel, Judge Advocate, and finally Colonel.

The closing chapter tells the story of the disbanding of the First Battalion of Coast Artillery on May 11, 1907. The newly enacted "Dick Militia Law" required that the National Guard organization,

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\*For additional information concerning of the reception tendered President Roosevelt refer to Company C, First Infantry Regiment, Second Brigade. Adjutant General's Office.

FIRST BATTALION COAST ARTILLERY (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

equipments and uniforms should conform to that of the regular army. The regular army regiment consisted of twelve companies, there the National Guard regiment should be a twelve unit organization. The Fifth Infantry Regiment had only nine companies in 1907 and the Board of Location and Organization decided to discontinue the Coast Artillery and transfer the units to the Fifth, in order to comply with the law.

Therefore on May 11, 1907, Companies A and D, First Battalion Coast Artillery were consolidated and redesignated Company K, Fifth Infantry Regiment. Companies B and C, Coast Artillery were redesignated Companies H and L, Fifth Infantry Regiment. On the same day the Battalion was discontinued. However, the place of Coast Artillery in the National Guard of California was destined to receive new recognition two years later, when the former units of the First Battalion of Coast Artillery reentered the service of the State as the Coast Artillery Corps, California National Guard.