

# **The California Volunteers and the Civil War: 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of Mountaineers 1863-1865**

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FIRST BATTALION OF MOUNTAINEERS

Reference: "Record of California Men in the War of the Rebellion" (1890)  
Adjutant General's Office

Regimental Headquarters:

Fort Humboldt, California  
Fort Gaston, California  
Fort Humboldt, California

June 1863  
Sept. 1863  
Sept. 1864-  
June 1865

Mustered in June 22, 1863  
Mustered out June 15, 1865

Commanding Officers:

<u>Name</u>	
Stephen G. Whipple, Lieut. Col.	_____
William S. R. Taylor, Major	_____
Charles W. Long, Major	_____

Commission  
Apr. 27, 1863  
June 2, 1863  
Sept. 9, 1864

Companies Included in First Battalion of Mountaineers:

Company A:

Headquarters: Fort Humboldt, California  
Mustered in May 30, 1863  
Mustered out April 25, 1865

Company B:

Headquarters: Fort Humboldt, California  
Mustered in June 2, 1863  
Mustered out May 13, 1865

Company C:

Headquarters: Fort Humboldt, California  
Mustered in August 29, 1863  
Mustered out May 23, 1865

Company D:

Headquarters: Fort Humboldt, California  
Mustered in March 16, 1864  
Mustered out May 20, 1865

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\*Battalion of Mountaineers became First Battalion of Mountaineers,  
"Synonyms of Volunteer Organizations of the United States", Page 8.

FIRST BATTALION OF MOUNTAINEERS (Continued)

Companies Included in First Battalion of Mountaineers: (Continued)

Company E:

Headquarters: Fort Humboldt, California  
Mustered in August 31, 1863  
Mustered out June 14, 1865

Company F:

Headquarters: Fort Humboldt, California  
Mustered in February 19, 1864  
Mustered out June 9, 1865

Activities of the First Battalion of Mountaineers:

The First Battalion of Mountaineers was organized during the year of 1863, by General Wright, who felt there was need of more troops for service against the Indians in Humboldt County, as all regular troops were put into service during the War of the Rebellion.

General Wright received his orders to organize such a battalion, through the War Department, and the Governor of California responded very readily by issuing a proclamation calling for six companies of infantry. These men were to be mustered into service as an emergency group and discharged whenever the Indian warfare had ceased. However, upon completing the organization the soldiers were given the same rating as Volunteer Troops, enlisting for a term of three years and sharing alike in bounty and monthly salary. This rating was later changed, as records show where these troops did not remain in the United States service for that length of time. A Special Order (No. 72) was issued through the War Department on March 31, 1865, releasing the men in the First Battalion of Mountaineers at such time as troops could be sent to relieve them. Company B, of the Fourth Regiment of Infantry, was the first relief unit sent to Humboldt County through this special order.

The first Battalion of Mountaineers was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Stephen G. Whipple, who was mustered into service and assumed command on June 22, 1863. The companies forming the battalion were organized within the territory that was most affected by Indian depredations, and remained there until mustered out at different dates during the Spring of 1865.

COMPANY A FIRST BATTALION OF MOUNTAINEERS.

Company A:

Location: Humboldt County, California

Mustered in May 30, 1863

Mustered out April 25, 1865

Commanding Officers:

<u>Name:</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Charles W. Long, Captain	_____	Feb. 9, 1863
Knyphausen Gier, Captain	_____	Nov. 10, 1864
Thomas Middleton, First Lieut.	_____	Nov. 30, 1864

Activities:

Company A was organized in Humboldt County By Captain Long; and remained on duty in that vicinity taking an active interest in bringing the Indians to terms of peace.

The only activity on file relative to this unit of men as a company, is a remark found on one of the Muster Rolls. Sergeant Sevier of Company A, reported that on the seventh of July, he was sent on a scout against the Indians on Mad River. On the eleventh of that month, he attacked a small band, killing two and wounding one.

This company was stationed, for a period of time, at Camp Jaqua and Fort Gaston but returned to Fort Humboldt to be mustered out of the United States service on April 25, 1865.

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Company B;

Location: Humboldt County, California

Mustered in June 2, 1863

Mustered out May 13, 1865

Commanding Officers:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
George W. Onsley, Captain	_____	Feb. 9, 1863
Isaac W. Hempfield, First Lieut.	_____	Apr. 27, 1863

Activities:

Company B was raised during May of 1862, the men being recruited from Arcata, which at that time was also in the district of Indian warfare.

On the seventeenth of November, 1863, Captain Onsley, with a detachment of fifteen men of Company B, had an engagement with some hostiles on Willow Creek, which was about eight miles from Fort Gaston. During this skirmish the Captain and two of his men were wounded. The following month Captain Onsley was again on duty; and with a detachment of thirty men (from Companies A, B, and C), provided with a mountain howitzer, attacked an Indian fortification on Christian Prairie. The outcome of this skirmish was the capturing of two horses and mules, four guns, several saddles, and other articles of property belonging to the Indians. The troops then destroyed all the Indian houses and provisions. There were several Indians killed and but one soldier wounded.

Company B was stationed first at Fort Gaston, remaining there on scout duty until January, 1864, when it was sent to Camp Anderson, being stationed there until October, 1864. Camp Curtis was the final station of the company and in January of 1865 while located there the company received news of the Ferry House\* being robbed. Ferry House was located on Mad River near the camp and it was reported that Indians were responsible for the robbery. Corporal Bosque and Private Adams went in search of these Indians and captured ten without the use of fire arms, as both Indians and soldiers were unarmed. They also recovered a portion of the stolen goods.\*\* This unit remained at Camp Curtis until mustered out of service on May 13, 1865.

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\*The Ferry House no doubt applies to the pier where the ferry boats were docked.

\*\*Sacramento Union, January 23, 1865, Page, 2, Column 1.

COMPANY C FIRST BATTALION OF MOUNTAINEERS

Company C:

Location: Humboldt County California

Mustered in August 29, 1863

Mustered out May 23, 1865

Commanding Officers:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Abraham Miller, Captain	_____	April 4, 1863
John A. Watson, First Lieut.	_____	June 5, 1863

Activities:

Company C was organized in Humboldt and Trinity counties, by Captain Abraham Miller, during the month of August 1863. The unit was kept on duty throughout these counties until the Indian depredations had been somewhat put to an end.

Before the company was mustered into service, a detachment of eighteen men, under Sergeant Day, were attacked by a band of nearly eighty hostile Indians. This took place at Redwood Creek, while the troops were escorting a government train. The encounter lasted for six hours and the soldiers finally routed the Indians, killing six and wounding many.\*

On the fifteenth day of September the Indians shot and killed William Terry of Company C, while on escort duty to the United States Mail between Hoopa Valley and Weaverville. During November of the same year, Captain Miller with fifteen men, surprised a party of Indians, who were killing a beef. An encounter followed in which two Indians were killed and two wounded.

On the twenty-eighth of May, 1864, nine men under command of Sergeant Wilson, were on a scout when they discovered an Indian rancheria. A spirited battle took place in which several hostiles were killed and two wounded. The troops endeavored to advance upon the rancheria, which was situated under a high and steep bank close to the river, but abandoned the idea when about twenty Indians from the opposite bank fired upon them. Shots were exchanged with this band until after dark, when Sergeant Wilson realized an attempt to enter the rancheria would be futile and unwise, as his small group of men would be exposed to great danger. He, therefore, ordered their return to camp and a second command was sent

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\*Taken from the Muster Roll of Company C, for August 1863.

COMPANY C FIRST BATTALION OF MOUNTAINEERS (CONT.)

Activities: (Continued)

out to scout for these Indians, of which there is no further record.

Company C remained on active duty in this territory until mustered out of service at Fort Humboldt on May 23, 1865.

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COMPANY D FIRST BATTALION OF MOUNTAINEERS

Company D:

Location: Humboldt County, California

Mustered in March 16, 1864

Mustered out May 20, 1865

Commanding Officers:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
William C. Martin, Captain	_____	Aug. 16, 1863
Rufus F. Herrick, First Lieut.	_____	Dec. 4, 1863

Activities:

Company D was formed in Humboldt County, during March of 1864. The men of this company were stationed at Fort Humboldt, during their entire term of service; and were kept mostly as a reserve in case of any serious Indian outbreak. However, occasionally they were sent on scouting parties in the vicinity. Lieutenant Herrick and thirty-seven men from Company D were sent on an Indian Scouting Expedition, to capture Indians living near the settlements in Trinity County. Upon returning to Camp they had taken seventy-nine Indian prisoners, seventy-two of whom were sent to Fort Humboldt in charge of Lieutenant Herrick of Company D and Lieutenant Middleton of Company A and a detachment from Fort Gaston.

There are no other reports of this company's activities on file, and they were mustered out of service at Fort Humboldt on May 20, 1865.

COMPANY E FIRST BATTALION OF MOUNTAINEERS

COMPANY E:

Location: Humboldt County, California  
Mustered in August 31, 1865  
Mustered out June 14, 1865

Commanding Officers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
John P. Simpson, Captain	_____	Feb. 28, 1863
W. W. Skinner, First Lieut.	_____	June 18, 1863

Activities:

Company E was organized in Mendocino County and mustered into service at Fort Humboldt, remaining there until October 1863. From there the unit was sent to Camp Grant to be stationed at that point until mustered out of service, except for times when detachments were ordered on scouts against the Indians. Lieutenant Skinner reported that on the fifteenth of October, 1863, a group of twenty men under his command, succeeded in capturing four Indians and held them as prisoners.

During February of 1864, Lieutenant William W. Frazier and a detachment of men from Company E had an encounter with hostile Indians on the upper Mattoale; and after killing thirteen of them, they took twenty-one as prisoners. Lieutenant Frazier was accredited with breaking up a band of hostiles in that territory, during May of the same year. In a report from Captain Simpson, August, 1864, he claimed the Indians were very numerous throughout Humboldt County, although they were gradually reporting voluntarily to the fort. The government had set aside a portion of land called a reservation, which these Indians could live upon, and where the natives would not be mistreated. The sixty-nine prisoners held at Fort Humboldt were satisfied to go to the reservation if their lives would be spared. At that time there were prospects of many more surrendering, as they became convinced of being treated kindly.

The company remained at Camp Grant until ordered to Fort Humboldt to be mustered out of service on June 14, 1865.

COMPANY F FIRST BATTALION OF MOUNTAINEERS

Company F:

Location: Humboldt County, California

Mustered in February 19, 1864

Mustered out June 9, 1865

<u>Name</u>	<u>Commanding Officers</u>	
	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Robert Burd, Captain	_____	July 1, 1863
A. W. Randall, First Lieut.	_____	Aug. 25, 1863

Activities:

Company F was organized during January 1864 at Fort Jones and various places throughout Siskiyou County. These troops were mustered into service at San Francisco on February 19, 1864, and left immediately for Klamath County, where bands of hostile Indians were creating a great deal of disturbance.

Prior to being mustered into the service, a detachment of sixty-three men under command of First Lieutenant A. W. Randall moved from Fort Jones, California, on the twelfth of February, 1864, and took post at the forks of the Klamath River, arriving there on the seventeenth. Distance marched was sixty-five miles as per telegram from Brigadier General Wright, commanding Department of Pacific, dated February 10, 1864. They were mustered in with the company at San Francisco on February nineteenth. The company was stationed at Fort Gaston, Klamath County, from June twentieth to August 31, 1864. The following information was taken from the company muster-roll of August to October:

"October 28, 1864, left Camp at Fort Gaston (per D. S. O. #58 dated Fort Humboldt October 19, 1864) the same day arriving at Winchepecks on Klamath River, distance marched thirteen miles. The morning of the twenty-ninth we embarked with all the company property in eleven canoes and at 5 P.M. reached Youngs on Klamath River, distance traveled twenty-five miles. On morning of the thirtieth re-embarked at 7 A.M. and at 9 A.M., while passing down the river, one of the canoes capsized turning the men and effects into the river, loosing five guns and one bugle (government property) and some effects belonging to the men were lost. At 5 P.M. we reached the mouth of the Klamath River - distance traveled twenty-five miles. Total distance from Fort Gaston sixty-three miles, en-route to Camp Lincoln, Klamath County."

The Company remained at Camp Lincoln, Klamath County, until mustered out of service on June 9, 1865.