

**History of Battery A, Field Artillery;  
Battery A, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Field Artillery;  
Battery A, 1<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery Regiment;  
California National Guard  
1911-1917**

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BATTERY A

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Battery A, Field Artillery, First Brigade  
Reference: Adjutant General's Files  
Location: Los Angeles, Los Angeles County

Organized May 29, 1911  
Reconstituted December 20, 1912\*  
Mustered into Federal Service June 28, 1916\*\*  
Mustered out of Federal Service December 30, 1916\*\*\*  
Resumption of Service in the National Guard 1916\*\*\*\*  
Mustered into Federal Service July 24, 1917.  
Redesignated September 24, 1917\*\*\*\*\*

<u>Name</u>	<u>Commanding Officers</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
R. A. Ford, Captain (resigned January 18, 1915)		May 29,	May 29, 1911
Jessie McClomas, Captain		Feb. 2, 1915	Mar. 15, 1915

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\*Battery A, Field Artillery, redesignated Battery A, First Battalion Field Artillery, December 20, 1912.  
General and Special Orders and Circulars 1912, General Order No. 26.

\*\*Battery A, as part of the First Battalion Field Artillery mustered into Federal Service for duty on the Mexican Border, June 28, 1916.  
Adjutant General Report 1914-1920, page 14.

\*\*\*Adjutant General Report 1914-1920, page 14.

\*\*\*\*General and Special Orders and Bulletins 1916, General Order No. 34,  
page 150.

\*\*\*\*\*Battery A, First Field Artillery mustered into Federal Service July 24, 1917. Muster Roll, Battery A, First Field Artillery July 1917.  
Adjutant General Files.

\*\*\*\*\*Battery A, First Field Artillery, redesignated Battery A, 143rd Field Artillery, September 24, 1917.  
Adjutant General Report 1920-1926, page 32.



BATTERY A (Continued)

<u>Commanding Officers (Continued)</u>		
<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Jessie McClomas, First Lieutenant (promoted Capt. Feb. 2, 1915)	Oct. 11, 1907*	May 29, 1911
P. H. Montgomery, First Lieut. (resigned May 15, 1915)	Feb. 2, 1915	Mar. 15, 1915
Walter Luer, First Lieutenant	June 1, 1915	June 25, 1915
N. F. Jamieson, First Lieutenant (resigned Oct. 23, 1911)	May 29, 1911	May 29, 1911
G. B. Decker, First Lieutenant (resigned July 8, 1912)	Nov. 21, 1911	Dec. 22, 1911
S. C. Haver, Jr., First Lieut. (resigned May 12, 1915)	July 30, 1912	Aug. 7, 1912
H. G. Ferguson, First Lieutenant	June 1, 1915	June 25, 1915

Activities:

On May 29, 1911, Battery A, Field Artillery located in Los Angeles was mustered into State Service under the command of Captain R. A. Ford, and attached to the First Brigade.

Until the organization of Battery A, there had not been a breech-loading artillery piece, or a battery of field artillery in the California National Guard. This condition was not only prevalent in California, but in the Organized Militia of the other states as well. Field Artillery service was popular with people generally, and for that reason an adequate personnel could be secured were it not for other existing conditions which more than offset the popularity of that branch of the service. The great hindering force was expense. A battery of artillery was estimated to cost twice as much to maintain as an entire regiment of infantry, having ten times as many men. Appropriations by State Legislatures being largely contingent upon numbers of enlisted men in the Organized Militia, and one of the Federal appropriations of \$2,000,000 having been distributed according to the numbers of Organized Militia also, a battery would get only about 1/10 as much money as a regiment of infantry. In other words the Field Artillery soldier costs the State about 20 times as much as the Infantryman. The State felt that such a burden was too heavy to carry, and that opinion was strengthened by the claim that a Battery was unnecessary for State purposes; that they would not

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\*Lieutenant McClomas retained his former rank date as of October 11, 1907, when he commanded Troop D Cavalry.



BATTERY A (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

dare to fire it during a strike or riot; that there was no danger of a State being invaded by the forces of another State and that Field Artillery was therefore purely a Federal arm. Under such conditions it was declared to be asking too much of the State to support an adequate number of batteries. Undoubtedly the reasoning of the State authorities was sound and the only solution seemed to be more liberal support from the Federal Government.

The sole reason given for the necessity of field artillery was its ability to assist the other arms, especially the infantry, upon the field of battle. The degree to which the field artillery prepares itself to render this assistance is then the only measure of its training and efficiency. To enable it to render effective assistance on a battlefield, artillery must be able, first, to march rapidly and in good order; and to establish itself, promptly, and without confusion, in such positions as will best utilize the available terrain; second, it must be able to deliver an effective and overpowering fire upon any designated part of the enemy's position. Thorough training in marching, camping, reconnaissance and communication service, fire discipline, conduct of fire and fire direction, conducted over varied country, was essential to the attainment of these qualifications.

In order to maintain a high standard of efficiency in the science of modern warfare, Battery A attended many encampments. From August 11 to 21, 1912 the Battery attended the war maneuvers in the vicinity of Salinas in conjunction with the regular United States Army forces. Battery A left Los Angeles four hours later than the schedule provided. The delay, caused principally by the absolute failure of the horse contractor to furnish the grade and class of draft and saddle animals he had agreed to supply. Eighteen head of horses had to be left at the railroad station, and others obtained, causing a delay of over two hours. At the Armory there was a delay of one hour in obtaining horses to replace those rejected by the battery commander for various reasons.

August 11 The battery detrained at Coyote at 3:45 P. M., where it was met by First Lieutenant J. R. Brabson, Second Field Artillery, United States Army assigned as its Inspector. Seven days were spent at Coyote and were devoted to practice in draft, gun drill, occupancy of positions and drill in fire discipline for the men.



BATTERY A (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

For the officers, there were terrain rides, instructions in the use of the B. C. Telescope, map reading and the preparation of firing data. It was necessary to march five miles to reach the drill field assigned to Battery A and in this way draft practice and instructions were combined with Battery drill. The thorough and tactful methods of instruction and the frank and instructive criticism of Lieutenant Brabson resulted in a marked gain in efficiency for the whole command, and it was only just and fair to Lieutenant Brabson that the attention of the Adjutant General was called to his untiring efforts to instruct and help the officers and men of Battery A.

August 17

Battery A, with the First Battery of Utah, left Coyote enroute to join the "Red Army" at Gilroy. Camp was made that night at Morgan Hill, where the Battery was met by an officer and guided to camp. Watering places were designated and full instructions given to the battery commander.

August 18

Battery A, with the Utah Battery, continued its march to Gilroy and joined the "Red Army" at 12:40 P. M. At Gilroy a provisional battalion of field artillery, composed of the Utah Battery and Battery A, was organized by the Brigade Commander and placed under command of Captain Webb of Utah.

August 19

The provisional battalion left Gilroy with the "Red Army" at 5:00 A. M. enroute to Morgan Hill, which was reached at 3:45 P. M. At 4:15 P. M. Captain Webb and Captain R. A. Ford of Battery A, accompanied by Lieutenants



BATTERY A (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

Haver and Montgomery, Battery A, and Gundry of Utah, made a reconnaissance toward Coyote, but they were uninformed as to the plans of the Brigade Commander and Chief of Staff, so could only get a general idea of the country and conditions under which the Artillery might have to operate.

August 20

Was the only day the Field Artillery had an opportunity to get into action and benefit by actual work under maneuver conditions, as well as that afforded by acting in conjunction with the infantry. The Battery occupied two positions, firing in support of infantry from one. Reconnaissance was made for three others, one of which was chosen by the battalion commander for the Utah Battery and from which that Battery fired.

August 21

Battery A entrained for Los Angeles arriving there August 22, at 4:20 P. M.

From August 29 to 31, 1913, Battery A held a camp of instruction for target practice at Centinella Ranch, near Los Angeles. Again in 1914, from September 5 to 7, Battery A held a camp of instruction for target practice near Los Angeles.

On August 14, 1911, Adjutant General E. A. Forbes received word from Washington to the effect that Captain Dennis H. Currie of the Third Field Artillery, United States Army, had been assigned by the War Department as Instructor for Field Artillery, Battery A at Los Angeles and Battery B at Oakland, and that he would report for duty at once. It would be work to train the artillerymen of the California National Guard to properly man the big guns that had just been received from the east.\*

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\*Los Angeles Herald, August 15, 1911, page 1, column 4.



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BATTERY A (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

Equipment for Battery A that had arrived in Los Angeles during the early part of August 1911, was rapidly being assembled at the temporary armory of the Battery at Exposition Park. The guns which were presented to the State by the Government, were of the latest model and the same as those used by the Regular Army, and cost \$150,000 with all accessories. In the equipment were four 3 inch field guns, eight caissons, one forge wagon, one kit wagon; and the full battery at peace strength was 128 men and 5 officers. At that time field artillery was very scarce in the army, the ratio being but one gun to every 2,000 infantrymen.

In 1908, Congress appropriated \$700,000 toward equipping the National Guard of the United States with field artillery. Officials of California were anxious to get the State's share of the allotment, and through the efforts of Adjutant General E. A. Forbes it finally succeeded. The War Department had issued material for Battery A, several months previous, and after many delays in transit from the arsenals it arrived in Los Angeles, and was being rapidly assembled under the supervision of Captain R. A. Ford of Battery A and Sergeant D. H. Smith of the United States Army. Captain Ford, to whom the credit was given for organizing Battery A, stated the battery was being recruited from the best young men in Los Angeles, and that about 80 percent of them were college men. The battery appealed to them on account of the fact that it was mounted. To move the battery mounted required the use of 96 horses, six horses to each gun and caisson, and a number of individually mounted men beside the officers.\*

On September 10, 1911, under a hot sun, members of Battery A pulled their cannon into the open from the convention hall at Exposition Park and without the aid of artillery horses went through the maneuvers of a field battery in action during war time. The guardsmen, among whom were several millionaires and many clubmen, worked without complaint at swinging the field pieces about the grounds. Perspiring freely, the citizen soldiers who would become crack artillerymen if their country needed them to combat a foreign power, dragged the stubborn dogs of war over ruts in the road and through several inches of dust that rose in clouds like battle smoke about them. The day marked the battery's first drill with real cannon. Captain R. A. Ford, with a drill book in one hand and sword in the other, put his men through everything in the artillery manual

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\*Los Angeles Herald, August 20, 1911, page 8, column 1.



BATTERY A (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

of arms. First the guardsmen swung the small guns into the open from their quarters in the convention hall, several society favorites performing work usually done by army mules. The huge field pieces were then aimed at an imaginary enemy with the guardsmen bending low to escape the hail of shot and shell. The guns were then loaded, the cranks were turned rapidly and although the little hammers struck with lightning like rapidity on empty chambers there was not a guardsman present who in his imagination could not hear the death rattle of the machine guns and the clatter of his battery's bullets in the ranks of the opposing forces. Following several broadsides the guns were shifted to another part of the field, where they were dismantled as a course of instruction, put together again and thrown into action against another imaginary foe. After several hours of hard drilling without army mules the guardsmen cached their guns in the convention building and in military order retired from the field. The drills were to be repeated until the battery had attained the perfection of regulars.\*

On September 23, 1911, Battery A together with the other units of the National Guard received an emergency call from the War Department to test the strength of the National Guardsmen and to ascertain the length of time required to place them in the field. The telegram to Brigadier-General Robert Wankowski commanding the First Brigade was as follows:

"War is declared. The enemy has landed in the Gulf of California and is marching north. What force can you place between him and Los Angeles, and how soon can you take the field? Most urgent haste imperative. Answer at once."

General Wankowski's reply was as follows:

"Seventh Infantry Regiment assembling now. Four companies, battery of artillery, cavalry troop, detachment signal corps have left city to intercept and harrass enemy. Will have 1500 men in field in 24 hours, full equipment for campaign."

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\*Los Angeles Herald, September 11, 1911, page 12, column 3.



BATTERY A (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

The entire National Guard of the Southern California district could be assembled in Los Angeles within a period of 24 hours; not ready for parade or drill or to attend a banquet, but ready to take the field, fully equipped for a campaign of whatever length of time the situation might demand. The following is a list of the forces that could be assembled to defend Los Angeles or to hasten from the city to some other point which might be menaced:

Seventh Regiment of Infantry	750 men
Battery A, 4 field guns	130 men
Troop D Cavalry	64 men
Signal Corps	50 men
Naval Militia	200 men
Coast Artillery	250 men
Total	1,444 men

With field and staff officers this number would be increased to one thousand five hundred, ready within the space of a single day to heed the call of "Uncle Sam" and form for battle.

In case of most urgent necessity the time of mobilization could be reduced to not more than 12 hours, for special trains could be run from the various out of town points to bring the soldiers to Los Angeles. The entire citizen soldiery of the State could be assembled for battle in San Francisco within 48 hours from the time orders for such mobilization were received and the entire State Guard could be brought together in Los Angeles within 60 hours. The peaches and cream days of the soldiery were past. The California Guardsmen were now soldiers in every sense of the word. Not only were the modern Guardsmen equipped in every way the same as their Regular Army brothers but were subject to orders into the service of the United States without even the formality of asking their consent. They were regularly enlisted in the National service and must obey orders the same as though they were in barracks, field or camp; and when the California National Guardsmen went forth to answer "the call", it would not be as their elder brother went in 1898. At that time the guardsmen were poorly equipped, scantily clothed, indifferently disciplined and had never had any experience in the field. All this was now changed. Each year the militiamen must go into the field with the Regular Army and taste the bitter dust of the long, hard "Hike", endure the gruelling rigors of the unspectacular sham battle and camp, not in some pleasure park but just as he may be called upon to camp when his services are needed by the nation.



BATTERY A (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

If anyone had the idea that even "mock" campaigning was in any way related to a pink tea or a floral fete, let him load himself down as the militia soldier must be loaded and then go out and walk twenty miles across plowed ground or over logs and rocks or through the dust.

The following is the equipment of every soldier in the ranks:

1 rifle	1 uniform and hat
1 bayonet	2 pairs shoes
1 canteen	2 undersuits
1 haversack	4 pairs socks
1 meat tin	1 pair blankets
1 tin cup	1 rubber poncho
1 first aid package	1 shelter half
1 bandolier containing 120 cartridges	

This equipment weighed about fifty-six pounds. There was nothing that could resemble tin soldiering when one was burdened with such a load.

The soldier of today had the great advantage over the soldier of the past in that he was not required to carry the "knapsack", fabled in song and story. Perhaps its absence removed a picturesque touch, for in all of the paintings of the soldiery of the past, the private in the ranks is pictured with a hunched back weighted down by a great burden. But what is lacking in picturesqueness is made up for by comfort. The soldier has no knapsack now. He rolls his extra clothing, his towel, his comb and soap inside his blankets and the rubber poncho is wrapped around all of them. He then slings the roll over his left shoulder and lashes the two ends where they come together beneath his right arm.\*

On March 17, 1912, Battery A and Companies F and C of the Seventh Infantry practiced war tactics, target shooting, scouting and drills in Santa Monica canyon under command of Colonel W. G. Schreiber. The two line companies were commanded by Captain F. R. Reynolds and Battery A was under command of Lieutenant S. C. Haver.

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\*Los Angeles Herald, September 24, 1911, page 4, column 1.



BATTERY A (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

Sunday morning was given over to target practice and the details of camp duty and scouting. In the afternoon there was a sham battle, one detachment led by Lieutenant J. K. Crum and the other by Lieutenant Haver.\*

On April 23, 1912, following the sudden departure of the cruiser Maryland from Los Angeles harbor for San Diego and possibly for Magdalena Bay the National Guard began making preparations to answer a call for duty in Mexico or along the border. While the infantry was drilling, Battery A was preparing for field duty. Within one hour, the Battery was declared by an officer to have its full complement of men and equipment and could be ready to entrain within 3 hours after receiving marching orders for the movement into service. Battery A's full quota of enlistment was 138 members and the command could be brought up to that number in a few days if necessary. Quarters of the Battery were at the state building in Exposition Park, and four 3 inch field guns of 1905 model, from the Frankford arsenal were housed there. The members of the battery were well versed in the theory of modern warfare, and had engaged in a number of practice marches with the guns.

The battery was divided into five sections, each in charge of a sergeant. Each sergeant carried a list of the men in his section, together with their addresses and night and day phone numbers. Within one hour after a call to service reached Captain Ford, it was communicated to his First Sergeant, W. H. Bushnell, thence to each of the other five sergeants, the men could be located and given the order for assembly. By centralizing the forces at Battery quarters in Exposition Park, the battery could be on the railroad cars for "the front" within 4 hours of the moment of receiving the first notice of marching orders.\*\*

By April 26, 1912, Battery A was in receipt of orders calling upon it to recruit to full strength. Horsemen were needed for service, and many noted equestrians from Southern California offered their services for the emergency. Battery A was of a type suited for quick action in rough country and this fact was

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\*Los Angeles Herald, March 18, 1912, page 7, column 3.

\*\*Los Angeles Herald, April 24, 1912, page 3, column 4.



Activities: (Continued)

considered an explanation of the imperative orders to recruit to full strength. Several machinists were needed for the battery and recruiting officers with headquarters at Exposition Park were seeking applications for these.\* Fortunately it did not become necessary for Battery A to go to the Mexican Border.

On May 30, 1912, Battery A participated in an impressive ceremony in Los Angeles in which patriotic citizens of all ages, from tiny children to tottering veterans, paid tribute to the soldiers and sailors of the Union who, on land and sea, had sacrificed their lives in the service of the nation. At 9:00 A. M. members of the Roosevelt Camp No. 9, of the Spanish-American War Veterans, assembled at the Seventh Infantry Regimental Armory. At 9:30 A. M. a procession headed by a platoon of police who were followed in turn by Companies A, B, C, and F, Seventh Infantry, Troop D Cavalry, the Signal Corps and Battery A marched through the downtown streets to Soldiers Monument at Central Park where impressive ceremonies in honor of the small number, but none the less, great soldiers, who died in the Spanish-American War, were held.\*\*

On December 20, 1912, a year after the organization of Battery A, General Order No. 26 was issued. The Order organized Batteries A, B, and C into a battalion of artillery to be known and designated as the First Battalion Field Artillery. The new Battalion was placed under command of Major Ralph Faneuf, former Captain of Battery B.

On November 5, 1913, Battery A participated in the celebration at San Fernando, that marked the completion of a new Aqueduct. Chief Engineer Mulholland, blushing like a school boy, pressed the silver-tipped button setting off the signal to open the flood gates above the 200 foot cascade. Seventy thousand people were on hand to see the water come billowing down from the mountains. San Fernando Valley and Los Angeles joined hands in a celebration that would be remembered as a monument to the ability of the engineers who conceived and executed the plan. Never before in the history of Southern California was such a sight seen, such loyalty displayed or such a tribute paid to the

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\*Los Angeles Herald, April 27, 1912, page 1, column 1.

\*\*Los Angeles Herald, May 30, 1912, pages 1 and 2, columns 2 and 4.



## Activities; (continued)

achievement of men. Staid business men, free for the day, joined hands with roughly dressed ranchers. Cheers resounded from the brown sage covered hills. For 15 minutes the crowd kept up the cheering in a wild burst of enthusiasm. When the Catalina military band arrived at 11:00 A. M. the hills surrounding the cascades were dark with people. Clad in their khaki uniforms the National Guardsmen added a touch of dignity to the multi-colored gathering. For a time the terse commands of the officers rang out through the air as the members of Battery A placed the field guns in position to fire a salute.\*

A review of National Guard troops stationed in Los Angeles was held on the night of July 29, 1914, under the direction of Colonel W. G. Schreiber, at the formal opening of the new \$200,000 armory in Exposition Park. Adjutant General E. A. Forbes reviewed the troops as a special representative of Governor H. W. Johnson. Five companies of the Seventh Infantry were presented in review, and then gave an exhibition in fantry drill. Battery A gave a standing gun drill, and were in turn followed by Troop D Cavalry who presented a sabre drill.\*\*

On June 28, 1916, Battery A as part of the First Battalion, Field Artillery was mustered into Federal Service at Sacramento for duty on the Mexican Border. Battery A entrained for Nogales, Arizona, on June thirtieth, and arrived there July third. The Battery did not engage in active service but performed only guard and patrol duty along the border until December 22, 1916 when they returned to Los Angeles. Battery A remained encamped in Exposition Park in Los Angeles until December thirtieth, when they were mustered out of Federal Service.

On June 22, 1917, Battery A was redesignated Battery A, First Field Artillery. One month later July 24, 1917, Battery A was mustered into Federal Service for duty during the World War, and on September 24, 1917, was redesignated Battery B, One Hundred and Forty-Third Field Artillery.

For further information concerning this unit, refer to the History of Battery A, 143rd Regiment Field Artillery, 40th Division.

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\*Los Angeles Herald, Nov. 5, 1913, pages 1 and 2, Columns 8 and 1.

\*\*Los Angeles Herald, July 29, 1914, page 10, column 2.