

History of the Signal Corps, 3rd Brigade, National Guard of California 1895-1904

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SIGNAL CORPS (Continued)

Signal Corps, Third Brigade (formerly Signal Corps, Fourth Brigade)

Reference: Adjutant General's Files

Location: Stockton, San Joaquin County

Organized June 18, 1889

Mustered out July 23, 1895*

Reorganized, mustered in and stationed Sacramento July 23, 1895**

Mustered out January 5, 1904***

Commanding Officers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
J. Glick, First Lieutenant	June 25, 1889	Feb. 13, 1889
Frank W. Dudley, First Lieutenant (resigned Dec. 16, 1891)	Oct. 21, 1891	Nov. 24, 1891
Alexander L. Rossi, First Lieut.	Apr. 3, 1892	June 11, 1892
Frank Eshbach, First Lieutenant	Nov. 7, 1893	Jan. 18, 1894
Fred L. Martin, First Lieutenant (reelected Aug. 3, 1896)	Aug. 6, 1892	Aug. 6, 1892****
Edwin H. Harvey, First Lieutenant	Nov. 1, 1898	Mar. 20, 1899
Walter L. Williams, First Lieut.	Aug. 20, 1900	Oct. 24, 1900
Fred L. Martin, First Lieutenant	Jan. 6, 1902	Aug. 29, 1902

*Adjutant General Report 1895-1896, General Order No. 11, par. 5, page 76.

**A new company organized in Sacramento and designated Signal Corps, Third Brigade, July 23, 1895.

Adjutant General Report 1895-1896, General Order No. 11, par. 5, page 76.

***General and Special Orders and Circulars 1904, General Order No. 1, page 1. The Signal Corps, Third Brigade according to the Officer's Register on file in Adjutant General Office was mustered out May 11, 1904 in accordance with General Order No. 1, issued January 5, 1904.

****Lieutenant Martin retained his former commission as of August 6, 1892, when he commanded the Signal Corps, Fourth Brigade.

Adjutant General Report 1895-1896, General Order No. 11, page 76.

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SIGNAL CORPS (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

The Third Brigade Signal Corps was organized June 18, 1889, in Stockton. The unit remained in National Guard service with headquarters at Stockton, until July 23, 1895, when it was mustered out of service. A redesignation was also effected on the same day when the Fourth Brigade, Signal Corps located in Sacramento, was redesignated Signal Corps, Third Brigade.*

The group of citizens who organized the Signal Corps were determined if possible, to keep within its ranks, a membership of the communities finest young men. In accordance, they adopted a set of rigid By-Laws, one of which related to committees and reads as follows: There shall be a secret investigating Committee, to be appointed by a commanding officer on each application for membership, whose duty it shall be to examine into the eligibility, standing and character of all applicants for membership and report thereon to the commanding officer.

Each applicant was thoroughly investigated before being accepted or rejected by the committee in charge as noted in the following section of the By-Laws which pertained to applications:

Should any applicant for membership receive two or more blackballs, it shall be the duty of those casting blackballs, when called upon by the chairman so to do, to give their reasons in writing to the chairman of the cause or grounds thereof. The chairman shall at the next regular meeting, state the reasons (if any are given) to the corps, without exposing the names of the members casting blackballs; and if any members casting blackballs shall not have informed the chairman of their reason for so doing by the next regular meeting, and if no other objection be made, the applicant shall be declared elected; but if such reasons be disclosed, or other objections be made, privately or otherwise, then the ballot shall again be held, and if no more than one blackball appears, the candidate shall be declared elected; but if two or more appear he shall be rejected.

*Adjutant General Report 1895-1896, General Order No. 11, page 76.

SIGNAL CORPS (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

All persons elected to membership must pass at least seventy-five per cent of the examination on the Meyer System of United States Signalling as prescribed by General Order No. 2, 1897, before the Examining Committee, within thirty days after their election to membership. They shall immediately thereafter take the prescribed oath before a commissioned officer of the corps, and sign the corps' roll, and shall within sixty days thereafter, pass a satisfactory examination before the examining committee on the American Morse Code of Signaling.

Through the enforcement of these laws, the Signal Corps became an efficient unit, maintaining a high standard of efficiency for a number of years.

The military duties of the unit were somewhat varied and quite different to those of the infantry or artillery companies. Aside from the necessary infantry movements, the drill of the corps consisted of signalling with wands, flags, torches and heliographs. The troops were also taught the use of the telescope and the establishing and changing of stations. The Heliograph, one of the methods used extensively by the Signal Corps, was being perfected for use in case of a war or riot. While on maneuvers, the members of the Signal Corps would establish stations in surrounding towns or the distant Sierras and search out the dome of the State Capitol Building. During the year of 1891, the range of heliograph signalling had been extended over a distance of eighteen miles, compared to a twelve mile range through the use of flags.

Encampments were of major importance to the members of the Signal Corps as the unit was stationed in places where it was possible to obtain longer ranges in which to transmit messages. During July 1897, the men were stationed at Summit Valley where they encountered misfortune as well as an elevation record. An article from a local newspaper relates the incident as follows:*

"According to Assistant Adjutant-General Peeler, who returned from the camp of the Third Brigade, Signal Corps, National Guard of California at Summit Valley, Tuesday night, First Sergeant W. F. Bailey met with a mishap that came near costing him his life.

While returning from a trip to Summit Soda Springs, the Corps lost the trail and to ascertain their exact

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*Sacramento Bee, July 29, 1897, page 4, column 4.

SIGNAL CORPS (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

position, Bailey rode up a narrow and dangerous piece of ground, considerably higher than the immediate surrounding country. His horse slipped and fell a distance of about twenty feet, landing on its back and on top of the Sergeant. It happened that Bailey fell between two rocks and escaped the serious results which would have happened had he not been so fortunate in landing between the rocks, which kept the weight of the horse from crushing him. Bailey was considerably bruised about one of his legs, and the horse also received some injury.

The Signal men have been doing some good work with heliographs and flags, and communication was opened with camp from Castle Peak, on the extreme side of Summit Valley, 9000 feet above the sea. They claimed to have maintained a station higher in altitude than any other Signal Corps in the State."

The activities of the Signal Corps did not always pertain to maneuvers as the unit participated in many parades and festivities. The May Day Floral Festival of 1904, held in Sacramento was outstanding to the unit as well as all who witnessed it. The city was gorgeously decorated, and the parade with its display of flowers was a scene not easily forgotten. Where all the flowers came from did not require any explanation by Sacramentans who knew to what extent their flower beds had produced.

Sacramento never contained such crowds as thickly fringed the line of march. Street cars stopped, and men clambered to their roofs in order to see the parade. Some, more adventuresome toiled up the electric light masts and clung to the first landing presented. The day with its sunshine was warm and the decorations in which the town was enveloped, stirred scarcely at all in the slight breeze from the north.

For the first time during any Carnival held in Sacramento, the young women were able to come out in their summer attire and these airy dresses gave a charm to the multitudes arrayed along either side of the thoroughfares.

Miss May McAdams, the May Queen, attired in a simple gauzy gown of white, sat with head uncovered in an open rose studded carriage alone. The parade was surprisingly prompt in starting and Colonel H. I. Seymour, the Grand Marshal, was congratulated upon his

SIGNAL CORPS (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

management. The Third Brigade Signal Corps was awarded a first prize of fifty dollars as the best group of riders.*

The Signal Corps was called into Federal service when on April 23, 1898, the President, William McKinley, issued a call for troops in the war with Spain. The Signal Corps was one of the first units to offer its services. However, the corps did not enter the service as a unit, therefore it is impossible to give the date of entering and mustering out of Federal service. The seven men to volunteer from the Signal Corps, saw service in the Philippine Islands.

This was the last major activity of the unit, prior to being mustered out in 1904. The unit had been an outstanding group of soldiers throughout its existence and no one understood just why it was ordered to disband until an article from a local newspaper stated the company had been without a commanding officer for a period of one year.** Although the order was issued on January 5, 1904, to muster the company out, the Third Brigade Signal Corps was actually in the service until May 20, 1904.***

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*Sacramento Bee, May 2, 1900, page 1, column 3.

**Sacramento Bee, January 6, 1904, page 5, column 3.

***Historical Records, Third Brigade. Adjutant General's Office.