

History of the Russian River Rifles, California Militia/National Guard of California 1862-1868

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RUSSIAN RIVER RIFLES

Russian River Rifles, Company D, First Infantry Battalion, Second Brigade

Reference: Dead Office File, Row 5, File 8
 Location: Healdsburg, Sonoma County
 Mustered in November 29, 1862
 Mustered out January 11, 1868

Commanding Officers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
George Allison, Captain	Nov. 29, 1862	Dec. 10, 1862
John N. Bayley, First Lieut.	Nov. 29, 1862	Dec. 10, 1862
George Allison, Captain (Re-elected Nov. 30, 1863)	_____	_____
John N. Bayley, First Lieut. (Re-elected Nov. 30, 1863)	_____	_____
George Allison, Captain (Re-elected Dec. 2, 1864)	_____	_____
John O. Darren, First Lieut.	Dec. 2, 1864	_____
John N. Bayley, Captain	Oct. 13, 1866	Oct. 13, 1866
S. B. Martin, First Lieut.	Oct. 13, 1866	Nov. 18, 1866

Activities:

The Russian River Rifles, Company D, Healdsburg, Sonoma County, was organized November 29, 1862. The elected officers were George Allison, Captain and J. W. Bayley, First Lieutenant. The requisition for arms was approved December second, however, the Bond was not filed until August 21, 1863, when the company received their arms and accoutrements.

Healdsburg early in 1862 was the center of the Settlers and Land Owners dispute, and it was necessary for the Sheriff of Santa Rosa to call on the militia for aid in serving the writs of eviction. These writs of restitution were issued when Mr. Baillache sued the settlers on his ranch to avoid the Statute of Limitations. The trouble had been simmering over a period of years and the court's action in 1856 confirming the Land Titles in favor of Baillache and his wife caused the dispute to reach a climax. The Settlers joined together and prepared to resist the Sheriff and his posse which resulted in the necessity of the military force being called out.* It is assumed after the successful manner in which the militia handled the situation,

*Letter from Sheriff Bowles of Santa Rosa to Governor Leland Stanford, July 17, 1862, letter on file State Archives, State Capitol.

RUSSIAN RIVER RIFLES (Continued)

RUSSIAN RIVER RIFLES (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

the residents of Healdsburg decided the organization of a military corps was a wise precaution against a possible recurrence of the Settlers' and Land Owners' difficulties. Also as the County was the seat of a strong Secessionist Movement whose members were secretly plotting against the Union Cause, a constant surveillance was deemed necessary.*

The serious nature of the squatter movement in the vicinity was evident from the accusations that some of the officers and twenty of the men in the Russian River Rifles were under suspicion of holding sympathetic views with the squatters. The accusation developed from the fact that the Second Lieutenant J. J. Maxwell was the son of a squatter, the father living on the Yzebaco Ranch and that twenty-one of the men had assisted in resisting the Sheriff in the execution of the writs. The citizens and residents of Healdsburg sent in a petition where a citizen who was assisting the Sheriff in the execution of a writ of Restitution was assassinated supposedly by a member of the Russian River Rifles. General Kibbe ordered Captain Allison to remove the offenders from the company's ranks. After the offenders had been evicted, the corps' loyalty was established.

The company received their arms and accoutrements in order to be in readiness to check any plot under way whereby the Settlers would openly contest the civic authorities. However, the rumored combat did not take place and apparently the knowledge of an armed militia so near at hand had the desired effect of restoring peace and tranquility to a district fraught with friction for so many years.

Under the Military Law of 1866 the Russian River Rifles having an active membership of eighty-four were reorganized and a \$4,000 Bond was posted. This law was the outcome of a recommendation by Brigadier-General George S. Evans that many of the companies in the interior mining towns, where the population was transient could not keep up their organizations under the stringent membership requirements of the law, and the Board of Location and Organization disbanded all companies deemed unnecessary for the public good due to location in regard to defense purposes. This economy measure materially reduced the number of companies in the National Guard.

Despite the large and active membership of the Russian River Rifles at their reorganization, two years later in 1868 they were among the companies ordered disbanded and was mustered out of

*Letter from L. A. Norton, Healdsburg, to General Kibbe April 23, 1863, on file in Adjutant General's office.

RUSSIAN RIVER RIFLES (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

the State Service January 11, in pursuance to Special Order No. 1. This general disbandment was ordered by the Legislature as an economy measure and the reasons given were:*

1.-The interest of the commonwealth did not demand the maintainance of so large a force.		
2.-A number of companies were distributed and located far inland where it was entirely unnecessary to keep up the organization.		Commission Jan. 2, 1863 Dec. 31, 1862
3.-The Legislature reduced the military tax from five cents, to one and one-quarter cents on the one hundred dollars of the taxable property of this State.		Mar. 28, 1863
James W. Wilkinson, Captain (Re-elected Dec. 22, 1865)		
Robert G. Gilmore, First Lieut. (Promoted)*	Dec. 28, 1863	Jan. 5, 1864
James W. Wilkinson, Captain (Re-elected Dec. 22, 1865)		
Robert G. Gilmore, First Lieut. (Re-elected Dec. 22, 1865)		
Rodger Robinette, First Lieut. (Promoted)*	April 28, 1865	May / 20, 1865
James W. Wilkinson, Captain (Re-elected Dec. 22, 1865)		
Thomas Sawyer, First Lieut. (Re-elected Feb. 1, 1867)	Dec. 22, 1865	Jan. 3, 1866
James W. Wilkinson, Captain (Re-elected Feb. 1, 1867)	-000-	
John Kean, First Lieut. (Resigned Jan. 4, 1866)	Dec. 21, 1865	Jan. 12, 1867
Michael J. Donovan, First Lieut.	April 3, 1866	June 4, 1866

Activities:

On December 30, 1862, County Judge M. C. Blake ordered Colonel J. W. McKenzie to meet with a group of men at the Police Court Room in the City Hall, San Francisco, to open a book to receive the names of men ranging in ages from eighteen to forty-five

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*Lieutenant Robert G. Gilmore promoted to Captain of Russian Guard, San Francisco, April 1865.