

# **History of the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, National Guard of California 1879-1885**

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FIFTH INFANTRY BATTALION

Fifth Infantry Battalion, Second Brigade  
Reference: Adjutant General's Files  
Location: Oakland, Alameda County  
Organized December 30, 1879\*  
Reconstituted August 1, 1885\*\*

On January 15, 1880, Major Ranlett issued Battalion Order No. 1,  
which reads as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Horace D. Ranlett, Major	Dec. 29, 1879	Jan. 2, 1880
A.L. Smith, First Lieut. Adj.	May 17, 1880	May 27, 1880
Horace D. Ranlett, Lieut. Col.	May 22, 1882	June 3, 1882
J. K. Duncan, Major (resigned July 10, 1883)	May 22, 1882	July 27, 1882
William Simpson, Major Surgeon	Mar. 3, 1882	Mar. 11, 1882
Thomas J. Parsons, Major	Oct. 15, 1883	Dec. 3, 1883
Albert L. Smith, Capt. Adj. (retired Aug. 9, 1883)	Mar. 1, 1883	Mar. 8, 1883
William Verbeck, Capt. Adj. (resigned Jan. 9, 1884)	Aug. 13, 1883	Aug. 17, 1883
William Verbeck, Capt. Adj.	Sept. 1, 1884	Sept. 10, 1884
James M. Donohue, Capt. Adj.	June 18, 1885	June 25, 1885

Activities:

On November 28, 1879, a petition was sent to Adjutant General P. F. Walsh, requesting that the Oakland Guard of Oakland and the San Jose Zouaves, be formed into a battalion. The request was signed by the commissioned officers of both companies. The application was approved by Brigadier-General John McComb on December tenth, and on the twelfth, an order was issued granting the request. The organization was to be known as the Second Infantry Battalion, Second Brigade. The Oakland Guard was designated as Company A, and the San Jose Zouaves as Company B. Eighteen days

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\*Fifth Infantry Battalion, formerly Second Infantry Battalion organized December 12, 1879, was redesignated Fifth Infantry Battalion eighteen days later on December 30, 1879. Adjutant General Report 1880. Special Orders No. 38, 40, page 72.

\*\*Fifth Infantry Battalion reconstituted as the Fifth Infantry Regiment, Second Brigade, August 1, 1885. Headquarter Papers, Second Brigade, Special Order No. 44, 1885.

## Activities: (continued)

later, the name Second Battalion was changed to the Fifth Infantry Battalion. The election of a Major to command the battalion resulted in the selection of Horace D. Ranlett, as Commanding officer.

On January 15, 1880, Major Ranlett issued Battalion Order No. 11, which reads as follows:

- I. By Special Order No. 40 from General Headquarters State of California, the name of the Second Infantry Battalion has been changed to the Fifth Infantry Battalion.
- II. Having been duly commissioned and qualified as Major of the Fifth Infantry Battalion of Infantry, I hereby, assume command of the same and establish Headquarters at 214 California Street, San Francisco, where all business connected with the battalion will be transacted between the hours of twelve noon and two P. M.
- III. Lieutenant Henry Levy, Company A, is hereby appointed acting Adjutant, Fifth Infantry Battalion. He will be obeyed and respected accordingly.

Horace D. Ranlett  
Major Commanding.

The two units could not always parade as a battalion because of their locations. Frequently on holidays or special occasions, Company A would parade in Oakland or San Francisco, while Company B paraded at San Jose. One such occasion was on September 26, 1881, when memorial services were held throughout the State to mourn the death of James A. Garfield, President of the United States. Battalion Orders show that Company A paraded in Oakland and Company B at San Jose.\*

The battalion continued as a two company organization for about two years, when on March 22, 1882, the Hewston Guard, unattached, located at Petaluma, was attached to the battalion and designated

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\*Battalion Order No. 22, 1881, on file Adjutant General's Office.

## Activities: (continued)

as Company C. At the same time the Vallejo Rifles, unattached, of Vallejo, was also added to the battalion and designated as Company D. The increase in the battalion increased the rank of Major Ranlett to that of Lieutenant Colonel. On April 7, 1885, Company D was mustered out of the National Guard upon the recommendation of Lieutenant Colonel Ranlett.\* Three weeks later, April twenty-ninth, a new company was organized and mustered in as Company D. The table on the following page indicates the changes in the Fifth Battalion.

According to the Adjutant General's Report of 1883-1884, the Fifth Infantry Battalion made the best actual average score at target practice on September 10, 1883, of any infantry regiment in the National Guard of California.\*\*

Under the splendid leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Ranlett, the battalion in the five years of its existence, as such, became the foundation on which the splendid Fifth Infantry Regiment was built. In June of 1885, a cadet company from Santa Rosa, was added to the battalion and on July 22, 1885, the Oakland Light Cavalry, unattached, was reorganized as an infantry company and attached to the Fifth Battalion as Company F, thereby bringing the organization up to the required number of units for the formation of a regiment. For additional information concerning the activities of the units in the battalion, refer to History of the Fifth Infantry Regiment, Second Brigade, National Guard of California.

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\*Company D, Fifth Infantry Battalion disbanded in accordance with General Order No. 9, April 7, 1885.  
Adjutant General Report 1885-1886, page 63.

\*\*Adjutant General Report 1883-1884, page 34.

COMPANIES COMPOSING THE FIFTH INFANTRY BATTALION, SECOND BRIGADE

1879-1885

A	B	C	D	E	F
Oakland Guard Oakland <u>1879</u>	San Jose Zouaves San Jose <u>1879</u>	Hewston Guard Petaluma <u>1882</u>	Vallejo Rifles <u>1882</u>  Company D San Rafael <u>1885</u>	Company E (Cadets) Santa Rosa <u>1885</u>	Company F San Francisco <u>1885</u>

Note: The year dates in the table indicate the year the companies were attached the Fifth Infantry Battalion, Second Brigade.