The California Volunteers and the Civil War: The California Battalion. 2nd Massachusetts Volunteer Cavalry 1862-1865

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CALIFORNIA HUNDRED AND CALIFORNIA BATTALION

(COMPANY A, SECOND MASSACHUSETTS CAVALRY)

Reference: "Record of California Men in the War of the Rebellion" (1890)

Adjutant General Report 1861-1867

Regimental Headquarters:

San Francisco, California and Massachusetts

Mustered in December 10, 1862, San Francisco, California Mustered out July 20, 1865, Court House, Fairfax, Virginia

Commander of California Hundred Major Casper Crowninshield

Companies Included in California Hundred.

Company A, Second Massachusetts Cavalry*

Commanding Officers:

J. Sewell Reed, Captain

Archibald McKendry, First Lieutenant

Mustered in December 10, 1862 Mustered out July 20, 1865

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THE CALIFORNIA BATTALION

(COMPANIES E, F, L, AND M, SECOND MASSACHUSETTS CAVALRY)

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

Regimental Headquarters:
San Francisco, California and Massachusetts

Mustered in March 1863, San Francisco Mustered out July 20, 1865, Court House, Fairfax, Virginia

Commander of California Batalion: Major Dewitt C. Thompson

Companies Included in California Battalion.

Company E, Second Massachusetts Cavalry
Commanding Officers:
Charles S. Eigenbrodt, Captain
John C. Norcross, First Lieutenant

Mustered in March 20, 1863 Mustered out July 20, 1865

Company F, Second Massachusetts Cavalry
Commanding Officers:
David A. DeMerritt, Captain
Rufus W. Smith, First Lieutenant

Mustered in (One detachment April 22, 1863)
One detachment May 10, 1863)
Mustered out July 20, 1865

Company L, Second Massachusetts Cavalry

Commanding Officers:
Zebdiel B. Adams, Captain
William C. Manning, First Lieutenant

Mustered in March 21, 1863 Mustered out July 20, 1865

Companies Included in California Battalion (Cont.)

Company M, Second Massachusetts Cavalry

Commanding Officers:
George A. Manning, Captain
Alvin W. Stone, First Lieutenant

Mustered in March 21, 1863 Mustered out July 20, 1865

Activities of the California Hundred and California Battalion:

The California Hundred was the first company organized on the Pacific Coast to participate in the Rebellion on the East, which was being fought for the cause of liberty and free government.

There were a large number of young men in the State who desired to go East and enter the army, and when it was found that the California Volunteers were being kept on this coast, a proposition was made to the State of Massachusetts to raise a company in California for services in the East.

On the twenty-seventh of October 1862, Captain J. Sewall Reed received the necessary instructions and began recruiting at once. There were five hundred men who had in two weeks time answered the call for troops. A selected one hundred was chose, thus forming the California Hundred.

These men were to be credited to the quota of that State, providing Massachusetts would guarantee all organization and transporation expenses. The bounty paid by the State of Massachusetts for Volunteers, the troops decided, should be paid into the company fund and used for the purpose of paying the company's expenses.

The California Hundred sailed for the East on December 16, 1862, and arrived at Readville, near Boston, Massachusetts on January 4, 1863.

This unit of men joined with the forces of the Second Massachusetts Cavalry, and was rated as Company A. They were immediately armed and trained as cavalrymen and stationed at Yorktown, Virginia, awaiting orders to report for active service. Their first battle was at South Anna Bridge where seventy California and twenty Massachusetts troops captured

one hundred and twenty-three men from the forty-fourth North Carolina Infantry.

The success in raising the California Hundred and the large number of men presenting themselves for enlistment induced other military officers to help raise four more companies under the same conditions. After considerable negotiations with the authorities in Washington, D. C. and Massachusetts, Major Thompson received permission to raise the four companies in California. Upon the arrival of these companies at Readville they were also attached to the Second Massachusetts Cavalry, and became Companies E, F, L, and M, of that regiment, and were associated with the California Hundred in service, in the East. The military history and services of the California Hundred and California Battalion and identical. The camped, marched, and fought side by side, and stood the hardships of campaigns and dangers of battles together.

The California Hundred and Battalion were mounted, armed and equipped for the field at Readville, Massachusetts, and as a Battalion on the twelfth of May it proceeded to Washington, and was attached to the Twenty-second Army Corps, then comprising the forces in that department. Its first service was to stand picket at all the out-posts, and scout in front of the forts defending the National Capital.

On the first of June its camp was moved to the north of Washington, and thebattalion was employed in scouting along the upper Potomac, looking out for the anticipated movement of Lee's army into Maryland.

About this time the battalion made its first raid, crossing the Potomac at White's Ford, and marching through Loudon and Fairfax Counties, Virginia, in search of Mosby's guerrillas; but as the wily enemy could not be found, it returned; the officers and men having gained a knowledge of the country and experience valuable in future movements.

On the twenty-sixth of June it joined the Army of the Potomac near Edwards' Ferry-then under command of General Hooker--and marched with the Twelfth Corps toward Gettysburg. A few days afterwards, Stuart's cavalry having crossed the Potomac at Muddy Branch Ford, the battlion was sent to watch their movements. By a forced march it came up with the enemy, and had an engagement with the rear guard near Brookville, Maryland, on the first day of July, and continued to follow them into Pennsylvania, capturing stragglers and

harassing their column. Orders to join Lee's army, then at Gettysburg, made Stuart's cavalry hurry forward and pay but little attention to the small forces about them; otherwise, his veterans would have made the Californians more distant and respectful in their attentions.

The battalion formed the right of a cavary force that started on the eighth of July to make reconnaissance to Virginia, east of the Blue Ridge and through Ashby's Gap into the Shenandoah Valley, to discover the position and watch the movements of Lee's army then retreating up the valley.

On the morning of July twelfth a sharp action took place at Ashby's Gap, exclusively by the four companies of this battalion, against a detachment of the enemy strongly posted, resulting in driving the Rebels from the gap and up the valley, and enabling the command to accomplish the objects of the reconnaissance. In this engagement Lieutenant John C. Norcross and several men were captured and hurried off, having gallantly charged through the enemy's ranks. Privates Walter 5. Barnes and Henry P. Irving were killed in the Gap, and mary of the skirmishes, the taking of a goodly number of prisoners, and gained much information in relation to the enemy's movements.

On the seventeenth of July the battalion was attached to a mixed command of cavalry, artillery, and infantry, detailed to protect the line of communication between Washington and the Army of the Potomac, then concentrating near Culpepper, and to operate against the partisan troops of the enemy east of the Blue Ridge. While on this duty the battalion had regular camps at Falls Church, Vienna, Fairfax Court House, and Centerville, and scouted over most of the Guntry bounded by the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Rappahonnock and Potomac Rivers.

On the thirtieth of July it had an engagement with Mosby's guerillas near Aldie, and recaptured a train of thirty-three wagons taken the day before on the Warrenton Pike.

On the seventeenth of August it recaptured, near Frying Pan, another train of thirteen wagons taken by Mosby near Annandale, on the Fairfax Pike.

On the twenty-fifth of August an unsuccessful engagement took place between about thirty Californians and M sby's command, near Coyle's Tavern, in which three of the battalion were killed, and several wounded and captured. In this skirmish Mosby was severely wounded, and disabled for several months.

Activities of the California Hundred and California Battalions (Cont.)

Buring the fall of 1863, several skirmishes and running
combats took place between the Californins and detachments
of the Sixth Virginia Cavalry, White's battalion, and Mosby's
men, with varied success to either party.

A detachment of cavalry, of which two companies belonged to the battalion, were surprised and defeated near Dranesville, on the twenty-second of February, by a larger force under Mosby. The commanding officer, Captain Reed, of the California Hundred, and thirteen enlisted men were killed, and a large number wounded and captured; Captain George A Manning and Lieutenant William C. Manning were disabled and taken prisoners. This affair was the most diastrous that occurred to the battalion during its long and eventful service.

During the spring of 1864, considerable skirmishing took place in the vicinity of Upperville, Rectortown, and Manassas Cap, between the battalion and the partisan troops of the enemy, but no decisive action could be forced from them, though in their own country.

On the eighth of June 1864, two companies of the battalion formed part of a cavalry force detailed to protect a train of ambulances sent from Washington to remove our wounded from the battle field of the Wilderness.

Early on the morning of the eleventh the column crossed the Rappahannock at United States Ford, and after passing over the old battle field of Chancellorsville, soon reached the scenes of the more desperate battle of the Wilderness, fought a short time before. The badly wounded of both armies were still in field hospitals, and the dead lay in lines, or scattered through the woods, unburied as they fell in combat. The command visited Parker's Store, Locust Grove, Wilderness Tavern, and other parts of the field, collected all the wounded that were able to be removed in ambulances.

On the twelfth the train and escort recrossed the Rappahannock on its return, and passing through Brents-ville, Manassas Junction, and Centerville, reached Alexandria on the fourteenth. During this march some skirmishing took place, a few guerrillas were captured, and a superior force of the enemy, sent from Orange Court House to take the ambulances, was avoided.

A part of the battalion, with small details from other regiments, while out scouting, were attacked near Aldie, on the sixth of July, by a superior force under Mosby, and compelled to retire with considerable loss.

Activities of the California Hundred and California Battalion: (Cont.) This was the last affair between the Californians and the guerrillas in Virginia. For a year they had been pitted against Mosby's, White's, Imboden's, and Gilmore's men; they had hunted them summer and winter, night and day, mounted and dismounted, together and in squads, from the Blue Ridge to the Potomac, on every road and in almost every house in Loudon, Fairfax, Prince William, and Fauquier Counties. When a fair, square fight could be obtained, the Californians were never beaten. If a small scouting party or isolated picket post could be pounced upon, or a detachment ambushed in the woods, or going through a pass, the wily enemy were often successful in such operations. Eigenbrodt's and Manning's companies, on the sixth of March 1864, were attached to the cavalry forces on the upper Potomac, camped near Edwards! Ferry, and were employed in picketing along the river and scouting between Washington and Harper's Ferry. They made frequent raids into Virginia, and assisted in surrounding and searching Leesburg and other towns for guerrillas and furloughed Rebel soldiers. These companies continued on this active duty until the fifth of July, when they were moved towatch Early's army, then crossing into Maryland. At Point of Rocks, on that day, part of them were

During the battle of Monocacy Junction, fought on the ninth of July, between General Wallace's forces, from Baltimore and Early's army, Captain Eigenbrodt's company held the fords below on the Monocacy River, and Captain Manning's company, under Lieutenant Partridge, was placed on the Frederick Pike, to watch the enemy's movements toward Washington. Both companies were employed in skirmishing in front and on the flanks of the enemy's column, during the tenth and on the eleventh, until forced up to Fort Stevens on the Seventh Street Road, a few miles from the Capital. They were there dismounted and engaged on the skirmish line and in rifle pits of the fort until the enemy retreated on the morning of July thirteenth.

engaged skrimishing with the enemy's advance.

On the tenth of July Adams' and DeMerritt's companies, that had remained on duty in Virginia, near Fairfax Court House, were ordered over to the defense of Washington. On the morning of the eleventh they took position in the Tanallytown Road and Rockville Pike, to oppose a demonstration of the Rebels on that road. As Early's army advanced against the forsts, they were placed on the skirmish line, in front of Fort Reno, and were on duty there until the enemy retired.

The battalion, mounted, had the honor of the right and leading advance in driving Early's army out of Maryland. At Rockville, on the thirteenth, it made a dash on a Rebel brigade, and with its seven-shooters did the enemy considerable damage. At Darnestown, on the morning of the fourteenth, a small skirmish took place, resulting in capturing an officer and several men from the enemy's rear guard; and at Poolsville, on the afternoon of the same day, the battalion, dismounted and deployed, took part in an action against infantry and artillery, lasting some two hours, until the arrival of the Sixth Army Corps, when the enemy retired over the Potomac.

On the fifteenth, the two companies that had been stationed on the Potomac, near Edwards' Ferry, resumed their former position and duties along the river, and two companies from Fairfax Court House continued to follow up the enemy in advance of the Sixth and Nineteenth Army Corps, through Loudon County and Snickers's Gap into the Shenandoah Valley, skirmishing with their rear guard or flankers on every favorable opportunity. Soon after reaching the valley they were ordered to return to their former camp and duties near Fairfax Court House.

Early's army having threatened another invasion of Maryland, these companies, on the twenty-fifth of July, moved over the river again and proceeded up the Frederick Pike to South Mountain and Harper's Ferry. Eigenbrodt's and Manning's companies, that had been picketing on the Potomac, were stationed at Poolsville on the thirty-first day of July, when Mosby's guerrillas crossing the river at Nolan's ford for the purpose of capturing a wagon train on its way from Washington to Harper's Ferry. Before the enemy could reach the prize the Californians interfered, and coming on the guerrillas near Sugar Loaf Mountain, drove them in a running fight back over the Potomac and scattered them in the woods beyond. The companies continued to cover the communications and protect the trains going to Harpers's Ferry until the ninth of August, when they moved to Halltown and joined the Army of the Shenandoah, under the command of General Sheridan. There the four companies of the battalion were again united and formed a part of the Third Brigade, First Division of Cavalry, under the command of General Merritt.

At daylight on the morning of the tenth of August 1864, the battalion marched with Sheridan's army up the valley towards winchester, commencing on that day those brilliant and successful operations and almost daily battles against the enemy that resulted on the evening of the memorable nineteenth of October, at Cedar Creek, in the ruin and almost total annihilation of Early's army.

Activities of the California Hundred and California Battalion (Cont.) During this campaign the Californians participated in the following battles; Shepardstown, August tenth; Whitepost, August thirteenth; Strasburg, August fifteenth; Kearnstown, August seventeenth; Winchester, August eighteenth; Berryville Pike, August twentieth; Berryville, August twenty-first; Charlestown, August twenty-second, twentythird, and twenty-fourth; Halltown, August twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth, and twenty-seventh; Summit Point, August twenty-ninth; Smithfield, August thirtieth; Opequan Creek, September seventh; Knox's Ford, September twelfth; Sheridan's battle of Winchester, September nineteenth; Rront Royal, September twentieth; Snake Mountain, September twentieth; Mills' Ford, September twenty-third; Luray Court House, September twenty-fourth; Waynesboro, September twenty-eighth; Mount Crawford, October fourth; Tomsbrook, October eighth and ninth, and Sheridan's great battle of Cedar Creek, October nineteenth.

At Halltown, on the twenty-sixth of August 1864, Captain Charles 5. Rigenbrodt, while gallantly leading his squadron in a charge against the enemy, was shot dead from his horse. Thus was lost to the battalion one of its bravest and best beloved officers, and to California one of its most patriotic and valuable citizens.

On the next day, and near the same field, First Lieutenant Charles E. Meader, after charging with his company on the enemy's lines, was killed, fighting hand to hand—"too brave to retreat and too proud to surrender." Lieutenant Meader enlisted as a private in the battalion, and by superior abilities and faithful services was promoted to First Lieutenant, and at the time of his death was in command of the California Hundred.

Early in the day, at the hard-fought battle of Cedar Creek, October 19, 1864, Captain Rufus W. Smith, formerly commander of the Light Guard of San Francisco, was killed while in command of his squardron, endeavoring to check the then successful advance of the enemy. This brave officer left home, friends, and business to serve with the battalion, and after participating in many engagements lost his life on the field of Sheridan's greatest victory.

Many non-commissioned officers and privates of the battalion, all brave and patriotic Californians, were killed in various battles of the valley. No better soldiers died for the Union cause during the war.

A large number of the officers and enlisted men of the battalion were wounded during this campaign.

The annexed roll of the members of each of the four companies will, though briefly, refer to such facts.

Activities of the California Hundred and California Battalion: (Cont.)

After the close of the battle of Cedar Creek, the battalion
was with the advance, following up the defeated enemy, and
many of the cannon captured and retaken from the Rebels,
that made the gallant Custer hug his General for joy, were
halted and turned back by the sabers of the Californians.

Having returned from the pursuit of the enemy up the valley, after the battle of the nineteenth of October, the battalion was stationed for several weeks near Strasburg, engaged in scouting and picket duty.

On the twenty-eighth of N vember it formed a part of General Merritt's Division of Cavalry, that moved through Ashby's Gap to operate against the guerrillas east of the Elue Ridge, and destroy such forage, supplies, and property as could be of use to the enemy in that section of country. During this raid the battalion passed through many towns frequently visited on scouts from its old camps near Centerville.

Early in December it went into camp near Winchester, and was employed in protecting communications, collecting supplies, and camp duty.

On the nineteenth of December it marched with the cavalry, under command of General Torbert, on a raid towards Charlottesville and Gordonsville, passing through Chester Gap, and returning through Madison Court House, Culpepper, Warrenton, and Ashby's Gap, to Winchester. During this raid the weather has intensely cold, and the men and horses suffered severely.

During the greater part of January and February 1865, it performed picket and camp duty. On the twenty-seventh of February the battalion was again in the saddle for one of the hardest marches made during the war-from Winchester to Petersburg -- about three hundred miles, through rain and mud, fighting the enemy all the way and destroying its railroads, canals, and other property. The command consisted of the First Division of Cavalry, under General Devin, to which the battalion belonged; Third Division, under General Custer, with a small force of artillery, pontoons, etc -- all under General Sheridan. On this march the battalion m ved from Winchester up the valley, through Woodstock and Harrisburg, to Staunton and Waynesboro. At the latter place of battle was fought, resulting in the capture of the remnant of Harly's army, and a large amount of Rebel supplies. The march was continued to Charlottesville, where the railroad and enemy's stores were destroyed; then to the James River, destroying the canals and the bridges over that river down to Goochland; then to the north of Richmond, across the South and

North Anna Rivers, down to White House Landing. The battalion assisted in charging and taking the railroad bridge across the South Anna, with its defenses and cannon. From the White House the march was continued across the peninsula and over the James River in Front of Petersburg, where the battalion went into camp on the twenty-sixth of March. The following menth these troops were constantly marching, fighting, skirmishing and destroying railroads, canals, and the enemy's property beyond any immediate repair. During this time the enemy was seldom found to offer any resistance against the advance of the troops.

The battalion marched from in front of Petersburg on the twentyninth of March and took part in the brilliant operations that resulted in the surrender of General Lee's army at Appomattox Court House on the ninth of April 1865. It formed a part of General Gibbs' brigade, that gallantly attacked the enemy at Dinwiddie Court House and forced him to retire.

On the first day of April the battalion was in the hottest of the fight at Five Forks, and was among the first troops inside of the enemy's works. It was in Devin's Division, referred to by President Lincoln in the following dispatch: "The Five Forks, strongly barricaded, were carried by Devins's First Division of Cavalry."

In this engagement, First Lieutenant Lewis Munger, while leading his company, was killed. This promising young officer enlisted in Califor ia, and had been promoted to First Lieutenaut for faithful services and distinguished bravery. He was the fourth officer of the batallion killed in battle. Eigenbrodt, Meader, Smith, and Munger are names that will always be cherished by their comrades in arms, and should be honored by California, the State they loved so well.

On the second of April the battalion marched toward the South Side Railroad, and during the day he rd of the fall of Petersburg. On the third of April it was in an engagement on the South Side Road.

The news of the fall of Richmond reabhed the battalion on the fourth of April, while following up Lee's army. During the day it was in an engagement at Devil's Ford. On the fifth of April it assisted in cutting the Danville Railroad and capturing three hundred wagons of General Lee's trains.

It took part in the battle of Sailor's Creek, on the sixth of April, that resulted in the capture of General Ewell and about ten thousand men of General Lee's army, together with their artillery trains and supplies. On the seventh of April it continued in pursuit of Lee's army, marching on their left flank and skirmishing nearly all the way. On the eighth of April it Marched rapidly to Appomattox Station, on the Lynchburg Railroad, and assisted in capturing five trains of cars loaded with Rebel supplies, and during the night twenty-two pieces of artillery.

On the morning of the memorable ninth of April, Sheridan's cavalry having formed in line of battle across Lee's line of retreet, the battalion was dismounted and deployed as skirmishers immediately in front of the enemy. When the army of Northern Virginia attempted to advance that morning it found every foot of ground stubbornly contested. For some time this spirited engagement was kept up, the Rebels expecting to break through the cavalry and escape. While this was going on, the Fifth, Twentyfourth, and part of the Twenty-fifth Corps came up and formed in rear of the cavalry, which gradually moved to the right flank to allow them to come into action. When their long line of battle advanced under General Ord, the veberans of the best Rebel army, who had fought for four years vainly, but too well, saw that their doom was sealed. They stopped firing and slowly fell back around Appomattox Court House, the Union troops following and hemming them in on all sides. Soon a white flag, in token of surrender, was presented to Sheridan's Cavalry, an honor they well merited, and hostilities ceased. Early in the afternoon the battalion had the pleasure of witnessing the meeting of the General-in-Chief of the armies of the United States and the General-in-Chief of the Rebel armies, and soon after the formal surrender of the army of Northern Virginia.

On the tenth of April the battalion commenced its march with the cavalry forces back to Petersburg, arriving and going into camp on the south side of that city on the nineteenth. There it was prepared to move with Sheridan's command to the assistance of General Sherman in North Carolina.

On the twenty-fourth of April it marched for that destination, but when near the North Carolina line news was received of the surrender of General Johnston's army to General Sherman, when it returned with other cavalry to Petersburg, remaining there in camp until the tenth of May, when the battaion marched toward Washington, arriving near Alexandria on the sixteenth of May.

It participated in the grand review at Washington on the twenty-third of May, where the California companies' colors

were greeted with enthusiasm by the highest and bravest in the land. Soon after the review it went into camp near Fairfax Court House, where it remained on picket and guard duty until it was mustered out of the United States service on the twentieth of July, 1865.

After being mustered out it proceeded to Camp Meigs, Readville, Massachusetts, where it was paid off, discharbed, and disbanded on the third of August, the companies having been through nearly two and a half years of hard service in the field and participated in over fity engagements.

Four hundred officers and enlisted men weremustered into the battalion at San Francisco, of which number only one hundred and forty-eight remained to be mustered out at its final discharge from the service. Many were killed in battle or died in the service; some were missing and unaccounted for; a large number were discharged from time to time on account of wounds or disability, and thirty of the enlisted men were promoted to commissioned officers in various regiments.*

In conclusion it is interesting to note that the regimental flags carried by the California Hundred and California Battalion in their victorious engagements against the Southern soldiers in the War of the Rebellion are still in existence. The flags have been mounted and are on exhibit in the Rotunda of the State Capitol at Sacramento, California. There are three flags, namely: the "Guidon or Bear flag"; the Pennant and the Colors of American flag commemorating the troops that composed the California Hundred and California Battalion. The Ergest and most elaborate of the three, (the American flag) is made of heavy linen and interwoven with strands of silk equally as heavy. The blue back ground of the flag is symbolic

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*Activities of regiment taken from a letter written November 15, 1867, by Major D. W. C. Thompson and addressed to Brigadier General George S. Evans, Adjutant General of California. Refer to Pages 849-853, "Record of California Men in the War of the Rebellion", (1890).

of the field of their operations which are described in letters of red, blue and gold. The three upper red stripes tell of the "armies" they served in while the fourth and fifth signify the organizations of "California Hundred" and "California Cavalry Battalion", enwreathed by green laurel leaves. The white stripe between these two red ones designates their numerical strength. The two lower red stripes show memorable events they participated in and the six remaining white stripes portray the fifty battles and skirmishes they engaged in.

Before boarding the S. S. Constitution on March 21, 1863, on leaving San Francisco for the seat of war, the "California Caval-ry Battalion" United States Volunteers, organized and commanded by Major Dewitt Clinton Thompson, was reviewed, inspected and highly complimented by Brigadier General Wright, United States Army, commanding the Department of the Pacific, and on that eventful occasion the Battalion carried as an honored gift, the large silk banner just described.

This flag was later seen and saluted by President Lincoln, and cheered at receptions and parades in Eastern cities. After the close of the Rebellion in 1865, it was brought back to San Francisco by Major Thompson. The Major then had the silken folds of the flag emblazoned with the records of both the "Galifornia Cavalry Battalion" and "California Hundred," as the two forces merged into the Second Massachusetts Cavalry Regiment. They served together in Maryland and Virginia and were there known unofficially as "The Californians".*