

History of the Hugh O'Neil Guard, California Militia 1863-1866

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

HUGH O'NEIL GUARD

Hugh O'Neil Guard, Company K, Second (Irish) Infantry Regiment, Second Brigade

Reference: Dead Office File, Row 7, File 2
Location: San Francisco, San Francisco County
Mustered in May 6, 1863
Mustered out July 21, 1866

Commanding Officers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Commission</u>
Mark W. Higgins, Captain	May 6, 1863	May 16, 1863
Charles Koen, First Lieut. (Resigned Jan. 26, 1864)	May 6, 1863	May 16, 1863
Nicholas Sweeney, First Lieut.	Jan. 16, 1864	Jan. 26, 1864
Mark W. Higgins, Captain (Re-elected June 11, 1864)	_____	_____
Nicholas Sweeney, First Lieut. (Re-elected June 11, 1864)	_____	_____
Mark W. Higgins, Captain (Re-elected June 14, 1865)	_____	_____
Nicholas Sweeney, First Lieut. (Re-elected June 14, 1865)	_____	_____

Activities:

The Hugh O'Neil Guard was organized at San Francisco May 6, 1863, under and by virtue of a petition signed by sixty-six citizens residing in the city and county of San Francisco. An order of the County Court designated a time and place for the meeting of the petitioners to perfect the organizations and elect officers as required by the Military Law of the State. The company was immediately mustered in as a unit of the State Militia as Company K, and attached to the Second Infantry Regiment, Second Brigade. The company received its arms and equipment in September 1863, but no uniforms were available from the State at that time and unlike some of the other companies of the Second Regiment, the members of the O'Neil Guard did not provide their own uniforms.

The Hugh O'Neil Guard attended the Second Brigade encampment held in Alameda in the Summer of 1863, but being without uniforms were unable to make the showing or win the applause they were entitled to by reason of their military skill and patriotic zeal.

The company devoted much time and effort to target practice and drill and attained a high degree of efficiency in both. The membership of the unit was kept up as the Muster Roll of June 15, 1865, showed an enrollment of sixty-seven men. It was, therefore,

✓ 455

HUGH O'NEIL GUARD (Continued)

Activities: (Continued) (SAN FRANCISCO GUARD)

surprising to find that on the twenty-first of July, 1866 the Hugh O'Neil Guard was mustered out of the service of the State. The records do not disclose the reason the company did not reorganize and enter the State service under the new National Guard Law of April 1866, as many other companies did; but it is safe to assume that the company was not able to meet the requirements of the new Military Law, or the regulations adopted by the State Board of Organization and Location.

Name	Rank	Commission
William C. Johnson, Captain (Resigned Sept. 1, 1863)	May 8, 1863	June 12, 1863
J. V. McElwee, Captain (Re-elected May 2, 1864) (Resigned Nov. 20, 1864)	Oct. 2, 1863	Oct. 31, 1863
M. Mills, First Lieut. (Resigned Oct. 28, 1863)	May 8, 1863	June 12, 1863
William C. Johnson, Captain (Re-elected Dec. 8, 1864)	Oct. 2, 1863	Oct. 31, 1863
George Humphreys, Captain (Resigned Oct. 1, 1864)	Oct. 4, 1864	Dec. 8, 1864
J. V. McElwee, Captain (Re-elected May 2, 1864) (Resigned Nov. 20, 1864)	Dec. 6, 1864	Dec. 11, 1864
William C. Johnson, First Lieut. (Re-elected Dec. 8, 1864)		
J. V. McElwee, Captain (Re-elected May 2, 1864) (Resigned Nov. 20, 1864)		
Henry Cooper, First Lieut.	May 2, 1865	May 20, 1865
Edwin Lewis, Captain (Resigned April 8, 1868)	Nov. 27, 1865	Jan. 18, 1867
J. V. McElwee, Captain	Sept. 1, 1867	Mar. 28, 1868
William C. Johnson, First Lieut. (Resigned April 8, 1868)	May 1, 1866	Nov. 7, 1866
Ransford O. Sheldon, First Lieut.	Mar. 28, 1868	Sept. 21, 1868

Activities:

The Columbian Guard, a company of infantry organized in San Francisco, May 8, 1863, was mustered in as a unit of the Santa Militia on the same date, and attached to the First Infantry Regiment, Second Brigade, and designated as Company D. The company received its arms and equipment early in September 1863, and attended the Second Brigade Encampment at Camp Allen, Alameda County, in October of the same year, where, although lacking experience and training, they made a very creditable showing.