

The California Volunteers and the Civil War: 1st Battalion of Native Cavalry 1863-1866

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FIRST BATTALION OF NATIVE CAVALRY*

Reference: "Record of California Men in the War of the Rebellion" (1890)
Adjutant General's Office.

Regimental Headquarters:

Drum Barracks, California	December 31, 1864-June 30, 1865
Fort Yuma, California	July 1865
Fort Mason, Arizona Territory	August 1865-December 31, 1865

Mustered in August 25, 1864
Mustered out July 20, 1866

COMMANDING OFFICERS

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Salvador Vallejo, Major	_____	Dec. 9, 1863
John G. Donevan, First Lieutenant and Quartermaster	_____	Dec. 18, 1863
Louis V. Leese, First Lieutenant and Adjutant	_____	June 24, 1864
John C. Cremony, Major	_____	March 17, 1865

Companies Included in First Battalion of Native Cavalry:

Company A:

Commanding Officers:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Jose Ramon Pico, Captain	Feb. 24, 1863	Feb. 26, 1863
Crisanto Soto, First Lieutenant	May 9, 1863	June 5, 1863

Location of Company:

Camp Curtis, California	Aug. 31, 1864
Fort Humboldt, California	Oct. 31, 1864
Fort Wright, California	Dec. 31, 1864
Benicia Barracks, California	April 30, 1865
Tubac, Arizona Territory	Aug. 31, 1865
Fort Mason, Arizona Territory	Dec. 31, 1865

Mustered in September 7, 1863
Mustered out March 20, 1866

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*Native Cavalry Battalion became First Battalion Native Cavalry.
Synonyms of Volunteer Organizations of the United States, 1861-1865,
page 8.

Companies Included in First Battalion of Native Cavalry: (Continued)

Company B:

Commanding officers:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Ernest E. Lagross, Captain	_____	Sept. 29, 1863
Edward Bale, First Lieutenant	_____	Dec. 18, 1863
John Lafferty, First Lieutenant	_____	June 28, 1864
Porfino Jimeno, Captain	_____	March 11, 1865

Location of Company:

San Francisco, California	June 30, 1864
Presidio San Francisco, California	Aug. 31, 1864
Monterey Barracks, California	Feb. 28, 1865
Camp Low, California	March 31, 1865
Fort Mason, California	Aug.-Dec. 31, 1865

Mustered in March 29, 1864
Mustered out March 15, 1865

Company C:

Commanding Officers:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Joseph Fitch, Captain	_____	Dec. 9, 1863
A. M. De La Guerra, Captain	_____	June 2, 1864
Santiago De La Guerra, First Lt.	_____	June 2, 1864

Location of Company:

Cahuenga Pass (Enroute to Drum Barracks)	Aug. 31, 1864
Drum Barracks, California	Dec. 31, 1864
Tubac, Arizona Territory	Oct. 31, 1865
Fort Mason, Arizona Territory	Dec. 31, 1865

Mustered in July 28, 1864
Mustered out April 2, 1866

Company D:

Commanding Officers:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Jose Antonio Sanchez, Captain	_____	Feb. 10, 1864
Edward Bale, Captain	_____	June 24, 1864
Jose Redona, First Lieutenant	_____	Feb. 10, 1864
J. C. Cox, First Lieutenant	_____	July 27, 1864
Thomas Young, Captain	_____	May 29, 1865
Edmund W. Coddington, First Lt.	_____	(Mustered in August 28, 1865.)

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Companies Included in First Battalion of Native Cavalry: (Continued)
Company D: (Continued)

Location of Company:

Drum Barracks, California	June 30, 1864
Carriso Creek, (Enroute to Tubac Arizona Territory)	July 31, 1865
Tucson, Arizona Territory (Enroute to Tubac)	Aug. 31, 1865
Fort Mason, Arizona Territory	Sept. 30, 1865
Tucson (Enroute to Drum Barracks, California)	Jan. 31, 1866

Mustered in March 3, 1864

Mustered out March 20, 1866

Activities of the First Battalion Native Cavalry.

The First Battalion of Native California Cavalry was organized in January 1863. This unit, composed solely of native Californians, was formed because of the "Natives" extraordinary display of horsemanship. It was felt that a mounted unit of this type would render excellent service in the Arizona Territory during the war. Accordingly a telegram was sent by Brigadier General G. Wright to the War Department requesting the authority to organize four companies of native cavalry. General Wright received a favorable response on the twentieth of January and started at once to recruit the battalion.

Don Andreas Pico of Los Angeles, the Brigadier General of the First Brigade of California Militia, was commissioned Major of the battalion. He, however, declined the commission due to illness and his inability to "ride horseback". His reasons are given in the following letter to the Adjutant General.

Los Angeles,
17th of February, 1863

Sir:

Your official note dated the 9th of the present month, came to my hands, as likewise did the commission in which the rank of Major 1st. Battalion, Native California Cavalry, is conferred upon me by his Excellency, Governor Leland Stanford.

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Activities of the First Battalion Native Cavalry: (Continued)

My answer is that, being actually sick, so that frequently I am unable to ride on horseback, I consider myself unfit for all kinds of active service and for which reason I respectfully decline the above said rank, with which I was honored by his Excellency the Governor.

Therefore, as required, I return to you the commission, with due respect and many thanks for the preference shown me.

I remain your affectionate servant,

Andres Pico

Wm. C. Kibbe
Adjutant General
Sacramento City,
California

Salvador Vallejo was then given the rank as Major of the battalion, but was not mustered as such until August 13, 1864. He resigned in February 1865, and was succeeded by John C. Cremony, who had been a Captain in the Second California Cavalry.

Considerable delay was experienced in raising men for this battalion. Recruiting began in January 1863, but the first company was not completed and mustered into service until September seventh of the same year. The other companies were not mustered in until the Spring and Summer of 1864.

Captain A. M. De La Guerra experienced some trying times while recruiting Company C, as during those years politics played a very important part in the raising of companies. Difficulty was encountered also in commissioning the men who were elected to the rank of captains and lieutenants.

Captain Guerra after being authorized by the Governor to raise his company, worked diligently in recruiting the units to between seventy and eighty men. He also quartered these men at his own expense for a period of one month when a certain political "clique" tried in many ways to

Activities of the First Battalion Native Cavalry: (Continued)

cause the company to be disbanded.* When the Captain's enemies failed to succeed, they boasted of preventing the company's organizer from being commissioned, and made statements to the effect that the enlisted men were not loyal to the Union.** But in the face of all these obstacles the company was mustered into service and A. M. Guerra received his commission as Captain and his nephew, Santiago Guerra, became Second Lieutenant. Both commissions were issued on June 2, 1864.

This delay in recruiting was due to the large number of disloyal citizens who, during 1862 and 1863, manifested quite a stronghold throughout California. This is explained through a letter to the Secretary of War from Adjutant General Kibbe, which reads as follows:

September 11, 1862

General:

I have the honor on behalf of the State authorities and the loyal citizens of this State to present a statement of the condition of affairs here.

It is represented and generally believed that there is a secret organization in this State numbering from twenty to thirty thousand men who are leagued together for the overthrow of our National Government, and whose purpose it is, if an opportunity should ever favor the scheme, to carry the State out of the Union. This class of men openly boast that their sympathies are with the traitors of the South, and they lose no opportunity to defame the Government from which they receive protection of life and property, and whose great benefits they enjoy.

*Taken from a letter by M. J. Still of Los Angeles to Governor Low on May 27, 1864. On file State Archives, State Capitol.

**Taken from a letter to Governor Low by Pablo De La Guerra (Brother to Captain Guerra) May 26, 1864. On file State Archives, State Capitol.

Activities of the First Battalion Native Cavalry: (Continued)

They continually preach their traitor-out doctrines among loyal men, and do much to discourage enlistments. The loyal citizen has at this time no protection from their insults, and even United States soldiers have been shot down in our streets for protecting against the free use of disloyal sentiments, and the probabilities are that the assassin will go unwhipped or justice.

The actions of these men are positive and determined and there is no immunity to loyal men from insult and wrong. The strength of the Government should be manifested, and the Union feeling of the masses fostered, therefore, if this is not done and our armies should meet continued reverses, trouble would be inaugurated upon the Pacific Coast.

The loyal citizens of the State have born this state of affairs long enough. They are now organizing themselves into military companies, and are making daily applications for arms. They are in earnest now in their efforts to fit themselves for any emergencies which may arise, and if they could be promptly armed, they would soon be prepared for duty, and when that is done every good citizen would once more breathe freely and declare his fidelity to the best government ever established, at all times and in all places. But the State has no arms in her arsenal, they are all in use. Will the General Government give or loan the State arms to equip her loyal men; and enable them to resist all treasonable efforts which may be made upon this coast? Will the Federal Government help us to manifest the strength and force of protection? If so I will guaranty that we will speedily organize a force of fifteen to twenty.

Activities of the First Battalion Native Cavalry: (Continued)

thousand, many of whom are already inured to the hardships of camp life, and who will promptly give their services for any exigency which may be presented.

This statement is not overdrawn. There are arms at the Benicia Arsenal and I most respectfully urge the issuance to this State of ten thousand muskets or those equivalent in such arms as may be required, either to be deducted from our future quota, or to be returned after the War.

If this could be done, General, the benefits to be derived can scarcely be calculated.

I am sir very respectfully
Your Obedient Servant,
Wm. C. Kibbe
Adjutant General
State of California

Major General
H. W. Halleck
Secretary of War

There seems to have been an unusually large number of desertions from the First Battalion of Native Cavalry-- one company reporting more than fifty, while another reported about eighty. The records of this battalion are very incomplete and for that reason it is impossible to give a full account of the services it rendered.

The Battalion was stationed in various places throughout California, and during the Summer of 1865 was taken by Major Cremony to Arizona. He kept the battalion in the southern part of Arizona until early in 1866, when it was returned to California and mustered out of service at Drum Barracks on March twentieth, except for Company C which was mustered out at the Presidio in San Francisco on April 2, 1866.