

History of the Nevada Light Guard, California Militia/National Guard of California 1863-1880

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NEVADA LIGHT GUARD

Nevada Light Guard, First Division, Fourth Brigade

Reference: Dead Office File, Row 4, File 7

Location: Nevada City, Nevada County

Mustered in April 18, 1863

Reorganized March 19, 1880*

Commanding Officers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
N. W. Knowlton, Captain (Promoted to Major, Fifth Infantry Battalion, Fourth Brigade, December 15, 1864. Promoted to Colonel, Fifth Infantry Regiment, August 25, 1866.)	April 18, 1863	June 12, 1863
Warren E. Pressey, First Lieut.	April 18, 1863	June 12, 1863
N. W. Knowlton, Captain (Re-elected 1864)	_____	_____
Jno. A. Lancaster, First Lieut. (Promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, Aid-de-Camp, Governor's Staff, January 10, 1872.)	April 18, 1864	May 16, 1864
Jno. A. Lancaster, Captain	April 17, 1865	April 24, 1865
Francis H. Fisher, First Lieut.	April 17, 1865	April 24, 1865
Jno. A. Lancaster, Captain (Re-elected April 5, 1866)	_____	_____
Marcellus S. Deal, First Lieut.	April 5, 1866	April 22, 1866
Marcellus S. Deal, Captain	Nov. 11, 1871	Dec. 13, 1871
John A. Rapp, First Lieut.	Nov. 11, 1871	Dec. 13, 1871
John A. Rapp, Captain	Nov. 11, 1873	Jan. 10, 1874
Alexander Gault, First Lieut.	Nov. 11, 1873	Jan. 10, 1874
John A. Rapp, Captain (Re-elected 1875)	_____	_____
William J. Organ, First Lieut.	Dec. 6, 1875	Dec. 8, 1875
John A. Rapp, Captain (Re-elected Nov. 28, 1877)	_____	_____
William J. Organ, First Lieut. (Re-elected Nov. 28, 1877)	_____	_____
John A. Rapp, Captain (Re-elected Nov. 29, 1879)	_____	_____
George A. Gray, First Lieut.	Nov. 29, 1879	Dec. 5, 1879

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*Nevada Light Guard redesignated Battery C, First Artillery Regiment, Fourth Brigade, March 19, 1880. Adjutant General Report 1880, Special Order No. 19, page 76.

NEVADA LIGHT GUARD
Reference: DEPT OFFICE FILE NO. 4 FILE 1
NEVADA LIGHT GUARD

NEVADA LIGHT GUARD (Continued)

Activities:

At a meeting held in Nevada City on April 18, 1863, the Nevada Light Guard was organized and the following officers were elected: N. W. Knowlton, Captain; Warren E. Pressey, First Lieutenant; Wm. H. Davidson, Senior Second Lieutenant; and Charles Carrol Leavit as Junior Second Lieutenant.

The volunteer company of Nevada City which started out under the title of Nevada Light Guard, Fourth Brigade, was continually in service for forty-four years, although the designation of the company was changed many times. Sometimes the reorganization was done in an effort to raise the lowering membership of the corps or to check the inefficiency which resulted in a loss of interest in the company by the members, and then again it was of a general nature of reorganization of the entire State Militia. At the time of the reorganization of the unit, the National Guard of California was divided into three brigades; and the companies dropped their former titles, using only alphabetical letters for designation.

Brigadier General Howell of the Fourth Brigade appointed Major E. F. Bean, September 29, 1864, as Inspector to superintend and conduct an organization of a Volunteer Battalion and election of a Major for the Battalion. This newly formed battalion would include the Nevada Light Guard, Grass Valley Union Guard, Little York Union Guard, and the Eureka Rangers, and was to be designated as the Fifth Infantry Battalion of the Fourth Brigade. The meeting was held, November 19, 1864, one o'clock P. M., at the armory of the Nevada Light Guard in Nevada City, and Captain Knowlton was elected Major of the Battalion.

Under the Military Law of 1866, the Nevada Light Guard was combined with other companies and was redesignated, August sixth of that year, as Company B, Nevada Light Guard of the Fifth Infantry, National Guard of California. On February 19, 1872, another change was made. Several regiments were combined and the unit was to be designated as Company C, Nevada Light Guard, Fourth Infantry Regiment, Fourth Brigade. On the thirty-first day of March 1877, several companies were disbanded to be reorganized into a new battalion. This change gave the unit the title of Company C, of the First Battalion of Infantry, Fourth Brigade.

The activities of this volunteer unit were many and varied in their aspects. The first military activity that the Nevada Light Guard participated in was when the unit attended the ten day Encampment of the Fourth Brigade held at Camp Kibbe, Oak Knoll, September 18 1863. Oak Knoll was located one mile north of Washington, Yolo County on the west bank of the Sacramento River. Being a newly organized.

NEVADA LIGHT GUARD (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

unit of the State Militia, this encampment training gave the members of the Nevada Light Guard an opportunity to learn regular military tactics and prepare themselves for future activities. The uniforms of the corps at this time consisted of dark blouses and trousers with regulation caps. The subsistence for the company during the Encampment was reported as follows:

Meat	516 lbs.
Bread	357 Loaves
Vegetables	561 lbs.
Beans	29 lbs.
Butter	44 lbs.
Pork	20 lbs.
Sugar	130 lbs.
Coffee	34 lbs.
Tea	4 lbs.
Syrup	6 gal.
Vinegar	3 gal.
Salt	9 lbs.
Pepper	3 cans
Pickles	2 gal.
Candles	3½ boxes
Rice	34 lbs.
Soap	13 lbs.

On November 8, 1863, a fire occurred which nearly consumed the town of Nevada City. Many of the fire-proof brick buildings, which had withstood the fires of 1856 and 1858, were destroyed, and the arms of the new military organization were stored in one of these brick buildings. The First Sergeant, with a number of privates, made several attempts to save the arms but had to desist because of the extreme heat. Adjutant General W. C. Kibbe issued Special Orders appointing an examining board to investigate the causes and circumstances of the destruction of the arms. This board met on February 17, 1864, and exonerated the officers and men of the guard from any blame for negligence in the care of the arms entrusted to them.

On January 17, 1865, Nevada County felt the effects of the "Big Scare", which was a report concerning the anticipated Secessionist trouble in the county. Information had been received on January seventeenth, that the Secessionists contemplated a raid on Nevada County. The Sheriff was certain the news, to the effect that the city was to be sacked and banks robbed, was authentic; and arms of the Nevada Light Guard were a prize for lawless men intent on increasing the Insurrection movement on the Pacific Coast. Families were moved to other quarters, some women and children having already been sent to the fortresses at

*Apparently a nickname given the Nevada Light Guard during those hectic hours.

*History of Nevada County, The ... & West, 1880, page 88.
 *Sacramento Family History, G. Walter Reed, 1923, page 243.

NEVADA LIGHT GUARD (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

Sugar Loaf. The Sheriff, indefatigably, mustered forces for defense of the city, then proceeded to fortify himself with old "Democratic whiskey". The Nevada Light Guard assembled at their armory where the Sheriff attempted to take command by not allowing the soldiers the privilege of going out to bid their wives a last adieu. The Court House was surrounded by a cordon of braves prepared for any deadly encounter with sixteen shooters, revolvers, hatchets, and knives. No enemy appeared and scouts were sent out to search every foot of ground between Nevada City and Grass Valley. The men kept an all night vigil lasting until the wee small hours of the morning but still no enemy appeared. As Captain Lancaster of the "Invincible Guard" would not surrender the entire command of his company to the Sheriff, the latter replied that, "the county was to be deprived of his valuable services as an officer," then retired to a game of "seven-up" in superlative disgust, resigning the city to a fate deserved by the insubordination of its inhabitants. In the midst of the game the gas light was extinguished and the Sheriff retired in not very good order.**

Many localities had trouble with groups of Secessionists in their midst and there was no doubt but that the report of the anticipated agitation did have some foundation, but on account of the manner in which the Sheriff attempted to forestall the difficulty, the whole affair turned into a farce.

Twice the Nevada Light Guard participated in festivities to celebrate the driving of the "Last Spike" for railroads in California. The first time was when the company went to Sacramento on May 9, 1869, to attend a Jubilee celebrating the completion of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads, which connected the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The last tie for this affair was made of California laurel and set in with silver plates which were to be held in place with spikes of rich metal. One spike was made of California's gold, one of Nevada's silver and one of Arizona's silver; and were driven in place by Leland Stanford, President of the Central Pacific Railroad, with a solid silver hammer. Wires were attached to the handle of this hammer so that with the first tap on the head of the spike at 12 P. M. (noon) the news was flashed to the entire American continent.***

The second time the company participated in a celebration of the completion of a railroad was for their home district. The Nevada County Narrow Gauge Railroad had finished the building of a road which would connect the two mountain mining towns, Grass Valley and Nevada City, with the outside world. On May 20, 1876, a large procession headed by the military companies and a band

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**History of Nevada County, Thompson & West, 1880, page 88.

***Sacramento County History, G. Walter Reed, 1923, page 243.

NEVADA LIGHT GUARD (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

marched to the depot to meet the first incoming train. A highly decorated and properly inscribed tie was prepared and two polished spikes fastened the last tie to the last rails, at which time a military salute was fired. The old cannon which had been set up on the summit of Sugar Loaf blazed forth to climax the ceremonies and the entire town indulged in a day of gaiety.*

Company B, Nevada Light Guard, as the company became known in 1866, participated in its second annual Parade and Target Practice on September 9, 1867, at Nevada City. Three prizes were given at this time to members, the Gold Medal, Leather Medal, and Pony Purse.

On October 23, 1866, a Bond for \$4,000 was taken up by John A. Lancaster, Henry Philip and Charles Marsh, for the unit, and on the twenty-eighth of December 1866, new uniforms and arms to the value of \$3,100 were received by the company. The question of uniforms was brought out in February of 1877, and Captain Rapp reported to Adjutant General P. F. Walsh, "that the uniforms belonging to the State are in a very bad condition and have been so for years", and "that shortly after he (Captain Rapp) took command of this unit he had the men newly uniformed (new regulations) which were paid for by the men." The Captain had written several times to Headquarters condemning the old uniforms and wishing to return them.

Between the years of 1873 and 1878, a great deal of the correspondence of this unit dealt with difficulties in obtaining supplies, such as the printed blanks for the various reports, arms, and clothing. The first complaint came from Captain M. S. Deal, April 5, 1873. Two years later, Captain John A. Rapp sent a requisition for new arms to the Adjutant General's Office. Receiving no reply to his request, the Captain wrote to Senator A. A. Sargent, asking the Senator to use his influence in obtaining the necessary arms. Evidently the Adjutant General wrote to Captain Rapp criticising the Captain for taking up the question of arms through channels other than the regular routine, as Captain Rapp answered the General's reprimand. The letter is as follows: (Exact copy)

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would increase, particularly as they were the only guard in the county. Besides the regular membership there were twenty exempt certificate members who were attached to the company and who were still active. Rifle practice was the only amusement for some of the members."

*History Nevada County, Thompson & West, 1880, Page 129.

referred to the report to meet the light rifle
activities: (Continued)

NEVADA LIGHT GUARD (Continued)

NEVADA LIGHT GUARD (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

Nevada City May 17th 1875

Adgt. Gen. L. H. Foote
Sacramento
Gen.

Having returned from a short trip in the mountains I find requisition for Springfield rifles returned. I was fully aware that the requisition should pass through the regular military channel. But Gen I have made three requisitions to Regimental Headquarters for Company Blanks and can not get them. The demand for annual allowance should have been sent on the 15th Inst. but I had no blanks to make the demand. Nor have I any blanks for the next monthly report. Can you blame me for sending a requisition direct to you when military matters are so poorly carried at Reg headquarters? I shall today make a requisition for blanks from Brig headquarters which I know is not proper and if they are not forthcoming from there I am at a loss to know where they are coming from.

Very Respt.

(Signed) John A. Rapp
Capt Comdg Nevada Light Guard

This act of Captain Rapp's, in writing to Senator Sargent, brought its results. The new arms were received; and when the old ones were returned, Captain Rapp reported "that they have long since gone to decay, as it is over twelve years since they were first received. The men are very much pleased with the new guns."

On April 11, 1876, Captain Rapp wrote to Adjutant General P. F. Walsh, protesting the request made that the company return part of their supply of guns, as the membership of the unit was never less than eighty--often ninety, and in the exchange for the new arms, the requisition was filled with seventy guns. Therefore, the company did not have enough guns to supply all the men. The Captain further reported, "that the men formed a Rifle Association, and it was believed that their membership would increase, particularly if the unit could have more guns, as they were the only guard in the county. Besides the regular membership there were twenty exempt certificate members who were attached to the company and who were still active. Rifle practice was the only amusement for some of the members."

NEVADA LIGHT GUARD (Continued)

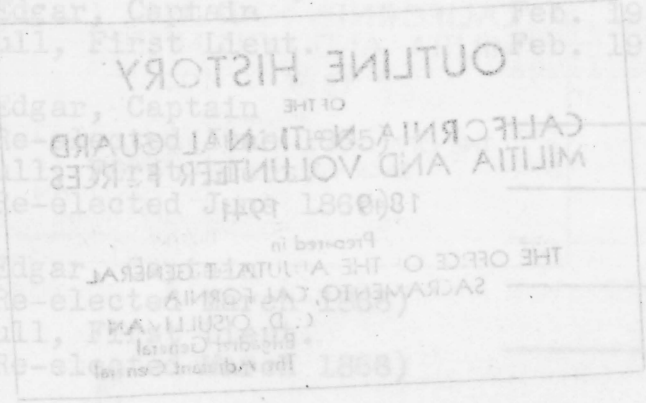
Activities: (Continued)

A new regimentation was made on March 19, 1880; and for further activities of the Nevada Light Guard, Company C, refer to Battery C, First Artillery Regiment, Fourth Brigade.

Mustered in April 21, 1863
Mustered out July 27, 1866

Commanding Officers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Elias Peterson, Captain (Resigned Oct. 9, 1863)	April 21, 1863	May 6, 1863
James Edgar, First Lieut.	April 21, 1863	May 6, 1863
James Edgar, Captain	Feb. 19, 1864	March 16, 1864
John Mull, First Lieut.	Feb. 19, 1864	March 16, 1864
James Edgar, Captain		
John Mull, First Lieut.		
James Edgar, Captain		
John Mull, First Lieut.		



Activities:

The Yolo Union Cavalry of Woodland, Yolo County, was organized at a meeting held in a private residence at Buckeye. The commanding officers elected were Elias Peterson, Captain and James Edgar, First Lieutenant. A Bond was filed for the arms which were received by the unit December 1863. Another Bond of \$2,000 was filed to cover cost of the clothing.

An election was held in February 1864 to fill the vacancy caused by Captain Peterson's resignation. The reason for the early election was to enable the officers to attend the Camp of Instruction at Camp Kibbe. Thirty-three members attended and wore the regulation caps, dark blue blouses, and dark trousers.

Although active and having an increased membership, the Yolo Union Cavalry was mustered out of service under the Military Law of 1865. This law was the outcome of a recommendation by Brigadier General G. S. Evans that the number of Cavalry companies in the State be reduced to ten, and as the Union Cavalry had no real reason for continuance, it was among the corps ordered to disband. * -7-