

# **History of the Company F (Oakland Light Cavalry), 5th Infantry Regiment, National Guard of California 1885-1917**

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COMPANY F

Company F, Fifth Infantry Regiment, Second Brigade (formerly Oakland Light Cavalry)

Reference: Adjutant General's Files

Location: Oakland, Alameda County

Organized September 23, 1878

Reorganized July 22, 1885\*

Reconstituted August 1, 1885\*\*

Reconstituted December 9, 1895\*\*\*

Mustered into Federal Service July 7, 1898\*\*\*\*

Mustered out of Federal Service February 6, 1899\*\*\*\*\*

Reorganized as Company F, Fifth Infantry Regiment May 4, 1899+

Mustered into Federal Service June 28, 1916++

Mustered out of Federal Service October 7, 1916+++

Resumption of Service in the National Guard 1916++++

Mustered into Federal Service April 7, 1917\*\*\*\*\*

Redesignated Company F, 159th Infantry Regiment September 24, 1917+++++

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

\*\*Company F, Fifth Infantry Battalion was redesignated Company F, Fifth Regiment, August 1, 1885. Adjutant General Report 1885-1886, page 117. Headquarters Papers Second Brigade, 1885, Special Order No. 44.

\*\*\*Company F, Fifth Infantry Regiment was redesignated Company F, Seventh Battalion, December 7, 1895. Two days later, December 9, Company F, Seventh Battalion designated Company F, Fifth Infantry Regiment, Second Brigade.  
Adjutant General Report 1895-1896, General Orders No. 17, and 18, pages 86, and 88.

\*\*\*\*Company F redesignated Company F, Eighth Infantry Regiment, and mustered into Federal Service during the Spanish-American War, July 7, 1898.  
Adjutant General Report 1896-1898, page 8.

\*\* Adjutant General Report 1899-1900, page 6.

+Company F, as part of the Fifth Infantry Regiment, re-entered the National Guard of California, May 4, 1899. Adjutant General Report 1899-1900, page 59.

++Company F, as part of the Fifth Infantry Regiment, mustered into Federal Service for duty on the Mexican Border, June 28, 1916. Adjutant General Report 1914-1920, page 18.

+++Adjutant General Report 1914-1920, page 18.

++++General and Special Orders 1916, General Order No. 34, page 150.

\*\*\*\*\*Company F, as part of the Fifth Infantry Regiment was mustered into Federal Service for duty during the World War, April 7, 1917. Histories, military, organizations etc. File No. 314.7. Adjutant General's Office.

\*\*\*\*\*Company F, Fifth Infantry Regiment redesignated Company F, 159th Infantry Regiment, September 24, 1917. Adjutant General's Report 1920-1926, page 25.

COMPANY F (Continued)

<u>Commanding Officers</u>		
<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Webb N. Pearce, Captain (reelected May 18, 1885)	May 9, 1883	June 16, 1883*
George B. Flint, First Lieut. (reelected May 18, 1885)	May 9, 1883	June 16, 1883*
George B. Flint, Captain (resigned June 7, 1886)	Nov. 16, 1885	Dec. 21, 1885
Chas. E. Parsons, Captain (resigned June 17, 1889)	Oct. 25, 1886	Nov. 16, 1886
A. M. Boyden, First Lieut. (resigned June 7, 1886)	Jan. 25, 1886	Feb. 12, 1886
W. H. Seaton, First Lieut.	Oct. 25, 1886	Nov. 16, 1886
F. R. O'Brien, Captain	July 15, 1889	Aug. 13, 1889
John F. Hayes, First Lieut.	Nov. 5, 1888	Dec. 20, 1888
John F. Hayes, Captain	July 7, 1890	July 25, 1890
Edwin G. Hunt, First Lieut.	July 7, 1890	Aug. 4, 1890
John F. Hayes, Captain (reelected July 18, 1892)	_____	_____
Edwin G. Hunt, First Lieut. (reelected July 18, 1892)	_____	_____
George H. Wethern, Captain	July 17, 1893	Aug. 10, 1893
W. H. Cobbledick, First Lieut.	July 17, 1893	Aug. 10, 1893
George H. Wethern, Captain (reelected Aug. 13, 1895)	_____	_____
W. H. Cobbledick, First Lieut. (reelected Aug. 13, 1895)	_____	_____

\*Captain Webb N. Pearce and First Lieutenant George B. Flint retained their former commissions as of June 16, 1883, when they commanded the Oakland Light Cavalry.

COMPANY F (Continued)

Commanding Officers (cont.)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Carl L. E. Wenk, Captain	June 7, 1897	July 3, 1897
W. H. Cobbledick, First Lieut. (reelected Aug. 16, 1897)		
Carl L. E. Wenk, Captain (reelected June 29, 1899) (resigned Mar. 12, 1900)		
H. T. Bennett, Captain (resigned Dec. 27, 1901)	Apr. 30, 1900	June 18, 1900
Curtis C. Covalt, First Lieut. (resigned Oct. 21, 1901)	Sept. 25, 1899	Nov. 29, 1899
Curtis C. Covalt, Captain	Jan. 6, 1902	Feb. 11, 1902
G. W. Nickerson, First Lieut.	Jan. 6, 1902	Mar. 15, 1902
G. H. Wethern, Captain	Mar. 23, 1904	Apr. 30, 1904
C. C. Covalt, First Lieut.	Mar. 24, 1904	July 11, 1904
G. H. Wethern, Captain (reelected Apr. 2, 1906)		
L. R. Keller, First Lieut. (resigned Jan. 26, 1909)	Nov. 26, 1906	Jan. 24, 1907
G. H. Wethern, Captain (promoted to Major, 1909)	Mar. 23, 1904	Apr. 29, 1909*
C. A. Sullivan, First Lieut.	Feb. 15, 1909	Mar. 6, 1909
C. A. Sullivan, Captain	Oct. 4, 1909	Nov. 15, 1909
W. R. Pritchard, First Lieut.	Oct. 4, 1909	Nov. 15, 1909
C. A. Sullivan, Captain (resigned Dec. 10, 1914)	Oct. 4, 1909	Nov. 15, 1913**
W. R. Pritchard, First Lieut.	Oct. 4, 1909	Nov. 15, 1913**
W. R. Pritchard, Captain	Dec. 28, 1914	April 3, 1915
P. B. Taylor, First Lieut. (resigned Feb. 8, 1916)	Dec. 28, 1914	April 3, 1915
E. E. Hinchman, First Lieut.	Mar. 6, 1916	May 5, 1916
E. E. Hinchman, Captain	April 17, 1916	June 7, 1916
Eugene Ashby De Hermida, First Lieut. (promoted to Capt. Co. A. Fifth Inf. Reg.)	Apr. 17, 1916	June 17, 1916
Edgar S. Hutson, First Lieut.	Apr. 1, 1917	Apr. 4, 1917

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\*Captain G. H. Wethern was recommissioned April 29, 1909.

\*\*Captain C. A. Sullivan and First Lieutenant W. R. Pritchard were recommissioned November 15, 1913.



COMPANY F (Continued)

Activities:

Company F, formerly Oakland Light Cavalry organized September 23, 1878, was redesignated Company F, Fifth Infantry Battalion, July 22, 1886. Eight days later on August first, Company F, Fifth Infantry Battalion was redesignated Company F, Fifth Infantry Regiment, Second Brigade. As there were already five units in the Fifth Infantry Battalion, the attachment of Company F raised the battalion to a regiment, August 1, 1885.\*

Two weeks later, August 15, 1885, Company F attended the first divisional encampment to be held in California at Santa Cruz. When it is remembered that the Fifth Infantry Regiment was newly organized, the report of Royal T. Frank, United States Army, representing the War Department, shows what can be accomplished with competent officers. The Major reported that, "the Fifth Infantry Regiment, Colonel Ranlett, consists of five companies and had 34 officers and 183 men; total 217 present. This regiment is commanded by a thorough disciplinarian and has a good reputation, which its appearance at inspection fully sustained."\*\*

Twenty seven years later, August 11 to 21, 1912, Company F, as part of the Fifth Infantry Regiment, was attached to the Red Army which was engaged in mimic warfare. The Red Army was that of defending, while the Blue Army attempted to capture the position held by the Red Army. These maneuvers were in charge of the Federal troops and indicate the change that had taken place in thirty-seven years. The 1912 Joint Maneuver was the last large encampment participated in by the Fifth Infantry Regiment. In the years between 1885 and 1912, Company F had participated in twelve other encampments. Some were regimental, some brigade or divisional, while several were joint maneuvers with the Federal troops.

From the muster-roll of 1887, the following notations are taken: company discipline, good; instruction, good; military appearance, excellent; and arms and property, well cared for. In 1896, Company F had the largest enrollment in the Second Brigade, there being ninety-nine present at the annual muster of that year. None were absent. Company F still rated high in 1902, but only had a membership of sixty-one men. A year later, 1903, the passage

\*Adjutant General Report 1885-1886, pages 70, 117.

\*\*Adjutant General Report 1885-1886, page 124.

COMPANY F (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

of the "Dick" Militia Act by Congress increased the United States War Department's power over the National Guard. Army officers and instructors soon increased the efficiency of Company F to a still higher degree.

Another beneficial result of the new law was to increase the marksmanship of the National Guard. In 1885, Company F made a company score of 21.40 per cent, and five years later, 1890, increased the amount to 33.07 per cent. In the early nineties, the National Guard authorities began awarding medals for marksmanship. A gold bar medal was decided for the first class group to be known as "Sharpshooters." Second rate scores entitled the soldier to a silver bar medal, known as "Rifleman," and the third class medal was bronze and called "Marksman." Under the new arrangement, Company F had three Riflemen and eighteen Marksmen in 1893. Three years later, the unit boasted of one Sharpshooter, ten Riflemen, and forty Marksman, a total of fifty-one medals in the company. Only Company A, Second Infantry Regiment possessed more medals that year.\*

Company F participated in many parades, a large portion being the usual holiday parades. A few of the special parades that Company F participated in are as follows. On December 12, 1890, when King Kalakaua, of the Hawaiian Islands, visited this country in an attempt to regain his health. Six weeks later the King died and again Company F acted as part of the military escort to the remains as they were returned to the Hawaiian Islands for their last resting place.\*\* On March 15, 1891, Company F participated in the funeral cortege of Senator George Hearst.\*\*\*

A year later on January 12, 1902, Company F was again called upon to parade at the funeral of Brigadier-General W. H. Seamans, Adjutant General of the State of California, who died while on duty in Washington, D. C. The General went east to attempt to adjust claims arising out of the Spanish-American War. \*\*\*\*

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\*Adjutant General Report 1896-1898, pages 60, 65, 78.

\*\*San Francisco Chronicle, January 23, 1891, page 10, column 1, 4.

\*\*\*San Francisco Chronicle, March 16, 1891, page 10, column 1-5.

\*\*\*\*Muster-roll, Company F, Fifth Infantry Regiment, Second Brigade. Adjutant General's Office.

COMPANY F (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

On May 1, 1911, the Fifth Infantry Regiment lost through the death of Major Milton W. Simpson, a valuable officer who had risen from the ranks to that of Major. His funeral was military and was held in Oakland on May third.\*

Another solemn funeral cortege was that held in Oakland in honor and respect to President William McKinley on September 18, 1901. With sorrowing hearts the citizens of Oakland lined the streets and bowed their heads as the empty carriage, in which the martyred President only a few weeks before had occupied during a tumultuous ovation and reception by that city, passed by. The carriage, the only one in the procession, was drawn by six black horses, each horse led by an attendant. An American flag draped the vehicle, and on the seat where the President had sat was a large cluster of liliunauratum, a species of Japanese lilies, tied with a bow of black silk ribbon. The First Battalion, Fifth Infantry to which Company F belonged, was in the first division of the parade.\*\*

One more activity of Company F taken from the dark side of life, was when the city of Oakland was awarded a torpedo port casing from the ill-fated battleship "Maine." The casing was mounted in Lakeside Park and the unveiling of the monument awakened sad memories in many hearts. A patriotic speech was delivered by Mr. B. A. Forsterer, department commander of the Spanish-American War Veterans, followed by a reading of a poem by Comrade H. O. Huber and a short address by Major R. F. Faneuf. The invocation by Reverend J. P. McQuade, past Chaplain of the Spanish War Veterans, was followed by the unveiling. Mr. F. F. Spooner, a survivor of the "Maine," then gently drew aside the veil, revealing the priceless relic of the "Maine." The ceremonies were preceded by a military parade in which Companies A and F, Fifth Infantry Regiment and Battery B, Light Artillery, Second Regiment, took part.\*\*\*

Most of the remaining parades participated in by Company F, were of a happier nature than the preceding ones. Four were receptions to the Presidents of the United States, Benjamin Harrison, April 25, 1891; William McKinley, May 1901; Theodore Roosevelt in May 1903, and William Howard Taft in 1911.

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\*Oakland Enquirer, May 3, 1911, page 1, column 1; page 2, column 3.

\*\*Oakland Enquirer, September 19, 1901, page 2, columns 1, 2, 3.

\*\*\*Oakland Enquirer, February 17, 1913, page 1, columns 2, and 3; page 2, column 2.



COMPANY F (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

The visit of the Atlantic Fleet to the Pacific Coast was the occasion of a military parade in Oakland on May 9, 1908, in which Company F as part of the Fifth Infantry Regiment participated. There were several more parades in the earlier years of a more festive nature, such as the opening of the Midwinter Fair in San Francisco on January 27, 1894, and the reception tendered the First California Volunteers on their return home from the Philippines in 1899.

Company F was stirred up to fighting mood by some news items printed in the Alameda Telegram in July 1894. The unit was camped at High Street, Alameda, during the railroad strike, when charges of drunkenness on the part of the members of Company F were made by the Alameda Telegram. First Lieutenant W. H. Cobbledick was appointed to investigate and interview the persons who had allegedly made the statements to the reporter. All persons interviewed, denied making the statements attributed to them. Also every house within two blocks of the camp, signed the following statement: "We hereby certify that we live in the immediate vicinity of the camp of Company F, Fifth Infantry Regiment, National Guard of California, stationed at High Street, Alameda, and that we have never seen or heard of any disorderly conduct or of vulgar language used by the above named company, and believe that the charges made by the Alameda Telegram in regard to immorality and drunkenness to be malicious falsehoods." No record of any retraction by the Alameda Telegram is recorded and it is assumed that after adopting strong resolutions condemning the editor and publishing them in other publications, the matter was dropped by Company F.\*

About six years later, January 1900, Company F was torn by dissention, but fortunately the company adjusted the ill-feeling without seriously handicapping the efficiency of the unit. The trouble was the outgrowth of the alleged strict discipline of Captain C. L. E. Wenk and Lieutenant W. H. Cobbledick, during the period the company was in Federal service during the Spanish-American War. Soon after the company returned to the National Guard, a movement was started by several members who were dissatisfied. Lieutenant Cobbledick sensed the ill-feeling toward him

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\*San Francisco Chronicle, January 3, 1895, page 7, column 5.

\*Oakland Enquirer, July 31, 1894, page 8, column 2.



COMPANY F (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

and refused to be a candidate for reelection on September 1899. Captain Wenk, however, was not so easily dislodged and although a petition signed by thirty members requesting that he resign, was presented to the Captain which he ignored and continued in command. The opposition went so far as to attempt to prevent the anti-Wenk faction from participating in the regular drills. Captain Wenk remained in command until March 12, 1900, when he resigned, realizing that to continue to hold office would perhaps lead to irreparable injury to the company in which he had spent many years of service. Lieutenant Cobbledick not only had likewise spent many years in Company F, but was also the best marksman in the entire regiment. After the desired resignations were made, harmony was restored and the history of Company F marches on.\*

Company F was first called for active duty in the maintenance of law and order, July 4, 1894, during the railroad strike. Company F was called on the Fourth, but dismissed on the fifth until further notice. Not until July thirteenth was the unit again called and stationed at Alameda Point where camp was made and guard duty begun. Two days later on July fifteenth, Company F was ordered to High Street, Alameda, at the request of the sheriff of Alameda County. On July twenty-first, the unit was ordered back to Camp Peralta, West Oakland, where the company remained until July twenty-third, when they were ordered to their armory and dismissed.\*\*

Four years later, July 7, 1898, Company F was mustered into Federal Service for duty during the Spanish-American War. Company F was redesignated Company F, Eighth Volunteer Regiment when entering the Federal Service. The Eighth remained at Camp Barrett, Oakland until September tenth, when the field, staff, band and Companies A, F, K and L, took station at Benicia Barracks. On December twenty-second, Companies F and L were sent to Angel Island, where they remained until mustered out on February 6, 1899. A splendid reception was tendered Company F, when they returned home to Oakland, but a keen disappointment was apparent

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\*San Francisco Chronicle, January 8, 1900, page 7, column 5.

\*\*Adjutant General Report 1893-1894, pages 283-285.

COMPANY F (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

among the members at their failure to see service on the battle front.\*

Eight years elapsed before Company F was again called upon for duty during the Earthquake and Fire in 1906. Early in the afternoon of April eighteenth, Company F as part of the Third Battalion, Fifth Infantry Regiment, received orders to report to Mayor Mott, of Oakland, for duty in that city. The battalion under command of Major E. G. Hunt, was stationed at the City Hall Park in Oakland during the twenty-nine days that they were in the service. Their duty consisted in the maintenance of order at refugee camps, supply depots and assisting the local police at night. The unit also acted as escort to supply wagons. Company F was mustered out May 17, 1906.\*\*

A fire on the slopes of Mt. Tamalpais during the first part of July 1913, threatened to destroy Mill Valley and the surrounding country. The fire was soon out of control and although 2,000 regular troops and as many sailors from ships in the bay of San Francisco engaged in fighting the fire, the blaze could not be brought under control. On July tenth, Companies A, C, D, E, F, H, I and K, of the Fifth Infantry were ordered to the scene of the fire and rendered service for four days.\*\*\*

On June 28, 1916, Company F as part of the Fifth Infantry Regiment was mustered into Federal Service during the trouble along the Mexican Border. After serving at Nogales, Arizona, until October 7, 1916, Company F was once more mustered out of the Federal Service.\*\*\*\*

About six months later, March 26, 1917, Company F as part of the Fifth Infantry Regiment, was again called into the Federal Service for duty during the World War. The Fifth Regiment became a part of the 159th Infantry Regiment, 80th Brigade, 40th Division. Many members of the old Company F, Fifth Infantry Regiment were either killed or wounded on the battlefields of France. For additional information concerning this unit, refer to the History of Company F, 159th Infantry Regiment, 40th Division.

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\*Oakland Tribune, February 23, 1899, page 5, column 2, and 3.

\*\*Adjutant General Report 1906, page 41, and 6, 7, and 11.

\*\*\*Adjutant General Report 1910-1914, page 44.

\*\*\*\*Adjutant General Report 1914-1920, page 18.