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**Atascadero:
The Great Military Camp of California**
By 2nd Lt. Herbert David Walter
1st Infantry Regiment, National Guard of California

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ATASCADERO

The Great Military Camp of California

BY HERBERT DAVID WALTER, *Second Lieutenant 1st Infantry, N. G. C.*

IT is not within the province of this article to give any detailed account of the manœuvres which were held by the combined forces of the regular army of the United States and the organized militia of the State of California encamped at Atascadero between the 12th and 26th of August, 1904.

As a starting point, it may be well to take the status of the troops who formed a majority of General MacArthur's command at Atascadero for a period of two weeks, and who, in the opinion of more or less competent judges, showed, on the whole, a very considerable effectiveness.

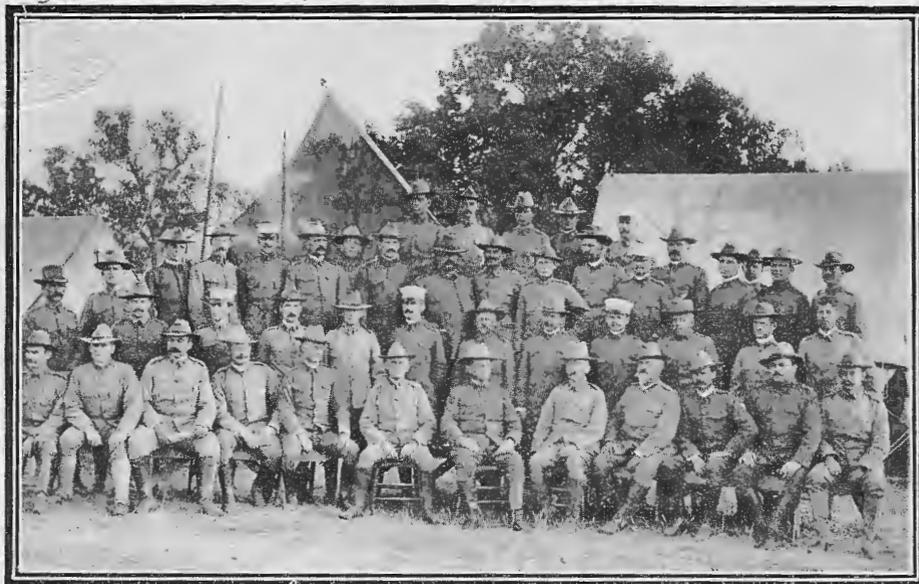
In the first place, beyond the sum allowed them by the National Government (equal to one-half month's pay of the regular establishment) the enlisted men of the National Guard, as the organized militia is termed, received no pay from the State. It is true that ten cents a day per week was allowed to the

mess fund of each company, troop, battery or detachment, but this barely sufficed to secure cooks for the organizations.

To the overwhelming majority of the men of the organized militia who served the State and the nation at Atascadero, the two weeks' work, and let no one doubt that it was work, and hard work, was done at a considerable expense in loss of wages.

In some cases, greatly redounding to the credit of the employer, the enlisted men suffered no diminution of pay during their absence, but these were shining exceptions. To any one acquainted with the rate of wages current in California, the strength of the organizations in camp furnished a very fair lesson as to the practical patriotism of Californians.

The organized militia were armed with the Krag-Jorgensen rifle, and their equipment was of the best. Their tentage and other appurte-



Gen. MacArthur, Staff and Umpires

nances were excellent and compared favorably with that in use in the regular establishment. The clothing of the militiamen left considerable to be desired. Some of the organizations were not provided with khaki blouses, and it was found necessary to borrow these from other organizations when acting on the brown side.

For the purpose of the maneuvers the troops were distinguished as "blue" or "brown," by wearing the

blue flannel shirt or the khaki service blouse.

By far the greatest and most important need of the militia in point of equipment, however, is foot-gear. The absolute and imperative necessity for a uniform, comfortable and serviceable field shoe was made manifest by this encampment. The army in the field depends almost as much upon its feet and its stomach as it does upon its weapons. On the long and severe



Officers of the 1st Inf. N. G. C.



Gen. Arthur MacArthur

In command of troops at Camp Atascadero.

"hikes" which were part of the work of the camp, men wearing shoes intended for city pavements and ordinary conditions, soon developed feet which almost destroyed their usefulness in the field.

It is hardly within reason to require the private soldier of the militia force, receiving the truly munificent remuneration of \$6.50 yearly, to provide himself with shoes to be used in the service at his own expense. What the Quartermaster's department of the militia had at their disposal they made all pos-

sible use of, and those things that were provided were excellent. The transportation to the camp, located about 250 miles from San Francisco, was in the hands of the Southern supplied, not a single difficulty occurred, and was handled without a hitch, although as much cannot be said for the return of the militiamen to their home stations at the conclusion of the encampment. A delay of four hours in a trip, the entire duration of which should have been eight hours, is hardly creditable.

The militia entrained promptly and detrained with speed and in good order at Atascadero Station, located about two miles from the camp site. The march to camp was accomplished over an exceedingly dusty bit of road, which strangely enough was not improved during the entire two weeks of the encampment.

The militia found that the camp had been carefully laid out for them and many of their immediate needs, such as firewood, sanitary arrangements, water barrels, etc., antici-



Gen. MacArthur giving orders by Field Telephone



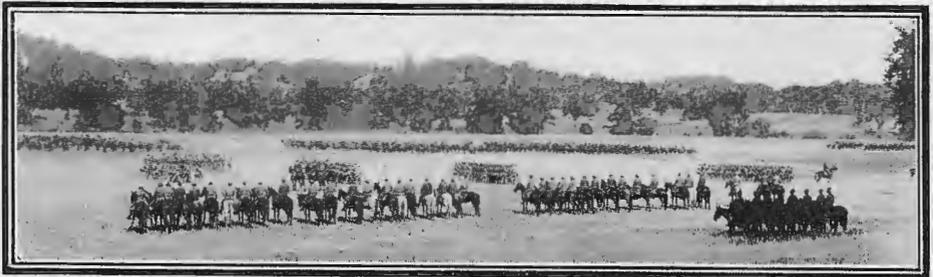
Presidio, San Francisco.



Artillery going into action



The Defense of a Convoy.



Division Review



General view of Camp

pated. The commissary department, whose headquarters were at Asuncion, on the line of the railroad, at once began deliveries of supplies. The officers of this department are entitled to the greatest credit for the manner in which the camp was currying in the entire time of the encampment.

The men, regular and militia alike, were subsisted upon the regular field ration of the army, which provided food with sufficient variety, excellent in quality and ample in quantity. Fresh bread and meat composing the issue were provided daily, being obtained from San Francisco. A part of the field ration, when obtainable, is ice, and this added in the greatest degree to the health and comfort of the men.

The camp was situated on a flat, running approximately north and south, and facing a rise to the east, upon which the division headquarters were located. Water was supplied from springs in the vicinity, and piped to faucets at the head of each company street close to the kitchen. The waters of Atascadero Creek were also utilized for a bathing place for the men, but while the supply proved ample for the number encamped, it is problematical if it would suffice for a much larger number. The cavalry and artillery camps were removed some distance to the north of the encampment, as was the division hospital, in accordance with sanitary requirements.

At the southern extremity of the camp was a large and level field, used as a parade and review ground.

On this ground the review tendered the Governor of California was held.

After a day's interval in which to become thoroughly settled in camp, the work for the militiamen began in earnest with three problems in advance and rear guard. It was in one of these problems that the men of the 1st California Infantry, under command of Col. Thomas F. O'Neil, gave an illustration of what the militia is capable of when commanded by officers who understand their duties. A battalion of the 1st under Major George Filmer secured possession of a ridge which proved to be the key of the problem. In order to attain the crest of the ridge it was necessary for the command to go over broken territory a considerable distance at double time. This, in the heat of the day, and by men fresh from sedentary occupations in the city, is an example of what militia can and will do. The battalion had the satisfaction of putting out of action a numerically larger force of regular infantry.

There can be no question that enthusiasm and spirit in a militia organization will do much, but just how much work can be accomplished by men accustomed to life in great cities and without preparation as to conditions in the field, is the question.

The problems that followed the first day's work gave evidence of a great strain upon the enlisted men, a strain which, taking all things into consideration, they bore well. In particular the problem of August 20th, the advance and employment



At Camp Atascadero, Cal.

of a division, proved that resistance and endurance are latent in the organized militia, but that like other military virtues, they must be cultivated and fostered. In a sense the camp and all other camps of a like character throughout the country were tests of the effectiveness of the organized militia. A great part of that effectiveness in time of war will be the ability of the men to march under all circumstances, both favorable and unfavorable. It was necessary, therefore, to thoroughly test the ability of the militia on the march.

As to the value of the camp, the officers and men of the militia, there can be no possible question. In the words of one militia officer: "We learned that it is necessary in modern war to march 15 miles to fight fifteen minutes," and if nothing beyond that single point had been learned, the camp would have been worth while. But many other things were learned beyond march-

ing, deployment and fire-control. Officers and men in the regular establishment and the organized militia showed that resourcefulness in the face of emergency which is the glory of the American soldier.

To the National Government the camp gave full value for the money expended, and the experiment was no cheap one.

In time of need it will be such men as compose the organized militia upon whom the nation must in a large measure depend.

It is their abilities and their disabilities which will have to be taken into account, rather than those of a few trained regular soldiers. Any great army that this nation can organize must of necessity consist of such troops and must possess their limitations. Whether these are so great as to render them ineffective is for the wise men of the War College to decide only after due test and deliberation.

