

# **History of the El Dorado Mountaineers, California Militia 1863-1866**

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El Dorado Mountaineers, Company G, Second Infantry Battalion, Fourth Brigade

Reference: Dead Office File, Row 4, File 6

Location: El Dorado, Eldorado County

Mustered in September 9, 1863

Mustered out July 25, 1866

Commanding Officers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Thomas J. Heninger, Captain	Sept. 9, 1863	Oct. 31, 1863
Elias Willow, First Lieut.	Sept. 9, 1863	Oct. 31, 1863
Elias Willow, Captain	Jan. 7, 1865	Jan. 21, 1865
Alonzo S. Smith, First Lieut.	Jan. 7, 1865	Jan. 21, 1865
Elias Willow, Captain (Reelected Nov. 4, 1865)	_____	_____
Alonzo S. Smith, First Lieut. (Reelected Nov. 4, 1865)	_____	_____

Activities:

The El Dorado Mountaineers were organized September 9, 1863, in the town of El Dorado which was formally known as "Mud Springs". This name was derived from a spring at the edge of the town used for watering horses and cattle, which caused it to be always muddy. In order to distinguish it from Diamond Springs, two miles north of there, it was given the name of Mud Springs which name it was known as until the town incorporated in 1855, and was called El Dorado. The County of Eldorado which is noted for its mines was one of the first mining settlements in the gold rush of 1849. These mines drew many rough characters that were in the habit of traveling from one mine to another causing trouble wherever they went. Due to that existing situation it is assumed the El Dorado Mountaineers were organized as an independent company of militia.

The first election of officers for this company was held on September 9, 1863, at which time Thomas J. Heninger was elected Captain and Elias Willow, First Lieutenant. Upon expiration of his term, Captain Heninger left the militia to recruit a company of volunteers for the War of the Rebellion. He remained as Captain of that company (known as Company H, Seventh Regiment of Infantry) until the close of the War in 1866.\*

Elias Willow was then promoted to Captain on January 7, 1865, and Alonzo S. Smith elected to serve with him as First Lieutenant. These officers held their respective ranks throughout a second term of service being reelected on November 4, 1865. The annual

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EL DORADO MOUNTAINEERS (Continued)

Activities: (continued)

elections are the only activities on record pertaining to the El Dorado Mountaineers except for the organization of the Second Infantry Battalion, of which the company was a part. On December 30, 1863, the Second Infantry Battalion of the Fourth Brigade was organized from five companies in Eldorado County and remained in existence until July of 1866. The companies included were the Georgetown Union Guard, Placerville City Guard, National Guard of Upper Placerville, Banks Guard of Smith's Flat and the El Dorado Mountaineers.

During the War of the Rebellion an organization composed of men residing in the North, known as the "Copperheads" created a great deal of consternation throughout the country. The use of the term "Copperhead" spread throughout the North quietly and persistently, so much so, that there was a fancied resemblance of the peace party to the venomous snake which strikes without warning. These "Copperheads" residents of the North deemed it impossible to conquer the Confederacy and were earnestly in favor of peace, consequently they were opposed to the war policy of the President and Congress. Some of the more zealous advocates of the peace policy wore badges that were made by cutting the heads from one cent pieces, believing that such a display emphasized their attitude more fully.\* These same men caused considerable worry for the various communities in Eldorado and Amador Counties, as was evidenced in a letter written by Lieutenant Colonel A.J. Baber of the Second Infantry Battalion, to Adjutant General Evans on the fourth of May, 1864. The Lieutenant Colonel informed the Adjutant General that he had received a report that an organization headed by prominent Copperheads was preparing to attack their different militia companies in Eldorado and Amador Counties, so as to force the men to deliver up their arms. This intention had been learned from some of the more indiscreet residents of the town of El Dorado who had been invited to join the organization. It was through the vigilance of Major Stanford and Captain T.J. Heninger, the facts had been ascertained. Proof had not yet been obtained for the report that these rebels had already completed an organization on the Eastern slope of the locality, though from the information at hand the Colonel was of the opinion that the movement was already started. The Lieutenant Colonel desired that each of his companies be supplied with at least twenty rounds of cartridges, and he also requested the Adjutant General to order the Second Infantry Battalion into a County encampment so that the members of the companies under his command might be given a regular military training, as many of the men had never fired a musket in their lives, and, some of the Captains were having difficulty in drawing a full attendance for meetings and drills. The Colonel explained to the Adjutant Gen-

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\*Encyclopaedia Britannica, Volume 6, page 409

ET DORADO MOUNTAINEERS (Continued)

EL DORADO MOUNTAINEERS (Continued)

EL DORADO MOUNTAINEERS (Continued)

Baker Guard, Company H, Fourth Infantry, Fourth Brigade  
Reference: Dead Office File, Row 4, File 4

Activites: Sacramento, Sacramento County

eral that he would leave the matter of length of time for the Encampment to the discretion of the General as he (the General) would know approximately the proper length of time it took to break in "raw" recruits. Colonel Baber did express the wish that the Encampment might be the latter part of June so that the members would be in good drill for the Fourth of July celebration (1864). There are no further records to show if the Lieutenant Colonel's request of Adjutant General Evans was granted, but it can be assumed that owing to the fact that Lieutenant Colonel Baber was so much interested in the protection of his country's needs that he did his best to see that his Battalion was as well trained as was possible under the circumstances, nor is there any information to show whether the Copperheads did carry their threats of trouble into definite action.

The El Dorado Mountaineers were mustered out in 1866, under the Military Law which reduced the number of Infantry companies of the State. This was due to the fact that the population of the mining towns was somewhat transient and the companies were unable to keep up their organizations under the requirements of the Military Law. The company was, therefore, mustered out of service by Major Charles H. Pomeroy on July 25, 1866.

and mustered out of the State Militia on the same date with a membership of twenty-four, and in less than a year was recruited up to forty-nine men. Under command of Captain Crowell the unit was speedily uniformed and equipped and devoted much time and energy to drill and target practice. The Baker Guard was soon recognized as one of the best disciplined as well as one of the finest appearing companies in the State Militia. However, they were never called upon for active service as a law enforcement agency. Despite this and the fact that after the conclusion of the Civil War there was a lack of interest in Military Affairs, the number of enrolled members of this company materially decrease as the Muster Roll of June 1, 1866, shows fifty-one names. However, under the Law of 1866 pursuant to which the military force of the State was reorganized as the National Guard of California and the number of units throughout the State was materially reduced this organization was disbanded and the Baker Guard was mustered out of the service of the State on June 25, 1866.\*

It is probable that the members of the Baker Guard re-entered the service under the new National Guard Law as a notation appears in the Historical Record of the Fourth Brigade to the effect that the company consolidated with the National Guard, but no mention is made of a consolidation with any other company.\*\*

\*Adjutant General Report 1865-1867, page 92.  
\*\*Historical Record Fourth Brigade 1864-1867, page 29. Adjutant General's Office.