Finding Aid of the First California Guard Papers C058484

Finding aid prepared by Carolee Gilligan Wheeler
Society of California Pioneers
300 Fourth Street
San Francisco, CA, 94107-1272
(415) 959-1849
pkeats@californiapioneers.org
07/10/2003
Title: First California Guard Papers
Identifier/Call Number: C058484
Contributing Institution: Society of California Pioneers
Language of Material: English
Storage Unit: B001627
Storage Unit: C058484
Physical Description: 8.0 folderSee Scope and Contents for full container list.
Date (bulk): Bulk, 1853-1854
Date (inclusive): 1849 to 1856
Abstract: The Papers of the First California Guard comprises 8 folders of original documents dating from the first formation of the Guard under Military Governor Bennett S. Riley in 1849. The collection contains meeting minutes, constitution and by-laws of the Guard, letters of acceptance and resignation, certificates, and bills and receipts of the organization. Date range: 1849-1856, with the bulk of the material dated 1853-1854.
Conditions Governing Access note
Collection open for research.
Conditions Governing Use note
There are no restrictions on access.
Preferred Citation note
First California Guard Papers. The Society of California Pioneers.
Donor
Donor and date of acquisition unknown.
Biographical/Historical note
The First California Guard was formed July 27, 1849 and was officially called the Company A, 1st Regiment, Light Artillery, under the Military Governor of California, Brigadier General Bennett S. Riley. It was formed to prevent situations similar to the "Hounds" of San Francisco (a lawless gang) from forming.
A number of prominent citizens, dreading a reoccurrence of a similar situation, conceived the idea for organizing a permanent volunteer company. Although it was designated as a light artillery organization, it was initially equipped as an infantry unit. General Riley commissioned Henry M. Naglee, Captain and Company Commander. Other volunteers who received appointments were: First Lieutenants O.H. Howard, and Myron Norton; Second Lieutenants Hall McAllister, and David F. Bagley; Company Surgeon Samuel Gerry, and Company Sergeant R.H. Sinton. By September 1849, Captain Naglee had recruited 100 volunteers, outfitting them in deep blue uniforms with artillery red trim.
The history of the California National Guard responding to the emergency needs of citizens is traced to this company. They were called for duty at the scene of the wreck of the steamer "Yankee Blade." This ship, on September 30, 1854, with nearly 800 passengers, ran into a reef at Point Arguello and nearly 200 people lost their lives. The survivors were assaulted by an armed band of 60 men and some of the survivors were murdered. The First California Guard was called to the scene to preserve life and property and to maintain law and order.
The First California Guard did not take part in the Civil War as a unit but made its contribution to the Union indirectly. The unit drilled frequently at the Presidio of San Francisco and was the only artillery company in California. It aided in the formation at the First Regiment, California Volunteers; the California 100; and the California Cavalry Battalion.
At a celebration of the "Society of California Pioneers" held New Year's Day 1851, the California Guard acted as escort to the society during their parade through the principle streets to the plaza, where an address was delivered by Captain John Frisbie. (Source: http://www.militarymuseum.org)
Scope and Contents note
The Papers of the First California Guard comprises 8 folders of original documents.
Folder 1: Meeting minutes, July 27, 1849-May 4, 1850 (17 documents, 2 pieces of ephemera). Folder 2: Meeting minutes, September 1853-March 4, 1854 (14 documents). Folder 3: Constitution and By-Laws (notes and pamphlet), 1849 (unbound) and 1850 (2 copies, both bound. Copy 2 has handwritten notes on changes made on 05/25/1852). Folder 4: Letters of resignation, 1853-1854, undated (19 documents). Folder 5: 2 Certificates of membership (1- Jacob Lerman of the San Francisco Blues, 05/26/1856; 2 - Major Jacob R. Snyder of the First California Guard, 07/04/1851). Folder 6: Bills and receipts, 1852-1854 (59 documents). Folder 7: Bills and receipts, including dues paid, 1853-1854 (19 documents). Folder 8: Correspondence to the Guard, 1853-1854 (8 documents).
Existence and Location of Originals note
The Society of California Pioneers, 300 Fourth Street, San Francisco, CA 94107.

Related Archival Materials note
C020898 - Election to Honorary membership in First California Guard (Flying Artillery Corps) of Major Jacob R. Snyder; dated 07/04/1851. C043808 - Invitation: 28th Anniversary Ball of the First California Guard; 08/01/1877. C047518 - Manuscript of the article, "The First California Guard," by Walter C. Allen.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Naglee, Henry Morris, Captain, 1815-1886
Riley, George Bennett, Brigadeer General
California, Northern - History - 19th century.
California--History, Military--19th century.
Militia
San Francisco Bay Area (Calif.)--History