

History of the Company L (National Guard), 5th Infantry Regiment, National Guard of California 1909-1917

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COMPANY L

Company L, Fifth Infantry Regiment, Second Brigade (formerly National Guard)

Reference: Adjutant General's Files

Location: San Francisco, San Francisco County

- Organized August 31, 1885*
- Redesignated May 8, 1861**
- Reconstituted April 19, 1901***
- Reconstituted May 11, 1907****
- Redesignated April 21, 1909*****
- Reorganized, mustered in and stationed Palo Alto May 19, 1909+
- Mustered into Federal Service June 28, 1916++
- Mustered out of Federal Service October 7, 1916+++
- Resumption of Service in the National Guard 1916++++
- Mustered into Federal Service April 7, 1917+++++
- Redesignated Company E, 159th Infantry Regiment September 24, 1917+++++

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- *Adjutant General Report 1861, page 97.
- **National Guard, unattached, designated Company C, First Infantry Regiment, May 8, 1861. (May 8, 1861, First Infantry Regiment organized and date which National Guard was attached to First Infantry Regiment.)
Adjutant General Report 1861, page 97.
- ***Company C, First Infantry Regiment redesignated Battery C, First Battalion Artillery, April 19, 1901.
Adjutant General Report 1901-1902, General Order No. 5, paragraph 3, page 66.
- ****Company L, formerly Company C, First Battalion Coast Artillery, redesignated Company L, Fifth Infantry Regiment, May 11, 1907.
General and Special Orders and Circulars 1907, General Order No. 10, paragraph 4.
- *****Company L, Fifth Infantry Regiment redesignated Third Company Coast Artillery Corps, April 21, 1909.
General and Special Orders and Circulars 1909, General Order No. 9.
- +A new company organized in Palo Alto designated Company L, Fifth Infantry, May 19, 1909. General and Special Orders and Circulars 1909, General Order No. 14, paragraph 11.
- ++Company L, as part of the Fifth Infantry Regiment, mustered into Federal Service for duty on the Mexican Border, June 28, 1916.
Adjutant General Report 1914-1920, page 18
- +++Adjutant General Report 1914-1920, page 18.
- ++++General and Special Orders and Bulletins 1916, General Order No. 34, page 150.
- *****Company L, as part of the Fifth Infantry Regiment, mustered into Federal Service for duty during the World War, April 7, 1917. Histories, military, organizations etc. File No. 314.7. Adjutant General's Office.
- +++++Companies L and E, Fifth Infantry Regiment consolidated and designated Company E, 159th Infantry Regiment, September 24, 1917.
Histories, military, organizations etc. File No. 314.7. Adjutant General's Office.

COMPANY L (Continued)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Commanding Officers</u>		<u>Commission</u>
	<u>Rank</u>		
Joseph N. Ross, Captain (cont. in office May 11, 1907)	Mar. 20, 1905		May 10, 1905*
John J. Hyer, First Lieutenant (cont. in office May 11, 1907)	Mar. 20, 1905		May 10, 1905*
John J. Hyer, Captain (retired Apr. 17, 1909)	June 3, 1907		June 24, 1907
Ellridge R. Armstrong, First Lieut. (resigned Mar. 9, 1908)	June 3, 1907		June 24, 1907
John C. Young, First Lieutenant	June 1, 1908		June 27, 1908
Frederick A. Marriott, Captain (retired Dec. 30, 1911)	May 19, 1909		June 26, 1909
Charles C. Anthony, First Lieut.	May 19, 1909		June 26, 1909
Charles C. Anthony, Captain	Feb. 12, 1912		Mar. 27, 1912
George V. Hayes, First Lieut. (resigned Nov. 5, 1913)	Feb. 12, 1912		Mar. 27, 1912
Theodore W. Mellen, First Lieut. (resigned Oct. 24, 1914)	Nov. 24, 1913		Jan. 10, 1914
Ernest W. Risling, First Lieut.	Nov. 23, 1914		Jan. 16, 1915
William H. Bates, Captain	May 10, 1916		June 5, 1916
Ernest W. Risling, First Lieut. (continued in office)	<hr/>		<hr/>

Activities:

When Company C, First Battalion Coast Artillery was transferred to the Fifth Infantry Regiment as Company L, that regiment received an old and honorable company of many years standing. The newly designated Company L was first organized as the National Guard, August 31, 1855, making the unit about fifty-three years old when joining the Fifth Regiment. Unfortunately they were destined to stay in the Fifth for about two years, when they were then returned to the newly organized Coast Artillery Corps which was organized in April 1909. A new company was organized at

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*Captain Ross and Lieutenant Hyer retained their rank and commission as of March 20, 1905, and May 10, 1905, respectively, when they commanded Company C, First Battalion Coast Artillery.

COMPANY L (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

Palo Alto and mustered into the service as Company L, Fifth Infantry Regiment, May 19, 1909.

At the annual muster and inspection, Company L always made a good showing. Only twice were they rated poor in any subject and that was small arms practice in 1909 and 1914. In all the remaining subjects such as attendance, membership, promptness, discipline, appearance, arms and records, their rating was always at least "good," and frequently "very good" to "excellent."

On the subject of rifle practice and shooting, their record is not as good. The new unit stationed at Palo Alto was handicapped by not having a target range of their own for several years after their organization. On January 21, 1912, Company L received permission to use the rifle range of the Palo Alto Rifle Club. The Rifle Club was very liberal in permitting the militiamen the use of their range and apparatus on several occasions. The use of the Gun Club's range injected new life into Company L at target practice. The unit hoped to place a man or two on the state rifle team. One year later, Company L qualified with two Expert, six First Class and five, Second Class riflemen. Two years later, the unit had no expert "Riflemen" or "Sharpshooters," but two "Marksmen," while the rest of the company failed to qualify. The Spring of 1916, found Company L constructing a rifle range, but the trouble along the Mexican Border resulting in the calling of the company for Federal service, and the World War soon after the border trouble, prevented Company L from receiving much benefit from the range.

The first encampment attended by Company L was the Joint Army and Militia Coast Defense exercises held at Fort Rosecrans, San Diego County. Colonel D. A. Smith, of the Fifth Infantry Regiment, believed that the benefit derived from the maneuvers could not be overestimated. In 1908, Company L attended the encampment at Atascadero in 1909, a regimental encampment at Seabright near Santa Cruz, and in 1912, they were a unit in the Blue army in the Joint Army-National Guard maneuvers held in the district between Salinas and San Francisco. Beside the above mentioned encampments, the members of Company L frequently attended schools of instructions for officers and men.

There were also several occasions when Companies L, B, and M, First Battalion, Fifth Infantry Regiment would hold one or two day battalion bivouac and over-night encampments. One instance was on the evening of August 13, 1910, when Companies B and M left their armories at nine o'clock P.M., in heavy marching

Activities: (continued)

order, loaded with rations and needs for a day and night. They headed for camp at Los Altos, near Palo Alto, and waited for the arrival of Companies B and M. The camp was under command of Major G. L. Holtum. The three companies joined together for mess, Company L furnishing the cooks and camp equipment. The program called for drill in extended order in the forenoon and the policing of camp and soldier's labor were concluded early in the afternoon, in order that a program of athletic events might be carried out. Besides usual field and track events, racing and weight work, the tournament concluded with a baseball game and military sports, such as tent pegging, wall scaling and trench digging. Camp broke up late in the afternoon and the companies returned to their armories.*

In the line of athletic achievements, Company L was unusually good. At the Army and Navy Field Meet held June 27, 1913, the relay team of Company L won first place. In 1914, Company L again won the relay race, and in 1916, Company L's track team won first place in the Army-Navy competition. This success was no doubt due to the fact that many members of the unit either had been or were students at Stanford University.

Because soldiers are usually sought for parades of various kinds, Company L was frequently called upon to assist in celebrations in Palo Alto or surrounding communities. The parades that Company L participated in up until April 1909, were while the company was located in San Francisco. One of the occasions was the death of Hyman P. Bush, Brigadier-General National Guard of California, who had retired on December 30, 1907, and a military funeral was held on January 1, 1908, in which Company L participated on May 7, 1908. Four months later, Company L paraded in San Francisco in honor of the arrival of the Atlantic fleet. Two days later a celebration was held in Oakland and again the unit paraded in honor of the fleet. On May thirtieth of that year, Company L paraded at the Presidio in San Francisco and on July Fourth, 1908, Company L took part in the celebration at Napa.

The next special parade was in San Jose, July 3, 4, 5, 1909. During that year, Company L was located at Palo Alto. It was an old fashioned Independence Day celebration in which bicycle races

*San Jose Mercury, May 13, 1908, page 1, 2, column 4.

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**Gilroy Advocate, July 5, 1908, page 1, column 1, 2.

*San Jose Mercury, August 13, 1910, page 12, column 3.

Activities: (continued)

were held in the Auditorium Rink, balloon ascensions at Alum Rock Park and Cedar Brook Park, a band concert in the evening by the Fifth Infantry Band, and baseball at Luna Park, were some of the features. Also in the afternoon in St. James Park, the school children rendered a beautiful patriotic program of music and recitations. On July fifth, the parade was held and trains and interurban trains from surrounding towns brought thousands of visitors into the city to witness the celebration. The military part of the parade consisted of the Fifth Infantry Band and Companies B, M, and L, under command of Major G. L. Holtum.*

The next year, May 11, 1910, the three companies again joined in a celebration in San Jose. The occasion was the Rose Festival, and in the parade was an estimated 6,000 little children clad in white, and decked in garlands of brilliant flowers and ribbons. San Jose and Santa Clara Valley believed in advertising their soil and climate that permitted such a profusion of beautiful and choice blossoms. Forming the first division of the parade was the Second Battalion, Fifth Infantry Regiment, consisting of Companies B, L, M, in command of Major G. L. Holtum. The remainder of the procession was composed of fraternal and civic organizations, many represented by floats and thousands of little children.**

Another celebration in Gilroy on July Fourth, 1912, illustrates the splendid spirit prevailing in Santa Clara County. All the surrounding cities and towns supported the celebration. San Jose sent her three Militia Companies B, L, and M, and from Berkeley, Company C joined them in making a battalion for the celebration.***

Company L, as part of the Fifth Infantry Regiment participated in the large military and civic pageant given in honor of the President of the United States, William Howard Taft in San Francisco on October 14, 1911. After the parade, Company L was the

*San Jose Mercury, July 5, 1909, page 1, column 7.

**San Jose Mercury, May 12, 1910, pages 1, 2, column 4.

***Gilroy Advocate, July 6, 1912, page 1, columns 1, 2.

Activities: (continued)

guests of the San Francisco and the Stanford University soccer teams at the game between the two teams.*

Among the social activities of Company L was the entertainment of November 23, 1911. The program was well arranged and the drill team gave a neat and interesting exhibition of the manual of arms and exercises to music. The feature of the evening was the vocal selections by Miss Agnes Maloney of Stanford University, her sweet voice bringing her much applause. The work of the Gymnasium Club was first class, and the Glee and Mandolin Clubs were well received. Miss Chlotilde Polastri entertained with two character songs, her songs being worthy of a professional. On the back of the official program was the following worded appeal; **

"Don't overlook Company L. Your moral support is all we ask. Our members are giving their time and effort in a public and patriotic cause. All this work is an up-hill struggle, because of the lack of interest from the public. In many eastern cities it is impossible to squeeze one's way into the armories on a drill night because of the people who go to watch the drills. That is what we want, more support and encouragement."

On July Fourth, 1915, Company L paraded in the City of Oakland in one of the finest civic and military parades ever held in that city. During the parade, motion picture comedians, dodging here and there throughout the parade, lent a touch of merriment to the occasion, as a busy camera reeled off thousands of feet of film of the parade. United States Infantry and Marines were followed in line by Battery B, Artillery and the Fifth Infantry Regiment, National Guard of California.

Along toward the rear of the line of march there was a sight that drew a thunder of cheers from the throngs upon the sidewalks. A large flag, borne flat along the street by lines of marching Spanish War veterans and covering the entire street, was in the lead of the men who fought in the war with Spain and the Philippine

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*Palo Alto Times, October 14, 1911, page 1, column 2.

**Palo Alto Times, November 25, 1911.

Activities: (continued)

Campaign. The parade was reviewed by Mayor Davie, of Oakland and Grand Marshal H. N. Gard on the countermarch at the Oakland Post Office grounds.*

Occasionally Company L was called upon for duty at military funerals. One such occasion was the funeral of Adjutant-General Edwin Alexander Forbes, Brigadier-General, National Guard of California on June 20, 1915, held in San Francisco.

On June 28, 1916, Company L, as part of the Fifth Infantry Regiment was ordered into Federal service for duty on the Mexican Border. The unit was stationed at Nogales, Arizona, where the soldiers aided in maintaining peace by stopping marauding bands of Mexicans from crossing the boundary lines and plundering American territory. After about three months of Federal service, Company L returned to their home station and was dismissed on October 7, 1916.

A few months later, President Woodrow Wilson called the National Guard for Federal service. When the United States entered the World War, Company L, as part of the Fifth Infantry Regiment was called into Federal service on March 26, 1917. Companies L and E, Fifth Infantry Regiment was consolidated September 24, 1917, and designated Company E, 159th Infantry Regiment, 40th Brigade.

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*Oakland Tribune, July 5, 1915, page 1, column 3.

**Histories military organizations etc. File #314.7, Adjutant General Files.