

# **History of the 8<sup>th</sup> Company, Coast Artillery Corps, National Guard of California 1910-1917**

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, 13 January 2015

EIGHTH COMPANY COAST ARTILLERY CORPS

2722 ✓

Eighth Company, Coast Artillery Corps, First Brigade

Reference: Adjutant General's Files

Location: San Diego, San Diego County

Mustered in May 16, 1910

Mustered into Federal Service April 23, 1917\*

Redesignated January 1, 1918\*\*

Commanding Officers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
J. V. Bush, Capt.	June 3, 1910	June 9, 1910
C. E. Nichols, First Lieut. (resigned Sept. 30, 1912)	June 3, 1910	June 9, 1910
James Muirhead, First Lieut.	Dec. 11, 1912	Mar. 11, 1913
<hr/>		
J. V. Bush, Capt. (reelected Dec. 5, 1913) (resigned Apr. 27, 1915)		
James Muirhead, Capt.	June 2, 1915	July 2, 1915
G. W. Fisher, First Lieut.	June 2, 1915	July 2, 1915

**Activities:**

During the month of March 1910, a group of twenty-one men enlisted in the Coast Artillery with the idea of forming a platoon to be connected with the artillery division at San Diego. However, an order was issued on May 11, 1910, which provided for the organization of a new artillery company to be known as the Eighth Company, Coast Artillery Corps,\*\*\* The order also provided for the transfer of sixty men from the Fifth Company, Coast Artillery Corps of San Diego to the newly organized unit, so instead of forming a platoon, these men assisted in the formation of an entirely new unit to be known as the Eighth Company, Coast Artillery Corps.

A meeting was held during the later part of March, where at the organization of the Second Company of Coast Artillery was discussed. This unit was to be stationed at Escondido, San Diego.

.oOo.

\*Eighth Company, Coast Artillery Corps, mustered into Federal Service April 23, 1917. Muster Roll Eighth Company First Coast Defense Command, April, 1917. Adjutant General Files.

\*\*Eighth Co., Coast Artillery Corps, redesignated Battery B, Sixty-Fifth Artillery, Coast Artillery Corps, January 1, 1919. Adjutant General Report 1920-1926, page 37.

\*\*\*General and Special Orders and Circulars 1910. General Order No. 12, May 11, 1910.

EIGHTH COMPANY COAST ARTILLERY CORPS (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

Captain H. R. Fay explained that if there were enough enlistments to organize a company at Escondido, it would mean the establishing of an armory there and the disbursement of \$1200 a year. A great deal of enthusiasm was aroused when Captain Fay spoke of some of the features of the coast artillery service. He also stated that there would be absolutely no expense to the enlisted men for equipment and that each men would be furnished with four uniforms. After a number of questions had been satisfactorily answered, the officers proceeded to take the applications for enlistment. At this first meeting twenty-one enlistments were accepted and thus was formed the nucleus of the Eighth Company, Coast Artillery Corps.

Lieutenant S. E. Clyne assumed command of the newly organized unit and called for an election of officers to be held on May twentieth. The action of the Adjutant-General in selecting Lieutenant Clyne as the commanding officer of the Eighth Company was greatly appreciated by the members. The Lieutenant was a recognized authority of the National Guard in matters pertaining to the coast artillery service having been an appointee of the War Department at the Artillery School for officers of the Regular Army at Fort Rosecrans. His military service in the National Guard at that time extended over a period of eight years in the Engineering, Infantry and Artillery branches of the service.

Sergeant J. U. Bush who was placed as second in command, also had a brilliant career in the National Guard service, having first joined in Iowa in 1899. He was continuously identified with military circles from that date. At the time he became affiliated with the Eighth Company. Sergeant Bush was transferred from the Fifth Company where he had been a First Sergeant.

It was gratifying to the officers and men of the local guard that their efforts to establish a second company of coast artillery had been so successfully and so quickly accomplished. Both commands were to participate in the joint army and militia maneuvers to be held at Fort Rosecrans.\*

The unit was mustered into the service of the State on May 16, 1910, and left for Fort Rosecrans on June 11, 1910, to encamp for a period of eight days. They were accompanied by the Fifth Company, Coast Artillery Corps, whose members were to assist the new recruits in acquiring a knowledge of military tactics.

.ooo.

\*The San Diego Union May 15, 1910, page 6, column 2.

EIGHTH COMPANY COAST ARTILLERY CORPS (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

The unit was anxious to attend the encampment although they had not received their uniforms. Therefore, the Fifth Company, Coast Artillery Corps, of San Diego, being eager for the new unit to join them in the maneuvers, shared their surplus uniforms and accoutrements with the Eighth Company. The members of the Eighth Company participated in all drills and maneuvers at the encampment and were highly praised for the interest they displayed. They assisted too in blending the powder to be used in the Big Gun practice which was held on June eighteenth, the day prior to breaking camp. The huge projectiles weighing six hundred and four pounds each, were also fused and capped ready for action.

The two companies of Coast Artillery, according to previous arrangements, were to fire the huge ten inch gun four times at a target. The first three were to be trial shots while the fourth would be for record. It was intended that a stationary pyramidal target be used for the practice and if the gun was handled in a satisfactory manner, the fourth shot would be made at a moving target. This method was followed and the fourth shot was made at the new material target which was towed at a speed of about five miles an hour by the government boat, Lieutenant George M. Harris. It was a perfect line shot but struck several yards short, hitting the surface of the water and ricocheting over the target without touching the netting. The range used was about 6,000 yards but had the distance been slightly increased, the shot would have pierced the target near the center. The trial shots were also perfect ones for direction, but the range used was too great and the shots went over the target. The record shot was fired in forty-seven seconds, which was considered excellent time considering this type of firing was comparatively new to all the troops. At the conclusion of the practice, Major Fay was highly pleased with the showing and congratulated the members of his command.

With the regulars and militiamen acting as a combined defensive force, and with three of the government boats representing ships of an imaginary hostile fleet, a tactical war problem had occupied the attention of the soldiers for several hours during the previous evening. The call to arms was sounded at nine-thirty P.M. and every soldier in camp sprang to his post, in record time. Such tests as these proved the alertness of the troops and their knowledge of duty.\*

The encampment held during the month of October 1914, proved that three years of training brought the standard of the Coast Artillery troops practically up to that of the Regulars. The Eighth and Fifth Companies, Coast Artillery Corps due to their efficiency were the only units of the California National Guard permitted to encamp during that year.

.oOo.

\*The San Diego Union June 17, 1910, page 9, column 1.

EIGHTH COMPANY COAST ARTILLERY CORPS (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

Guard duty along the border during the Mexican trouble of 1914 had nearly exhausted the state funds and left only enough to defray the expense of one or two companies. Adjutant-General Forbes, selected the two holding the highest records. This honor fell upon the Eighth and Fifth Companies, Coast Artillery Corps. No other organization in the state force was thus favored so the efficiency of these two units was apparent to those who directed the movements of the state troops.\* The encampment was under command of Major Herbert R. Fay, who highly commended the Eighth Company for its ability in handling the big gun, drilling, and firing squad movements.

Captain W. T. Platt of the Coast Artillery Corps having been detailed by the War Department as inspector and instruction officer for the Coast Artillery units, was also at camp. The Captain was the author of a book on coast artillery fire control apparatus, which facilitated study of that branch of the service in the National Guard.

As Captain Platt watched the troops go about their duties, he made the following statement:

"It has been my observation that State Guards from the smaller cities, are commanded by men who are in touch with the personnel. In this way it is possible to build up a highly efficient organization..In larger cities, officers have not the personal acquaintance with their men and consequently do not get as good results. I am pleased with the showing of these companies."

The first duty the unit performed at camp was to pitch the tents which they did with military precision. Then came the artillery drill with the big gun; the San Diego troops manning nearly all parts of the fire control apparatus from primary stations to plotting room, as well as the modern weapons of defense. The company was being gently led to the climax, which was a target practice with the monster disappearing rifles.

Artillery drill was followed by subcaliber target practice, and the gun crews and fire control details performed their duties well. The final test for the Eighth Company came on the tenth of October when they discharged the huge gun for a new record. The company was allowed four shots, two of which were trail shots. The rifles were handled entirely by the militiamen. Although Regular Army officers were present at the practice, they gave no orders and practically

.ooo.

\*The San Diego Union October 7, 1914, page 2, column 1.

2726

EIGHTH COMPANY COAST ARTILLERY CORPS (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

turned the Fort over to the National Guardsmen. Company Eighth, however, did not reach a perfect score as they hit the moving target only once out of two shots and were bested by the Fifth Company.

Major Fay was highly pleased with the encampment and admitted that the work of the men surpassed that of any previous encampment. The target practice for that one day cost the United States Government \$1000. Each time the guns were discharged, it was at an expense of \$125.

The encampment was of ten days duration and on October fourteenth the troops marched ten miles to their armory and after receiving their pay were dismissed.

Major Fay treated the boys to ten gallons of ice cream, which needless to say was enjoyed by all.\*

Prior to entering camp in 1914, the Eighth Company was stationed for eighteen days on the Mexican Border, guarding the San Diego water system. A number of other National Guard organizations were also stationed at the various water systems though out the territory adjacent to San Diego after the many alarming telegrams from American residents near the border reached the Governor's office. There were statements issued to the effect that Mexicans were coming across the border and committing depredations. It looked as though the United States was going to engage in a War with Mexico and the Americans near the border were crying for aid. Some raiding bandits supposedly Mexicans, had come from Lower California, murdered a storekeeper and robbed a store.

The companies of the United States Coast Artillery which was scattered along the border was not sufficient protection, therefore the Eighth Company was one of the National Guard units ordered to the border for active duty.\*\*

On May sixth Adjutant-General Forbes, visited San Diego in order to determine whether or not it was possible to relieve the troops from further duty. The expense incurred by the troops on guard duty was about \$1500 per day and there was but a small sum remaining in the militia fund.

.000.

\*The San Diego Union October 14, 1914, page 9 column 2.

\*\*Adjutant General Report 1910-1914, pages 46, 47.

EIGHT COMPANY COAST ARTILLERY CORPS (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

General Forbes considered every angle of the situation and finally decided that the troops should be returned to their home stations. They were however, to be in readiness in case they were again needed. The boys arrived at San Diego on May tenth after spending eighteen days on the Mexican Border. They were well occupied for some time after their return giving first hand accounts of life at the front.\*

A few days later on May twelfth the Fifth and Eighth Companies, gave a "Bivouac Chow" at their armory for the purpose of exchanging reminiscences of their recent experiences. Members of both companies were invited as was the Naval Militia, including the staff and medical officers\*\*

Two years later June 27, 1916, the Eighth Company was again called out for duty on the Mexican Border. Captain James Muirhead received a telegram from the office of the Adjutant-General which read as follows:

"By direction of the Governor you will assemble your company in your armory by twelve oclock noon, June twenty-seventh and report to Major Hagood, commanding the United States forces at Fort Rosecrans, for duty. You will make such arrangement for ammunition, transportation, subsistence and supplies as Major Hagood may direct.

(Signed) C. W. Thomas Jr.  
Asst. Adjt. Gen."

The entire company reported at the armory except for a few of the members who were out of town. It was, rather, an early morning call as at two forty-five A.M. the fire whistle was blown. This was to be known as the call to assemble in any case of emergency. The Eighth Company departed with forty-one men and three officers. Their number was increased by thirteen men the next day, the absent members having been notified. The unit left San Diego at three-thirty P.M. requiring three motor trucks and two large sight-seeing cars to transport the men and baggage.\*\*\* Camp life on the border for the Eighth Company was strickly on a war time basis, and the camp was kept spick and span. The men were in fine physical condition and could boast of being as brown as the proverbial berry. The camp was put in first class condition by installing every known comfort. The shower baths, screened meat houses, and with water piped to the kitchen were examples of the up to dateness of the camp. Therefore with the serving of such splendid food as cook Harry Young prepared, the ten days of guard duty was not hard for the men to endure.

.ooo.

\*The San Diego Tribune May 11, 1914, page 3, column 1.

\*\*The San Diego Union May 17, 1914, page 8, column 1.

\*\*\*The San Diego Union June 27, 1916, page 1. column 5

EIGHTH COMPANY COAST ARTILLERY CORPS (Continued)

## Activities: (continued)

The unit returned to San Diego on July sixth and went immediately into summer camp for fifteen days at Fort Rosecrans.

The troops however, did not take the Federal Oath. While on duty at the Mexican Border; they were at all times under supervision of the California National Guard. Upon returning to San Diego however, the Eight Company jointly with the Fifth Company, took the New Federal Oath. When this was done the United States Government took charge of the situation and replaced the National Guardsmen with Federal troops from Oregon, who had been on duty at the Panama Pacific Exposition.\*

The activities of the Eighth Company were not limited to military duties alone as the members participated in many civic and social affairs. One of the outstanding celebrations which the Eighth Company attended was the "Carnaval Cabrillo" held at San Diego in September 1913. A monument was erected on September twenty-fifth in honor of Juan Roderiguez Cabrillo, founder of San Diego. The site selected for the monument was at Point Loma where the old light house had stood for years. The monument was to be 150 ft. high and 550 ft. above the Pacific Ocean. For the first time in generations the voice of the King of Spain was heard officially, when Senor Juan Gauangos, special envoy of his Royal Eighness expressed his thanks in behalf of his King and country for the honor paid to one of that Nations greatest sons. The day was a typical San Diego day when the long line of official automobiles started from the Carnaval to the spot where the dedication took place. While the guns at Fort Rosecrans boomed out a national salute and the American flag was hoisted to the top of a mast erected on the summit of Point Loma, Lieutenant-Governor Wallace dedicated the monument. Grouped about the platform were troops from the Eighth Company, Coast Artillery, and Marines from the warships in the bay. At the base of a nearby hill were soldiers, dressed spanish style in costumes of red and yellow, while nearly a thousand people were gathered around to attend the ceremony.\*\*

The following day, a monument was also dedicated to Balboa. This dedication also called for a parade and again the Eighth Company paid tribute to one of the early founders of America. The pageant was about three miles long and contained six divisions. It was headed by Chief Iodine, the last of the Iroquois tribe, who for

.oOo.

\*The San Diego Union July 7, 1916, page 9, column 1.

\*\*The San Diego Union September 26, 1913, page 1, column 5.

2723

EIGHTH COMPANY COAST ARTILLERY CORPS (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

fifty years had been employed by the United States Government as a scout. The chief was followed by a platoon of mounted police, headed by Chief Keno Wilson. Following the police escort and the Grand Marshal, was a float depicting the Goddess of Liberty, impersonated by Miss Mabel Weber. Uncle Sam was impersonated by Allen Brant and Lieutenant Stockton was impersonated by John M. Smith.

The division of troops contained a detachment from the United States Cruisers in the harbor, under the leadership of Lieutenant Commander Enoch; a battalion from the Eighth Company, Coast Artillery under Captain J. W. Bush, another battalion under Captain C. M. Condon, and a division of the Naval Militia under Lieutenant Don M. Stewart.\*

The Eighth Company was accredited throughout the State as an up to the minute unit in all military tactics. Target practice was an essential factor in these requirements and the unit held a fair record at all times. The following records show the number of men qualifying for medals at target practices:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of men issued medals</u>
1911	20
1913	28
1915	8
1916	14

There was a decline in the number of men who qualified in 1915, which was largely due to a lack of practice. The following year showed a great improvement, proved that the unit was capable of doing well when properly instructed and with the necessary practice.

When the United States entered the World War in 1917, the Eighth Company was one of the units to be called. The company was mustered into Federal Service on April 12, 1917, and was redesignated Battery B, Sixty-Fifth Artillery, Coast Artillery Corps, on January 1, 1918.\*\*

.ooo.

\*The San Diego Union September 26, 1913, page 1, column 5.

\*\*Adjutant General Report 1920-1926, page 37.