

History of the Oakland Light Cavalry, California Militia/National Guard of California 1878-1885

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OAKLAND LIGHT CAVALRY

Oakland Light Cavalry, unattached, Second Brigade

Reference: Adjutant General's Files

Location: Oakland, Alameda County

Mustered in September 23, 1878

Redesignated July 22, 1885*

Commanding Officers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
William C. Little, Captain (Placed on retired list Jan. 17, 1882)	Sept. 23, 1878	Oct. 5, 1878
C. H. Woodward, First Lieut. (Resigned June 6, 1879)	Sept. 23, 1878	Oct. 28, 1878
T. H. Allen, First Lieut.	Aug. 18, 1879	Nov. 5, 1879
Louis L. Bromwell, Captain	Feb. 17, 1882	Feb. 18, 1882
W. H. H. Hussey, First Lieut. (Resigned March 23, 1882)	Aug. 29, 1881	Sept. 28, 1881
Webb M. Pearce, First Lieut.	May 29, 1882	June 8, 1882
Webb M. Pearce, Captain	May 9, 1883	June 16, 1883
George B. Flint, First Lieut.	May 9, 1883	June 16, 1883
Webb M. Pearce, Captain (Re-elected May 18, 1885)	_____	_____
George B. Flint, First Lieut. (Re-elected May 18, 1885)	_____	_____

Activities:

On May 3, 1878, Governor William Irwin, Commander-in-Chief of the National Guard, received a petition signed by forty-five residents of Oakland stating they were an organized, uniformed, and partly equipped cavalry company, desiring to be mustered into the National Guard. Three months later in August, Special Order No. 17 was issued by Adjutant General P. F. Walsh, commanding Brigadier-General John McComb to take the necessary action to muster in the cavalry company. Accordingly on September twenty-third the Oakland Light Cavalry company was mustered into the National Guard as an unattached unit. William C. Little was elected as Captain and C. H. Woodward was elected First Lieutenant.

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*Oakland Light Cavalry, unattached, redesignated Company F, Fifth Infantry Battalion July 22, 1885.
Adjutant General Report 1885-1886, General Order No. 18, page 70.

Adjutant General Report 1877-1878, page 75.
Adjutant General Report 1881-1882, page 138.
Adjutant General Report 1883-1884, page 109.

OAKLAND LIGHT CAVALRY (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

In the first Annual Inspection of 1879, this newly organized Light Cavalry received a percentage of 85.48, while the next highest cavalry company was 58.33.* Major Walter H. Homes, Inspector of the Second Brigade in his Report of 1882 made the following remark regarding the company:**

"The splendid appearance of this command, the efficiency of drill, the perfection of discipline, the excellent and well appointed armory, the mathematical nicety and extreme neatness and order shown in its records, as well as the care of equipment, arms, and all State property, calls for more than ordinary attention, and is deserving of the most warm commendation. This is indeed a fine command, and brings to the National Guard much credit, proving itself a source of pride to the whole Brigade. While the former commandant is deserving of much praise, yet to Captain Louis L. Bromwell belongs the award of merit which the excellence of his command compels. Both himself, officers, and men, evince the greatest interest in the affairs of not only their own company, but the National Guard as a body, and by their untiring energy, ability, and marked enthusiasm, they have succeeded in establishing the Oakland Light Cavalry as the pride of the Second Brigade."

That splendid report was undoubtedly due in a large part to Captain W. C. Little, the organizer and former commander. In January 1882, Captain Little tendered his resignation to the Governor, because of business matters beyond his control. His letter of resignation met with almost unanimous regret, and a long petition of members of the Oakland Light Cavalry and friends was filed with Major General Samuel W. Backus urging that Captain Little's resignation not be approved. Captain Little insisted that the resignation be accepted, which was finally granted, and Louis L. Bromwell was elected Captain to succeed him.

The Oakland Light Cavalry maintained their high standard of efficiency and in their Annual Inspection of 1884, scored an average percentage of 87.65, which was the highest rating attained by any cavalry unit.*** Likewise in target practice the company was unusually efficient. In 1881 the unit scored 48.93 per cent with carbines and in 1883 the troop averaged 50 per cent with the regulation

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*Adjutant General Report 1877-1879, page 75.

**Adjutant General Report 1881-1882, page 138.

***Adjutant General Report 1883-1884, page 109.

OAKLAND LIGHT CAVALRY (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

army rifle. The efficiency of the Oakland Light Cavalry was due to the fact that the company had inaugurated monthly class matches in target practice, and held three matches with other companies. On July 22, 1879, the unit held a target match with the Washington Grey Troop of New York, each unit entering a team of ten men who fired ten shots at 300 yards. The Oakland Light Cavalry won the match by a margin of 153 points.

In July 1882 the Oakland Light Cavalry and companies F, G, and H of the Second Artillery, went into camp at Santa Cruz under command of Captain Mix of Company F. The expense of that encampment was borne entirely by the companies participating, no money having been appropriated by the Legislature for encampments of units less than an entire regiment.*

Only one muster roll is on file dated 1879, which indicates that the company took part in fifty-five assemblages during the year:

Mounted drills	2
Mounted parades	2
Dismounted parades	2
Inspection	1
For duty	1
Armory and Street drills	47
Total - -	55

For two years from 1877 to 1879 the National Guard was frequently called to arms during the period of unrest among the unemployed who had organized into unions and were holding demonstrations against the employment of Chinese labor, and vigorously protesting against the unrestricted entrance of the Chinese coolie laborers into the United State. Fortunately no serious disorders occurred in that period of unrest, due undoubtedly to the decision of the labor leaders to use the ballot to gain their goal. In several eastern States strikes and riots occurred, resulting in military intervention, but in California a Workingmen's Party was organized and ballots were used instead of bullets. The success of the Workingmen's Party at the polls in 1879 and the general agitation against the Chinese laborer throughout the country, led to the final adoption of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, thereby eliminating one of the main causes of the unrest so prevalent in the period of 1872 to 1882.

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*Adjutant General Report 1881-1882, page 14.

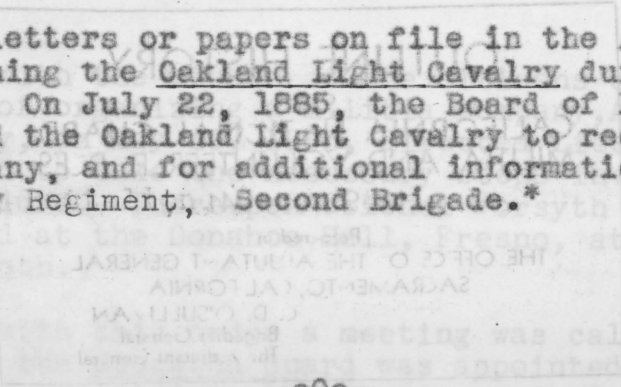
OAKLAND LIGHT CAVALRY (Continued)

Reference: Adjutant General's Files
Activities: (Continued)

Organized June 15, 1885
On August 23, 1879, the Oakland Light Cavalry received orders to assemble in their armory and be ready to march to San Francisco during one of the most serious situations encountered in the Chinese trouble. However, the company was not called to the city, but was dismissed after two days vigil. That was the last time the Oakland Light Cavalry was called to arms during a labor difficulty until the Railroad Strike of 1894.

Activities:

There are no letters or papers on file in the Adjutant General's Office concerning the Oakland Light Cavalry during the years of 1883 to 1885. On July 22, 1885, the Board of Location and Organization ordered the Oakland Light Cavalry to reorganize into an infantry company, and for additional information refer to Company F, Fifth Infantry Regiment, Second Brigade.*



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In compliance with the order a meeting was called and Captain Eugene Lehe was appointed Secretary. Colonel [redacted] presided at the meeting and after the required number of signatures were obtained, the company of seventy men took the oath and were sworn in as a militia company of the National Guard. The newly organized unit adopted the name of Forsyth Guard in honor of their mustering officer. By a majority of votes, W. W. Muller was elected Captain and Stuart B. Wright elected First Lieutenant of the new company. In concluding the business of the meeting, a committee was appointed to procure uniforms for the men and a proposal was made that all members prepare themselves for the purpose of joining the State Encampment to be held at Santa Cruz in August, 1885. The following day the newly elected officers appeared before Major Gibson and Captain Lehe, the Board Examiners for the Third Brigade, and passed a very creditable examination.

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*Forsyth Guard, according to the organization papers and a newspaper item, was organized June 15, 1885. However, the Adjutant General's Report for 1885, page 6, records the date of organization as June 1, 1885.

**Adjutant General Report 1885-1886, General Order No. 18, Par. 1, page 70.

***Stockton Daily Independent, June 18, 1885, page 3, columns 1, 2.

****Adjutant General Report, 1885-1886, Special Order No. 18, page 70.