

# **History of the Siskiyou Light Guard, California Militia/National Guard of California 1863-1868**

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SISKIYOU LIGHT GUARD

Siskiyou Light Guard, Company D, Fifth Brigade

Reference: Dead Office File, Row 4, File 1

Location: Yreka, Siskiyou County

Mustered in June 20, 1863

Mustered out June 6, 1868

Commanding Officers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
George W. Chase, Captain	June 20, 1863	June 27, 1863
William Grow, First Lieut.	June 20, 1863	June 27, 1863
William Grow, Captain	Aug. 3, 1864	Aug. 24, 1864
Jerome Churchill, First Lieut.	Aug. 3, 1864	Aug. 24, 1864
William Grow, Captain (Re-elected July 5, 1865)	_____	_____
Jerome Churchill, First Lieut. (Re-elected July 5, 1865)	_____	_____
William S. R. Taylor, Captain	July 26, 1866	Aug. 18, 1866
Robert Nixon, First Lieut.	July 26, 1866	Aug. 18, 1866

Activities:

Residents of Yreka, Siskiyou County, who believed that the military system assumed those duties that affect the common interest of all, felt duty bound to have military protection for their district, and to those who voluntarily assumed this duty the whole community owe an obligation.

A volunteer company was organized, October 14, 1861, under the title of Siskiyou Light Guard with George W. Chase as Captain and A. E. Raynes as First Lieutenant. This group of volunteers existed for two years before they were re-organized and mustered into the State service as Siskiyou Light Guard, Company D, Fifth Infantry of the regular militia.\* Desiring to become a re-organized corps of the State Militia, the regular steps were taken of publishing the notice for ten days in both the Yreka Semi-Weekly Journal and the Yreka Semi-Weekly Union. Under the Act of Legislature of April 24, 1862, and amendments thereto, the County Judge A. M. Rosborough on June 8, 1863, appointed F. Wadsworth as Inspector to enroll members for the volunteer company, and called a meeting to be held in the Court House of Yreka City at four o'clock P.M. on Saturday, June 20, 1863.

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\*History of Siskiyou County, California - D. J. Stewart & Company, Oakland, 1881, page 191.

SISKIYOU LIGHT GUARD (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

At the organization meeting the regular staff of officers of the Siskiyou Light Guard, Company D, were elected, retaining George Chase as Captain and electing William Grow as First Lieutenant. Robert Baird who was elected Senior Second Lieutenant was later commissioned Captain of Company F of the First Battalion of Mountaineers, California Volunteers. Captain Chase was also offered a commission as Brigadier-General, Sixth Brigade, and tendered his acceptance of the honor to Adjutant-General Kibbe.

Major H. B. Warren, Ordinance Officer on the staff of Brigadier-General John Bidwell, commanding the Fifth Brigade, reported on July 8, 1864, to Adjutant-General George S. Evans that the Siskiyou Light Guard had held the annual election in strict conformity with Section 68 of the Act in relation to the Militia, but without orders from the Brigadier-General of the Fifth Brigade as he was absent from the State. Major Warren had presided over the election at the request of the company. This election was not accepted and Brigadier-General Bidwell later issued to Major Warren the order for the election which was again held in pursuance to regulations. At this time the First Lieutenant was promoted to the Captaincy, and Jerome Churchill was elected to fill the existing vacancy. These two officers were re-elected July 5, 1865, to remain in office until the annual election of 1866, held on the twenty-fifth of July, when William S. R. Taylor was elected as Captain and Robert Nixon, formerly Senior Second Lieutenant, was elected as First Lieutenant. These last two officers remained in command until the mustering out of the company in 1868. Under the Law of 1866, the Siskiyou Light Guard, Company D of the Fifth Brigade, was re-organized. On August fourth of the same year, Major Warren, mustering officer of the Fifth Brigade, mustered the company into the National Guard as a unit of the Sixth Brigade.

Immediately upon completion of the organization of the volunteer company in 1863, a requisition was sent into Headquarters for arms and accoutrements, and a supply of fifty stand was received on September 2, 1863. The unit did not keep this equipment long for on January 20, 1864, Adjutant-General Kibbe telegraphed Captain Chase to deliver the arms in his possession to Captain Robert Baird or Lieutenant A. W. Randall of Company F of the First Battalion Mountaineers, as the residents of the Salmon River territory were being harassed by the hostile Indians and the need for arms was urgent, and it was necessary that the company in active service be supplied from a ready source. General Kibbe assured Captain Chase that if the arms were not returned in proper time a new supply would be shipped from the State Arsenal. The company was later re-armed and uniformed, all of which were returned to the State upon mustering out, with the exception of some articles that were unavoidably lost or destroyed.

SISKIYOU LIGHT GUARD (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

As there are no records to show that the Siskiyou Light Guard was in active service it is assumed that they maintained home guard protection and kept themselves in readiness for active service if called upon. During the War of the Rebellion, Siskiyou County rendered aid to the United States Government in every way possible. Many patriotic organizations were formed to uphold the honor and love of their country and funds were raised for the needed maintenance of the War. First Lieutenant Grow was President of the Union League which sponsored the pledge of loyalty.

Quote: "We pledge ourselves to an unconditional loyalty to the Government of the United States to an unswerving support of the administration in its effort to suppress the Rebellion, and to spare no endeavor to maintain unimpaired the national unity, both in principle and territorial boundary."

Not only were the men active, but their wives took active part in such societies as the Lint Associations and Ladies Relief Soirees.\*

On October 3, 1863, Captain Chase communicated with Adjutant-General Kibbe regarding the coming Encampment to be held at Red Bluff on October twenty-sixth. Information was already available to the effect that the hire of two teams at sixteen dollars per day for hauling supplies, would amount to \$352 for the six days march each way and ten days Encampment. The Captain requested additional information concerning the stage fare, and desired to know if the unit would be allowed by the State to travel that way so the company would not have to go on foot. The Encampment date was changed to a month later November ninth and the place of meeting was changed to Camp Ellis in Chico. Seven companies attended this Camp of Instruction, and considering that most of the units were nominally new units of the Militia who had to travel long distances to reach their destination, they entered upon the course of instruction with earnestness of purpose. The result demonstrated that the corps had improved their military tactics and appreciated the opportunity afforded them. During this Encampment the companies were organized into a Battalion, with Major Hill acting as Colonel, for instruction of battalion drill.

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\*History of Siskiyou County, California, D. J. Stewart & Company, Oakland, 1881, pages 169-171.

SISKIYOU LIGHT GUARD (Continued)

## Activities: (Continued)

There are no further records of active service pertaining to the Siskiyou Light Guard other than when Captain Taylor reported in 1867 that his company had paraded on the ninth of September, in compliance with the State Militia Law.

In 1867, there was considerable dissatisfaction among the members of the company over the manner in which the funds were handled by Captain Taylor, commanding the unit, therefore, First Lieutenant Nixon, as one of the Bondsman, communicated with Adjutant-General Evans about the matter. Lieutenant Nixon reported in this letter of December 16, 1867, that the company was in ignorance as to the financial standing of the corps, and that it was understood by some of the members that there was an indebtedness against them in the way of several months rent due, at twenty-five dollars per month, for the armory space. Although the company did have a Treasurer, the Captain had been receiving and disbursing all the money.

When General Evans answered Lieutenant Nixon's letter, December 31, 1867, he sent a copy to Captain Taylor. A detailed explanation of the existing controversy was sent to the Adjutant-General, January 8, 1868, by the Captain. Quote: "Since the company had no dues and fines were seldom paid, there was no individual fund for the corps, in fact not over ten dollars had been paid in fines in the last sixteen months. That when he (Captain Taylor) had assumed command at the company's recent organization, the corps had no property and was badly demoralized and in debt. He had paid up the old indebtedness, purchased a fine new set of brass instruments for the band, who were now a well organized Military Band, at a cost of between \$400 and \$500." Also, "that the unit had moved from a small meeting place to a fireproof armory 80 x 60 feet, which had incurred additional expense, although the change had been made with the consent of the company and the work of overhauling, etc. would be found on the vouchers." The Captain also stated, "That he had refused to entertain a motion to donate eighty dollars of the State money for a visionary school house as he felt the money would be placed in the hands of an irresponsible person and the school house would never be built." He further stated, "He was satisfied the State never contemplated such use to be made of the Military money, but he had consented to an appropriation of money for prizes for their own target shooting."

Lieutenant Nixon again communicated with Adjutant-General Evans on February 8, 1868, when he informed the General that Captain Taylor had arbitrarily dismissed, without pay, the Armorer, A. V. Burns, apparently for "shooting his mouth off" about the Captain. Although the By-Laws designate the Armorer as one of three business officers of the company to be elected each year in January, the Captain had called an election for the Second Treasurer, but claimed it as his privilege to appoint the Armorer.

Activities: (Continued)

Lieutenant Nixon also stated that angry words had passed between the Captain and Private Brown after the Private had queried the Captain concerning the company's funds. Captain Taylor apologized at the next meeting for his anger to the company and the Private. Lieutenant Nixon went on to say that the "County Treasurer, who was also Treasurer of the company, had refused to accept the first warrant from the Military Fund for the use of the company which was sent to the Captain upon instructions from the Controller, although subsequent ones were accepted after learning they could be returned to the State in settlements. Captain Taylor sold the first one to some one, and it was assumed the same course was followed with later warrants. Honorable E. Wadsworth had informed him (Lieutenant Nixon) that \$1,460 had been drawn for the Captain." He further remarked that "Captain Taylor is equivalent to Captain, Lieutenant, company Treasurer and everything else combined." This is an extremely lengthy letter, therefore, to close this part of the discussion of Lieutenant Nixon's letter, one more statement will be quoted from his narrative wherein he states, "He had no desire whatever to do Captain Taylor any injustice, or to incur any expense for the State, nor would he (Lieutenant Nixon) question the privilege of the Captain of disbursing funds if the debts had been paid regularly, but other members of the company were taking steps towards soliciting a Court Martial with a view of preferring charges."

Major Warren also communicated with Adjutant-General Evans on the twelfth of February of 1868, and in a very lengthy letter he stated the same facts as did Lieutenant Nixon about Captain Taylor, with the one exception, that the amount of funds handled by Captain Taylor was \$1,400. The Major ended with the request for information regarding the proper procedure to be taken in establishing a Committee of Investigation or Court Martial. As there are no further records to prove otherwise, it is assumed that this trouble over the Captain's extremely aggressive leadership was ironed out to the satisfaction of all concerned.

In the year of 1868 it was deemed advisable to materially reduce the number of existing companies as the interest of the commonwealth did not demand the maintenance of so large a force, and at the same time the Legislature had reduced the military tax, which meant a curtailment in the military fund. Therefore, on May 23, 1868, the Siskiyou Light Guard, Company D, was mustered out, possibly due to the fact that it was one of the companies that was located inland where it was considered unnecessary to maintain military organizations.

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