

# **History of the 5<sup>th</sup> Separate Company, Infantry, California National Guard 1918-1921**

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FIFTH SEPARATE COMPANY

1105

(SACRAMENTO)

Fifth Separate Company, Infantry, California National Guard

Reference: Adjutant General Files

Location: Sacramento, Sacramento County

Mustered in January 9, 1918\*

Redesignated July 22, 1919\*\*

Redesignated November 1, 1920\*\*\*

Redesignated October 1, 1921\*\*\*\*

Commanding Officers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Sidney H. Sayre, Capt. (resigned July 27, 1918)	Jan. 9, 1918	Feb. 13, 1918
Fontaine Johnson, Capt. (resigned Oct. 24, 1918)		Aug. 30, 1918
Charles D. Webster, Capt. (resigned Dec. 6, 1919)	Nov. 15, 1918	Nov. 15, 1918
Fontaine Johnson, Capt.	Feb. 9, 1920	Feb. 9, 1920
Harry G. Dowdall, First Lieut. (resigned Aug. 15, 1918)	Jan. 9, 1918	Feb. 13, 1918
George H. P. Urban, First Lieut.	Nov. 15, 1918	Nov. 22, 1918

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\*Fifth Separate Company designated Company E, and mustered into State Service January 9, 1918.

Adjutant General Report 1914-1920, page 116.

\*\*Fifth Separate Company redesignated Company B, First Separate Battalion Infantry, July 22, 1919.

Adjutant General Report 1914-1920, page 116.

\*\*\*Company B, First Separate Battalion Infantry, transferred to the Second Separate Battalion Infantry as Company B, November 1, 1920.

General and Special Orders 1920. General Order No. 14, page 27.

\*\*\*\*Company B, Second Separate Battalion redesignated Company G, 159th Infantry, California National Guard, October 1, 1921.

General and Special Orders 1921. General Order No. 17, page 34.

(UNCLASSIFIED)

FIFTH SEPARATE COMPANY (Continued)

Activities:

On December 5, 1917, Adjutant-General J. J. Borree, California National Guard, received the following letter from Harry G. Dowdall and Byron C. Erwin:

"We are filing herewith a petition signed by one hundred and fifteen citizens who pray for the organization of an infantry Company of California National Guard in Sacramento. In filling the required quota we have made every effort to maintain a high standard of citizenship through the acceptance of only those whom we believe will meet the necessary qualifications. It is not our intention to cease receiving signatures, but will continue, with the idea in view of securing at least one hundred and fifty names, or possibly enough to assure the organization of a second company in Sacramento. The majority of the men who have signed the petition are extremely anxious to enter the service and in their behalf we would appreciate it if an early date be set for their examination and muster in."

The preamble to the petition read:

"We, the undersigned citizens of California, and residents of Sacramento, believing ourselves to be physically, and mentally fitted for military service, and being within the military age for membership in the National Guard, do hereby agree to enlist in the California National Guard, and thus participate in the organization of a company of infantry at such time and place as your office may designate, and we respectfully petition that this application receive favorable consideration, and that authority for the organization of a company of California Infantry, National Guard, be granted."

More than a month passed before the petition received favorable action. On January 9, 1918, the company was mustered in at Sacramento before a large assemblage in the armory. The oath was administered by Major Jacob Alexander of the Adjutant General's department, while the men were drawn up in double line formation. At the conclusion of the ceremony Adjutant-General, Borree was introduced, and he congratulated the new soldiers on their patriotic spirit in rallying to their country's call. L. C. Hunter, vice president of the Sacramento Chamber of Commerce, made a happy little speech, felicitating the people that the company was a reality, thanked the members of the organization and wished them Godspeed. President D. W. Carmichael of the City Commission extended the thanks of Sacramento to the men of the new Company and assured them of the loyal support and devotion of all good citizens. Following the formal ceremonies, the company guests met in the club rooms where more speeches and jollification took place. Mrs. Rosina Rosen Cluck, Godmother of the Company, and who suggested its name, "Sacramento Braves", was given an ovation by the organization and responded with two pleasing solos.\* Sidney H. Sayre was chosen Captain and Harry G. Dowdall First Lieutenant of the organization.

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\*Sacramento Union January 10, 1918, page 7, column 4.

FIFTH SEPARATE COMPANY (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

Like other separate units of the new National Guard, the ranks of the Fifth Separate Company were thinned by enlistments and the drafting of many of its members into the Federal Army. The monthly return of the unit for the month of August, 1918 contained the following remarks:

"No drills were held during the month of August on account of the small membership. Recruiting was actively carried on during the last week of the month. A recruiting office was opened and placed in charge of two members of the Company. With the resignation of Lieutenant Dowdall August 15, 1918, the Company was left without commissioned officers."

Although handicapped by the constant shifting of its members to the United States Army and the recruiting necessary to fill the places left vacant by those who entered the Federal Service, the Fifth Company, (Sacramento Braves), aided in all the patriotic activities of Sacramento. On April 8, 1918, the Fifth Company took an active part in opening the Third Liberty Bond drive. They paraded in the evening, regardless of the fact that rain was pouring down. The patriotism of the people of Sacramento was fully demonstrated when thousands of men, women and children stood in the rain while the procession went by. Promptly at 8:00 P.M. the long line of marchers, with a galaxy of slogans and banners moved into J Street, marched down J to 4th Street, over 4th to K Street and back on K to 9th Street, where a program of War songs was scheduled to take place in the Plaza. The Fifth Separate Company marched directly behind a large float conveying the Grand Army of the Republic Veterans.

The actual start of the sale of Liberty Bonds was made by the Fifth Company at the Federal Building shortly afternoon. The program was in the nature of a Patriotic Jubilee conducted by the Fifth Company (Sacramento Braves) and resulted in thousands of dollars worth of Bonds being sold. H. E. Diggles, Godfather of the Braves, issued a challenge that he would take \$1000 worth of the Bonds if the rest of the audience would subscribe an equal amount. It required only sixty seconds, just one minute to call his challenge. It was believed that the third Liberty Bond issue would be more popular than the two preceding ones. The American people were aroused and money was forthcoming to help win the war. Many of those present had sons or brothers in France or in preparation camps, and freely placed their money in Uncle Sam's Liberty Bonds.

The annual Memorial Day parade and exercises on May 30, 1918, were more serious and reverent than for many years. In addition to the many thousands who had given their lives in the Civil War and in the Spanish-American War, many more thousands were giving their lives in France in what was believed to be a War that would put an end to War. The usual Memorial Day parade was held in the morning. When the procession reached the Southern Pacific bridge where flowers were strewn on the waters of the Sacramento river in memory of the sailor heroes who rest forever in the waters of the unknown deep, there seemed to be

FIFTH SEPARATE COMPANY (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

a more thoughtful reverence among the people as the flowers were tossed upon the water. From the river back to the Capital grounds the parade made its way. At Capital Park patriotic exercises were held.

The sixty old, but still gallant veterans of the Civil War, who occupied the front seats, lent to the scene a touch of color that was most spectacular. The heroes of '61 who fought for the Union were garbed in the blue uniforms so familiar to the soldiers of Grant. Patriotic selections were rendered by the Southern Pacific Glee Club and Platt's Band. General N. P. Chipman, presiding justice of the third district court of appeals, who in 1866 wrote the order which set apart May thirtieth as the National Memorial Day and who acted as Abraham Lincoln's escort when he made his famous Gettysburg address, presided at the afternoon exercises.

One interesting feature of the observance of memorial day in 1918 was the appearance of thirty-one men of the Fifth Separate Company. They carried a service flag that contained sixty-three stars, indicating that sixty-three of the original one hundred and three that had signed the first muster roll were in the service of Uncle Sam. Two thirds of the company had either enlisted or had been drafted into the United States Army. No wonder the various separate companies had such a hard time to remain in existence. Despite the difficulties encountered, the Fifth Company survived and on November 1, 1920, was redesignated Company B, Second Infantry Battalion.

Fontaine Johnson, succeeded Sidney H. Sayre as Captain on August 30, 1918 when Captain Sayre resigned. Captain Johnson also resigned October 14, 1918, but was again selected as Captain of the unit on February 9, 1920. Captain Johnson was still the commanding officer of Company B, Second Separate Battalion when the unit was redesignated and became Company G, 159th Infantry, October 1, 1921.