

History of the Trueman Head Rifles, California Militia 1863-1866

This history was completed in 1940 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in conjunction with the California National Guard and the California State Library.

Digitized by the History Office, Camp San Luis Obispo, 31 January 2015

Original document on file at the California State Library

TRUEMAN HEAD RIFLES (200)

Trueman Head Rifles, Company F, Fifth Brigade
 Reference: Dead Office File, Row 6, File 3
 Location: French Gulch, Shasta County

Mustered in June 23, 1863
 Mustered out August 20, 1866

Commanding Officers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
William E. Hopping, Captain	June 23, 1863	July 9, 1863
Henry Frost, First Lieut.	June 23, 1863	July 9, 1863
William E. Hopping, Captain (Re-elected Nov. 5, 1864)	_____	_____
L. B. Grover, First Lieut.	Nov. 5, 1864	Nov. 24, 1864
William E. Hopping, Captain (Re-elected Oct. 7, 1865)	_____	_____
L. B. Grover, First Lieut. (Re-elected Oct. 7, 1865)	_____	_____

Activities:

French Gulch, Shasta County, is located in one of California's oldest settled districts where great gold wealth has already been produced, and where there still remains rich deposits to be discovered. This settlement was situated in a territory where there was always the danger of Indian depredations, besides troublesome persons within the community itself, particularly during the Civil War period when Secessionists were active throughout the country. Therefore, a meeting was held in the old Empire Hotel at French Gulch, Shasta County, and a military company was organized June 23, 1863. The meeting was presided over by E. Dichesson, acting as Inspector, and forty-two citizens enrolled in the newly organized company which was designated as the Trueman Head Rifles, Company F, and William E. Hopping was elected Captain and Henry Frost, First Lieutenant.

The members adopted the name of Trueman Head Rifles to show honor to one of California's most prominent frontiersmen, who was more generally known under the euphonious title of "California Joe." Mr. Head had been active in many Indian battles, had served in the Union Army as a sharpshooter, and in later years because of his vast knowledge of Indian warfare, he was appointed by General Custer to act as Chief of Scouts for the United States Cavalry which was composed of several regiments.*

-000-

*Famous Frontiersmen, Pioneers, and Scouts by E. C. Cattermole, A. B.--W. H. Harrison, Jr. Publisher, 1886, page 493.

*Brigadier-General Bidwell's report to Adjutant-General Kibbe, Adjutant General's Report, 1863, page 40.

Activities: (Continued)

This Cavalry of which Trueman Head was Chief Scout was organized when trouble arose with the Sioux Indians in 1876, the battle in which General Custer and his regiment of two hundred and sixty men were killed.

Captain Hopping immediately took command and instructed the company in their regular drills. Upon receipt of the necessary Bond to the State, the company received their arms and accoutrements September twenty-fifth, of the same year. Captain Hopping communicated with Adjutant-General William C. Kibbe, to the effect that he was desirous of receiving uniforms for his company as soon as possible, believing it would stimulate additional interest among the members of his corps and would be the means of enabling the Captain to have a full command present for the Encampment which was to be held at Ellis Camp, Chico, on November third. Eight companies participated at the Encampment and all of the units with one exception traveled a long distance to reach the Camp. The Trueman Head Rifles traveled more than one hundred miles, and at the Encampment went through the course of instruction with rare earnestness, and the result demonstrated that they had appreciated the opportunity it afforded them. Their appearance was creditable and soldierly, and all their movements were executed with a precision which would have done credit to older troops.*

Unfortunately for this company, a destructive fire occurred in the town of French Gulch, at three o'clock in the morning, on June 24, 1864, and destroyed a third of the town. The fire originated in a store adjacent to the armory, and soon spread to the armory which was also destroyed, including most of the accoutrements. The rifles were saved by quick action of members of the company and the citizens. A Board of Survey was appointed to determine the origin and extent of the damage done, but upon investigation found the fire was not incendiary. A request was made to the Adjutant-General to replace the supplies that were lost in the fire.

There are no records indicating that this company was ever called into active service. In 1866 as an economy measure, the State Legislature enacted a new Militia Law reducing the number of companies in the National Guard to eighty. A section of this law referred to companies located in the interior mining towns, which due to the transient population, were not able to maintain the required membership. The Trueman Head Rifles, located at French Gulch, was situated in such a district and, therefore, were mustered out of the State Service August 20, 1866.

-000-

*Brigadier-General Bidwell's report to Adjutant-General Kibbe Adjutant General Report, 1863, page 40.