

History of the 6th Infantry Battalion, Company A (Stockton Guard), National Guard of California 1885-1888

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COMPANY A

Company A, Sixth Infantry Battalion, Third Brigade (formerly
Stockton Guard, unattached, Third Brigade)

Reference: Adjutant General's Files

Location: Stockton, San Joaquin County

Organized December 12, 1871

Reconstituted July 22, 1885*

Reconstituted February 21, 1888**

Commanding Officers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
J. B. Douglass, Captain	Sept. 6, 1886	Oct. 16, 1886
W. R. Johnson, First Lieut.	Mar. 22, 1886	April 2, 1886

Activities:

In accordance with orders issued by the Adjutant General's Office, the Sixth Infantry Battalion was organized July 22, 1885. The new battalion was composed of the following companies: The Stockton Guard to be designated Company A, Emmet Guard, Company B and Forsyth Guard, Company C. In 1887, Company D of Modesto, formerly a Cadet Company, was attached to the battalion. The battalion after its participation in the Moquele-mos Land Grant dispute was designated the "Sixth Harvesters."

The first activity Company A participated in subsequent to its attachment to the Sixth Battalion of Infantry was the encampment held at Santa Cruz, August fifteenth to twenty-third, 1885. The Legislature of that year made an appropriation for a general encampment of the National Guard which was the first time that

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*The Stockton Guard, Third Brigade was attached to the Sixth Infantry Battalion and designated Company A, Sixth Infantry Battalion by General Order No. 16, July 22, 1885.
Adjutant General Report 1885-1886, page 70.

**The Sixth Infantry Battalion was elevated to the Sixth Infantry Regiment, Third Brigade February 21, 1888, and Company B was designated Company B, Sixth Infantry Regiment, Third Brigade.
Adjutant General Report 1887-1888, page 3.

Activities: (continued)

such an appropriation had been provided. Santa Cruz was chosen by the majority of the commands for its many advantages. These advantages included the following features: mild temperature, sea bathing, easy accessibility of the camp by rail or water and the large and beautiful grounds. The ample grounds provided sufficient space for battalion and brigade evolution. Colonel W. W. Hall, State Engineer, was credited for the manner in which he completed the arrangements for the encampment. The Second Brigade was camped on the right and the Fourth on the left, the lines of the two forming an obtuse angle. At the apex of the angle, Division Headquarters were situated, and to its left, and on somewhat higher ground, the tents of Governor Stoneman and staff were located. On the opposite side of the field the camps of the light artillery and temporary stables for the horses were set up. Detachments were sent a few days in advance to pitch the tents. Straw was provided upon which the soldiers spread their blankets at night. The sanitation of camp was taken care of by sinks constructed in rear of camps and the kitchens on the flank and rear. Water was conveniently supplied by pipes connected with the city main. During the Camp of Instruction, the camp was inspected daily and the medical officers endeavored to secure the best sanitary conditions possible.

Company A, together with the other troops arrived in camp Saturday night and the commands spent Sunday getting settled. The day being the Sabbath, divine services was held in the camp by several regiments. On Monday the regular routine of drills, parades and other duties of camp commenced which were carried on with but little deviation to the end of the encampment. The activities of the men at camp included battalion drill, battalion skirmish and brigade drills, battalion and brigade dress parades and guard mountings. Governor Stoneman and his staff arrived in camp late Monday and stayed throughout the week. A detail met the Governor and escorted him to the camp and on the following day the Light Battery fired an appropriate salute. On Tuesday afternoon the troops were reviewed by his Excellency; where guard duty was intelligently and conscientiously performed. The commanding officers were competent and well informed and the soldiers of all ranks, zealous and diligent. Brigade and regimental guards were mounted and in addition to these, there was a provost guard which patrolled the town and other places exterior to camp, arresting absentees and disorderly soldiers. The sentinels were well instructed and guards performed their duties with alacrity and zeal.

Activities: (continued)

Company A was one of the six companies that made up the First Provisional Regiment at the encampment. Captain Lehe of Company A, commanded the Regiment which had seventeen officers and 233 men. Company A with a total of fifty members was the strongest company in camp and was credited with a zealous military spirit for this fine showing. Due to the limited appropriation only thirty-five men from each unit were allowed transportation and subsistence. All in excess of that number went at their own expense or that of their company's. Company A provided and cooked their own rations, affecting a considerable saving. The men were satisfied with this arrangement as the saving in the cost of subsistence amounted to more than the price of the mess kits. A unit could cook their rations at a third less than the caterer charged. It also afforded practical instruction to the men, officers and staff officers.

A sham battle on Saturday, the twenty-third closed the activities of the encampment. The battle was reviewed by thousands of a spectators from the amphitheatre of hills that overlooked the scene. The battle proved a grand spectacular event, and also proved a dangerous burlesque of an actual skirmish. The encampment was a decided success and the short period of only one week improved the drill and soldierly bearing of the troops.

Major Royal T. Frank, commander of the First Artillery, United States Regulars, who had been appointed Inspector of the Encampment, in his criticisms suggested several recommendations for the improvement and betterment of the Guard in relation to future encampments. His recommendations are as follows:

Recommended regular Camps of Instruction for the troops, as that reliable soldiers could not be made by armory instructions and street parades alone.

Recommended instruction in camp duty was a necessity as an aid to the civil power as the efficiency of a military force in an emergency, depended wholly upon its proper armament, equipment, discipline and instruction.

Recommended brigade in preference to regimental encampments as commands derived more benefits from such an outing, duty was more attractive, and a friendly rivalry was stimulated among the different organizations and also troops became accustomed to operating together.

COMPANY A (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

Recommended the men should be required to stay throughout the period of the camp service in as much as the Government paid the transportation to the camp and the brief interval the men were required to do camp duty. During the previous encampment the men who wished to do so were permitted to leave camp on private business.

Recommended the discontinuance of the elaborate receptions which involved heavy expense which not only disturbed the men not participating, but created and fostered jealousies. This recommendation brought out a problem that had confronted the military authorities for a long period, to make a Camp of Instruction popular with the men in order to secure voluntary attendance and a cheerful performance of duties, and yet not lose sight of the main objective of the camp which was practical instruction in the various field duties of the soldier.

Recommended the discontinuance of Chinese lanterns for decoration and illumination in the camp. This detracted from the military appearance and gave the young soldiers an erroneous opinion contrary to the order and quiet which should pervade a military camp at night.

Recommended that provision should be made for each brigade to be furnished with a few beds, surgical instruments and medicine necessary to treat illness in camp.

While the military authorities fully concurred with Major Frank in his criticisms, the encampment was considered a grand success and it was felt the objectionable features would eradicate themselves in the future.

Company A was called upon to take part in the parades honoring three former statesmen who had passed away during the year 1885. Ex-President U. S. Grant died July 27, 1885; Major General George B. McClellan who had played an important role in the affairs of the National Guard throughout his lifetime, passed away in November while scarcely a month later Vice President Thomas A. Hendricks died. As a tribute to the dead, the armories of the National Guard and the colors of the command were draped in mourning for thirty days. The customary badge of mourning

Activities: (Continued)

was worn by the officers for the same period.

The occasion of the twentieth national encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic in San Francisco in 1886, was the incentive for the National Guard troops to parade as escort to Commander-in-Chief Burdette and the Grand Army of the Republic. The Sixth Infantry Battalion to which Company A was attached marched with the first division which participated in the escort guard. The second division consisted of two columns of carriages which contained the distinguished guests of the Grand Army of the Republic, Governor Stoneman, General George B. Cosby, Colonel Perrie Kewen and Colonel G. G. Tyrrel. Company A in all probability shared in the report that all the troops in the First Division presented a fine appearance, marched well and were an outstanding commencement for an imposing parade. One year later, March 1887 Company A, as escort, took part in the parade acting a s guard of honor of Governor Bartlett's inauguration to office.

The only record of target practice in which Company A took part, during the short time it was a unit of the battalion, was during the year 1887. At this practice the company made 24.08 percentage. This low percentage was caused by thirty-four of the members being absent from the practice drill.

The returns of Company A indicate there was little change in the Company's numerical strength during the three years the Company was in the Battalion. At the muster and inspection of March 1886, the unit had sixty-five members and rated sixty-seven per cent which was the smallest number on the company's rolls over the three year period. A year later in November, the muster showed seventy-four members which was the greatest number of members for the corresponding period.

The National Guard which consisted of forty companies previous to 1887 was increased to fifty by an act of Legislature during that year. The Third Brigade benefited from this increase resulting in the elevation of the Sixth Infantry Battalion to a Regimental organization. The Sixth Infantry Regiment was composed of Companies A and B of Stockton, C and F of Fresno, and D of Modesto, and E of Visalia. Company A, Sixth Battalion was redesignated Company A, Sixth Regiment, Third Brigade.*

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*San Francisco Call February 24, 1888, page 3, column 4.
Adjutant General Report 1887-1888, page 3.