

History of the Germania Rifles, National Guard of California 1866-1881

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, 16 January 2015

GERMANIA RIFLES

Activities: (Continued)

Germania Rifles, Company D, Second Infantry Regiment, Second Brigade.
Reference: Dead Office File, Row 7, File 1.
Location: San Francisco, San Francisco County.
Mustered in May 21, 1868
Mustered out _____

Commanding Officers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
John Sneider, Captain	May 22, 1868	June 13, 1868
George Cantos, First Lieutenant	May 22, 1868	June 13, 1868
<hr/>		
John Sneider, Captain (Re-elected May 27, 1872)		
Adolf Goetzen, First Lieutenant	May 27, 1872	June 19, 1872
<hr/>		
John Sneider, Captain (Re-elected June 24, 1873)		
William Newman, First Lieutenant	June 24, 1873	July 9, 1873
<hr/>		
George Van Senden, Captain	Sept. 21, 1875	Oct. 11, 1875
William Brockhoff, First Lieutenant	Feb. 9, 1875	Mar. 8, 1875
<hr/>		
William Brockhoff, Captain	Feb. 13, 1877	Feb. 20, 1877
Adolph Obermeyer, First Lieutenant	Feb. 13, 1877	Feb. 20, 1877
<hr/>		
William Brockhoff, Captain (Re-elected Feb. 19, 1879)		
Philip Newman, First Lieutenant	Feb. 19, 1879	Mar. 22, 1879

Activities:

On May 15, 1868, Colonel J. W. McKenzie commanding the Second Infantry Regiment, Second Brigade, stated in a letter to Adjutant General James M. Allen that the military company known as the Germania Rifles was in a splendid state of discipline and drill, and recommended that the unit be mustered into the service of the State and admitted to his regiment.* Accompanying his letter was the petition of the Germania Rifles requesting that they be mustered into the National Guard. On May 21, 1868, Special Order No. 29 was issued, commanding Colonel McKenzie to detail an officer to muster in the Germania Rifles to fill the vacancy caused by the mustering out of the Liberty Guard, Company D, Second Infantry Regiment, Second Brigade.** Colonel McKenzie ordered Lieutenant E. Irving Smith to muster in the company and preside at the election of officers, which was accomplished on May twenty-eighth of the same year. John Sneider was elected Captain and George Cantos was chosen for First Lieutenant.

*Letter on file Adjutant General's Office.
**Adjutant General Report, 1867-1869, page 142.

GERMANIA RIFLES (Continued)

Activities: (Continued)

In a return of Public Property Blank dated September eighth, Captain Sneider stated "that the Germania Rifles possessed no State property, the unit having furnished their own arms, uniforms and equipment." On May 19, 1869, the company received their first arms and equipment from the State. The shipment consisted of a stand of eighty Springfield Rifles and all necessary accoutrements. No uniforms were issued at that time.

The company steadily improved at target practice until in 1878 the Germania Rifles made a score of 49.50 percent; but in 1879 their showing dropped to 47.21 percent. Captain Brockhoff was one of the sixteen men that qualified for the Creedmoor Team. At the interstate military match held at Creedmoor, New York, on September 12, 1877, the Captain made the unparelled record of eighty-nine points out of a possible 100. The final score of each team in that contest was California 995, New York 967, Connecticut 971, and New Jersey 744. Therefore, California's National Guard Rifle Team, participating for the first time in such a contest, received the highest score becoming the National Champions. The award was a trophy of bronze called "The Soldier of Marathon". Enroute home from New York the victorious team was tendered joyous receptions at Stockton, Sacramento, Oakland, and San Francisco. The team reached the latter city on the evening of October third of the same year at nine o'clock and found the regiments and companies (composing the Second Brigade) and an immense crowd at the Ferry Building to greet them. Their arrival was the signal for a salute from the guns of the Light Guard, after which the members of the victorious team were escorted to carriages, and the column stepped out in quickstep time for parade, the Oakland Guard acting as escort. The route was by Market Street to California, to Montgomery, to Kearney, down California to Montgomery and counter marching in front of the armory of the First Infantry Regiment. Arriving at the armory, the officers of the Second Brigade escorted the team to the reception that had been arranged, and a large number of prominent citizens and United States Army officers were also present to do honor to the occasion, including Major Bryant, Major General McDonald, Major General Vernon, and the staff of the latter, and Brigadier-General John McComb. The trophy of the "Soldier of Marathon" was borne into the room and exhibited. Colonel Wason, in a few words gave a welcome to the team. Major Bryant gave a short address on the victory that the team had achieved, and the glory which it had reflected on California by placing the State in the van of military marksmanship. Prior to the departure of the team, the National Guard of California did not entertain a doubt as to the final results; but the

-0o0-

*San Francisco Examiner, October 4, 1877, page 3, column 5.

-2-

**Adjutant General Report, 1877-1878, pages 77, 78.

Activities: (Continued)

contest was a keen one, and it was creditable to California that the match had resulted in its favor. General McComb, who was a member of the Creedmoor Team and responded for the team, said the men felt very grateful for the magnificent reception it had been accorded, not only in the armory but in the streets. When the team left for Creedmoor its members felt that they had a right to expect that they would win the trophy, judging the match by past achievements. They were prepared to go a long way ahead of what had been recorded in previous years. The soldier trophy had passed to New York on a percentage of sixty-seven out of 100, and Connecticut won it the following year by sixty-nine percent. In practice California had shown a capacity to make eighty percent, and despite the distance traveled, the nervousness incident thereto, and a disadvantage of shooting on a strange range the team felt confident of success. General McComb concluded by saying that the teams from the other states had treated California handsomely, and while there was a disposition in the East to wrest the trophy from this State next year, he felt confident that California would be equal to the occasion, if at all diligent at practice and would retain its honor. Adjutant General Walsh, then presented in the name of the "Old Friends Society," a tastefully arranged tray of flowers to Captain Brockhoff, the crack shot of the team. In the absence of the Captain, Colonel Smedberg, of the Second Regiment, accepted the present and returned thanks.

Major General McDowell was then called upon, and in a somewhat humorous speech complimented the team on its victory and stated that he hardly expected it to be successful, because between the Sierra and the shores of the Atlantic there are a good many people, and some of them are such excellent shots, that they have defeated the crack marksmen of Great Britain, Australia and Canada. In the army he had been one of the promoters of long rifle practice at the target, and personally he had felt glad the State in which he was a resident for the time being as an army officer, had proved itself the superior in an interstate match.* The trophy was placed in the custody of the Adjutant-General there to remain until 1878, when it was returned to Creedmoor to be awarded to the victor of that year's contest. Brigadier-General John McComb of the Second Brigade who was a member of the team and scored seventy-nine points, recommended that the State Legislature appropriate \$6,000 toward defraying the expense of a team to participate in the match of 1878, as he doubted if funds could be raised by popular subscription as was done in 1877.** Apparently the money was not appropriated, as no further mention is made of the match in the later Report of the Adjutant General.

-0o0-

*San Francisco Examiner, October 4, 1877, page 3, column 5.

**Adjutant General Report, 1877-1879, pages 77, 78.

GERMANIA RIFLES (Continued)

Activities: (Continued) SARFIELD GUARD

In the decade of 1870-1880 agitation against the unrestricted entrance of Chinese coolie labor into the United States commenced, and in the years 1877 to 1880, because of this situation, the National Guard was placed under arms on several occasions in anticipation of mob violence against the Chinese. In November 1877 the Germania Rifles was called into service for nine days and in January 1878 for eleven days. In 1879 the shooting of Dr. Kallcock, a candidate of the Workingmen's Party for Mayor in San Francisco, by Charles DeYoung caused the National Guard to be called out to guard the city prison against the seizure of DeYoung by a threatening mob. The Workingmen's Party was bitterly opposed to the unrestricted entrance of Chinese into this country. With the settling of the Chinese question by the adoption of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, the National Guard was not called upon to aid the civil authorities for several years, as by the enactment of this law the cause of most of the agitation was removed. The annual inspection of the Germania Rifles usually revealed that the unit was above the regimental average in the percentage column. In 1879 the company received a rating of 90.74 percent, while the regiment averaged only 82.81 percent.*

On March 26, 1880, Adjutant General Backus issued an order which stated that from that date on, in all official correspondence, companies attached to regiments or battalions would be recognized by letter only. In the same order the Germania Rifles was designated as Company D, Second Infantry Regiment, Second Brigade, National Guard of California.**

-000-

*Adjutant General Report 1879, page 74.

**Adjutant General Report 1880, General Order No. 12, page 63.

*Company derived name of Sarfield from the famed soldier, Patrick Sarfield, Earl of Lucan, Ireland, who was a commanding officer in the English Army during the reign of Charles II and James II of England.