

Quarterly Bulletin of the Calaveras County Historical Society

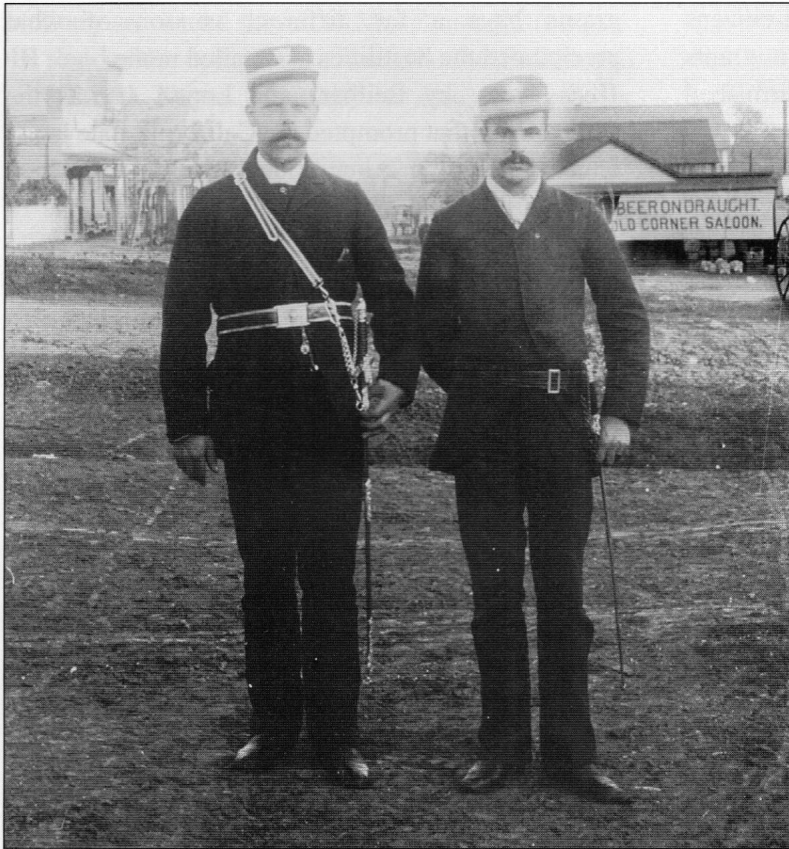
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THE MILITARY IN EARLY CALAVERAS COUNTY

The Mexican-American War to World War I, 1846 - 1946
by *Bonnie Miller*



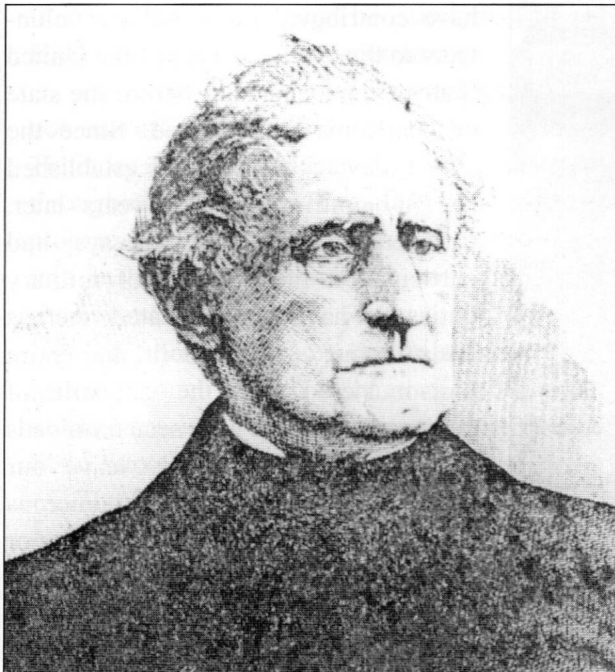
Union Army soldiers on Main Street Copperopolis.
Photos from the Calaveras County Historical Society.

Calaveras County has always been a patriotic community. Our relationship with the military has been exciting over the years and we have contributed many willing volunteers to the military ranks of the United States from as early as before the state of California was formed. Since the time Calaveras County was established in 1851 until today 152 years later, Calaveras County has always had participation in a variety of military duties. We have seen decorated veterans return home, armories built, and entire units mustered within the boundaries of our county. And we have seen trainloads of enlisted men tearfully leave our county. Our cemeteries inter numerous veterans from numerous conflicts or military duties. From veterans of the Civil War to present day soldiers serving in the Middle East, Calaveras County has proudly provided support to the United States and the world to protect freedom.

First Military Involvement

The first United States military personnel in Calaveras County were probably members of the Frémont parties surveying the western portion of the continent. California was ceded from Mexico by the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo after the Mexican War in 1846 and the new region of California had a military government until granted statehood in 1850. Calaveras County was a charter county formed when statehood was granted and a local, civil government was established. Many of the early miners that inhabited the area in the early goldrush days were veterans of the Mexican War. One notable resident of early Mokelumne Hill was such a military man. After the discovery of gold, Colonel Stevenson brought his decommissioned troops to the goldfields (see *Las Calaveras*, April 1995). These men were known as Stevenson's Regiment, although they performed no military duties in Calaveras County.

In 1852 we saw our first military unit in this county. It is fitting that this unit was formed for the protection of mining interests. In Mokelumne Hill the Mexican and Chilean miners were alleged to have been murdering and robbing the good citizens of the area. Earlier in 1849, the Chilean immigrants mining the area known as Chili Gulch had skirmished



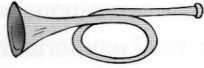
Colonel Jonathan Stevenson of Mokelumne Hill. Leader of "Stevenson's Regiment" of Mexican War veterans who were early miners in Calaveras County.

with the local miners in what became known as the Chilean War. By 1852 the residents of Mokelumne Hill felt they needed some lawful protection from such uprisings and the **First Calaveras Guard** was born. Unfortunately the new military unit was sorely outfitted to perform their peace-keeping duties. Comprised mostly of miners the unit had little time to develop basic military skills and had no uniforms or ammunition. Records indicate that they had no more than two rounds of shot and some buckshot to discourage the rioting foreigners. In reality the guard unit was probably no more than a band of vigilantes led by a genuine military man, Captain Arnold C. Lewis. The power of their unity appeared to have been enough to intimidate against further uprising in the mining camp. After a short career of only ten months Calaveras' first military unit was disbanded on May 28, 1852.

The "foreign uprising" that prompted the formation of the first military unit was in fact more significant than military that quelled it. See *Las Calaveras*, October 1988 for an account of the Chilean War. The descendants of the Chilean immigrants have a far different version of what precipitated the hostilities as detailed in the book *We Were 49ers!* by Beilharz and Lopez. It was the Chilean War that prompted the California state legislature to adopt the "Alien Miners Tax" in 1850 which required all foreign miners to pay a license fee of \$20 per month in order to mine for gold. This legislative act was the first of many such discriminatory laws enacted for the protection of United States citizens. Eventually these laws were rescinded but not until after having bred much discontent between those who arrived in the gold country first and certain of those who arrived later than first.

After having only been disbanded for sixteen months, Calaveras found itself again embroiled in conflicts with foreign miners. In September of 1854 Captain Lewis formed the **Jesus Maria Guard** and implored his commanders to send appropriate arms. It was not until 1856 that Captain Lewis saw any ammunition which was woefully under supplied. Almost immediately the small shipment of supplies was confiscated and returned back to Sacramento where Captain Lewis' superiors felt they were more necessary to assist the state authorities in combating the numerous vigilante forces operating throughout

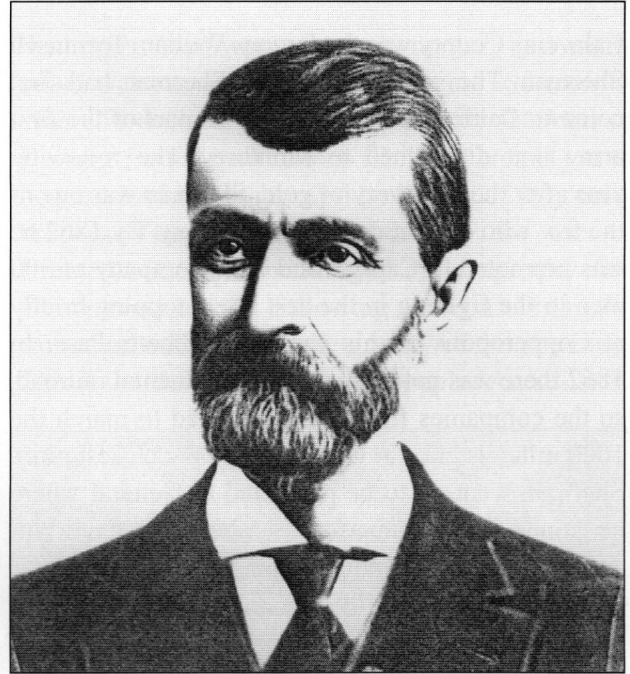
the Mother Lode. Fortunately hostilities in Calaveras had again grown quiet, and in 1857 the Jesus Maria unit disbanded without formally mustering out.



War Between the States!

Military Veterans of both the War of 1812 and the Mexican War became miners who saw California grow from the hectic goldrush to a well-established state of the union. California was a free state, so when the union was threatened by civil war in 1861 Calaveras quickly responded by sending many enlisted men to fight on the union side. Allegiance to the union cause was fierce and fighting often broke out among communities when one group felt that another may have had sympathies for the south or confederate side of the conflict. These sentiments were behind the nickname “Copperhead Flat” given to the community later known as Sheep Ranch (see *Las Calaveras*, October 1998) when it was believed that a significant proportion of the residents of Sheep Ranch had immigrated from, and therefore by association were assumed to be sympathetic to the south.

During the Civil War years Union Meetings were held regularly at various communities. These meetings served to bring news of the war effort as well as recruit new enlistments. The newspaper the *Calaveras Chronicle* would promote the meetings with such endorsements as “Some of the best speakers of the State will be present” (October 22, 1864); or, “We can assure those... that they will never have a better opportunity for enlisting under good officers than at present.” (November 1864). Between 1861 and 1865 voluntary units were formed throughout the county. These units drew hundreds of men from communities such as San Andreas, Independence and Murphys. Typical volunteer enlistment lasted three years although most volunteers never saw any active duty. Most notable was a volunteer company of 128 men organized by Captain Hiram A. Messenger of Campo Seco. Through Captain Messenger’s efforts, the volunteer company was mustered in to the Union Army at the Presidio in San Francisco in November of 1864 as Company E of the 7th Regiment of Infantry of the California Volunteers. The company saw duty in the Arizona Territory. For a thorough account of the life and career of Hiram Messenger, see *Las Calaveras* January 1978.



Captain Hiram Messenger of Campo Seco

The January 28, 1865 *Calaveras Chronicle* noted a monthly meeting of the Calaveras Light Guards. The company was a volunteer unit formed in 1861 and by the end of the Civil War continued to boast strong membership despite constant fluctuations in populations in the Mother Lode. The unit had at their disposal a fine armory situated on a prominence overlooking the town from the north. Today this location in Murphys is known as Armory Hill.

Nowhere is Calaveras County’s involvement in the Civil War more evident than in Copperopolis. The community is best known for, and in fact named for, the copper ore mined there and it is alleged that it was used primarily to support the union effort. Likewise a copper mine was named the Union Mine. The community embraced the war effort and constructed the Copperopolis Union Guard Armory, a sturdy brick building built for \$8000. The muster of 1864 indicated an enlistment of 71 men and thirteen officers. In all, eighteen men who actively served in the war listed Copperopolis as their home. The Armory was used extensively during the war to enlist and train troops. For a detailed account of the histories of Copperopolis and their Armory, see *Las Calaveras* October 1960, October 1997.

One of the most notable Civil War soldiers that stopped at the Copper Armory while visiting

Calaveras County was the famous William Tecumseh Sherman. The young Lieutenant Sherman had first come to California in early 1847 as part of the first army unit dispatched to Monterey. The following year after the discovery of gold, Sherman was one of the few who did not desert his company. By 1862 he was promoted to Captain and led a company of 300 men to the fighting in the east after stopping briefly at Copperopolis on his way over Ebbetts Pass. In 1862 there was not yet the trans-continental railroad, so the companies from California had to march the 1000 mile distance to Utah to get to the closest train. Sherman went on to be promoted to General where he gained further fame for his roles in the Civil War and the subsequent Indian Wars.

In the 1960's the 100 year anniversary of the War Between the States was honored in various events throughout the county. Perhaps some of the greatest relics of that war are the famous canons. In Copper there rests a cannon cast in 1837 and used by the

Union Guard to train troops. The San Andreas cemetery was adorned with two fine "Twelve Pound" Howitzers until recently when one was stolen. Pictured below are the two canons which were fired in a ceremony held in 1997 memorializing the Civil War.

Records for enlistment during the civil war were vague. Often volunteers signed on only to not show up at their appointed position and were quickly labeled deserters. Of the 128 men that Captain Messenger enlisted, only 84 saw active duty once the military surgeon had completed his rejections. It is unknown how many, if any, lives of Calaveras County residents were lost in the conflict. In 1890 the US government attempted to quantify civil war enlistment and conducted a special census. California and by extension Calaveras County did not participate in the census. The soldiers who enlisted from Calaveras County were probably not native sons but had more likely been born elsewhere. The proximity of the Civil War to the Gold



Two Civil War cannon being fired in a ceremony in San Andreas, 1997.

Rush was too short for men of fighting age to have been born locally. In July of 1989 the late Ray Garamendi of the Mokelumne Hill Historical Trust attempted to qualify a complete list of civil war veterans from the county. His research indicated that Calaveras County provided 155 men who saw service during the years 1861 to 1865. In 1991 his research was confirmed to be correct.



Western Expansion and Military Reform

After the ravages of the Civil War and the assassination of President Lincoln, Calaveras County returned to the boom-bust lifestyle of the young state of California. There was not a major call to duty for another fifty years but the military was always present in the wild west. In fact, the fifty years following the Civil War proved to be the most creative for the military. The Civil War had definitively resolved the issues of slavery and state sovereignty, and an organized and well-armed militia that was not dependent on the state volunteers was necessary. And the regular national army needed to be unified and re-organized after the war between the states. In 1879 the National Guard was established. From 1881 to 1892 each state of the union established an organized National Guard unit. Young men across the country clamored for the opportunity to enlist in this elite branch allowing them to dress the part and show their patriotism while not necessarily being called to duty. As such, the Guard drew criticism as actually being a fraternal organization which enjoyed the pomp of local prestige while avoiding the rigors of active duty. Regardless, by the end of the century the National Guard was the principal reserve behind the regular army.

It fell to the military to support the activities of the western expansion that the country was experiencing. In 1867 the

United States purchased Alaska which the military oversaw. Ultimately military outposts in Alaska were abandoned as they proved far too inaccessible to effectively manage. Support services for this new territory were more efficiently run by private entrepreneurs. In the south and east the Army Corps of Engineers found itself working on the development and expansion of the nation's waterways. In the west military presence was required in such arenas as the occupation of the western territories, the Indian Wars, and with technical ventures such as the Weather Corps and the Signal Service (later known as the Signal Corps, this was the branch of the military responsible for the telegraph system). A network of forts had been



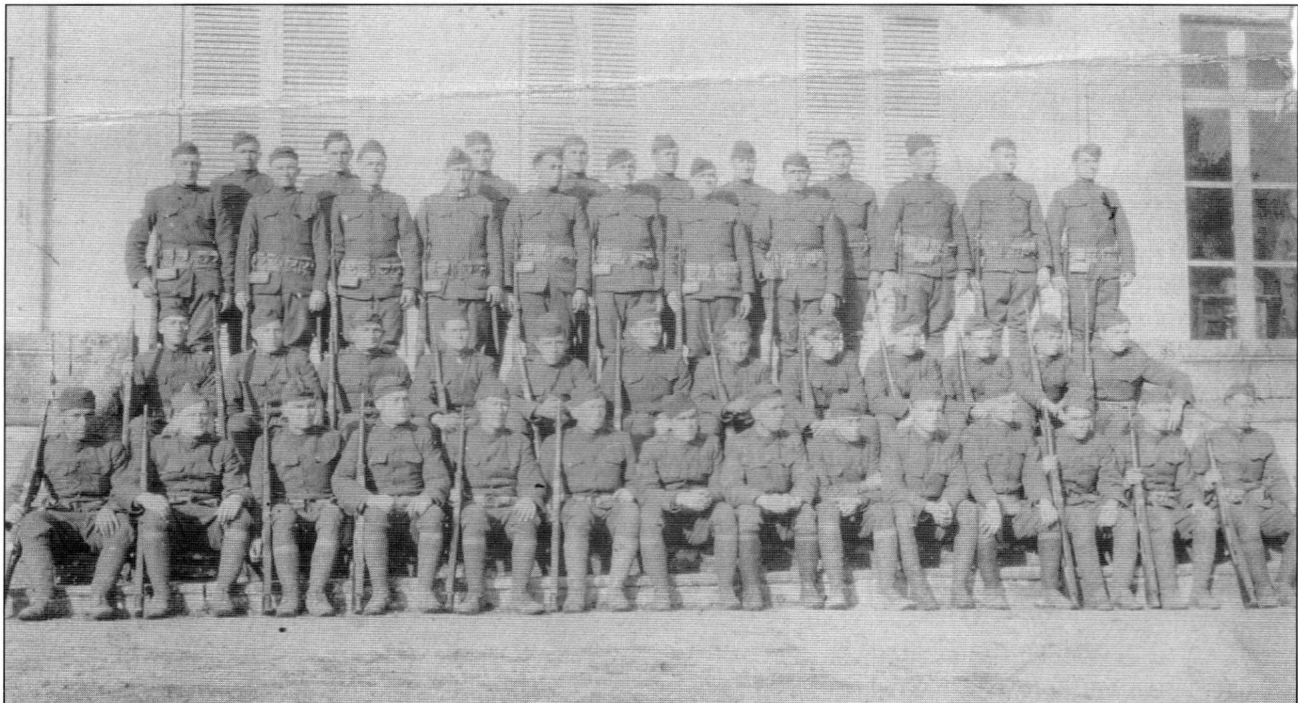
John Jay Snyder of Valley Springs in his National Guard uniform, 1884.

established across the west to assist the immigrants' travel and settlement. Concurrently activities were increased to deflect the Indian tribes who opposed or threatened the immigrants' goals. Scientific and industrial advances provided exciting military assignments such as protection of the expansion of the rail road, weather prediction, installation of the telegraph system, and surveying and wilderness exploration of still uncharted lands. Between 1878 and 1899 a period of only twenty-one years, the military experimented in the west with homing pigeons, telegraph, and a "field-telephone kit" developed by a young inventor named Alexander Bell. A young enlisted man from California could gain a vast variety of military experiences and never travel further east than the Arizona Territory. With the quiescence of the Indian Wars, by the end of the 1800's these domestic duties were reduced with much of the west settled. The small forts were no longer necessary as military outposts, and the military could be more effectively managed regionally. Despite all of the duties the military was performing across the country, it was not necessary to have a large active military. Backed by the National Guard on reserve, the regular army numbered less than half of what it entailed during the Civil War.

During the intervening years after the Civil War until the end of the century, the military explored a

variety of internal innovations. In 1866 the Civil War had experienced the introduction of the famous rapid fire gun, the Gatling Gun. This gun was devastating even though it had to be manually loaded. It quickly lead to the development of faster loading weapons. Dramatic advances were then seen in the development of rapid firing and reloading arms. Technical innovations effected all aspects of military arms from the guns and cannon to the design of the bayonet. Outside of the military, the end of the 1800's saw the industrial revolution. Its impact had far greater effect on the military than any other innovation. The combustion engine revolutionized modern transportation. Likewise, military transport leapt forward.

The year 1898 saw the brief **Spanish-American War** between the months of April to August. Believed by some to have been born of, or at least fueled by the rampant yellow-journalism of the day, the United States popular opinion was whipped to a frenzy. Calaveras County was probably particularly attentive to the sayings of the press, as the great newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst had lived briefly in the area. He obtained his fortune from mining in Sheep Ranch (see *Las Calaveras*, October 1998) which provided the funding of his newspaper empire from where he could pontificate his inflammatory opinions. The United States was urged to rescue Cuba,



World War I recruits, circa 1917.

the Philippines and other Spanish territories for their own independence. Rather, Cuba gained independence from Spain but the US claimed the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico as their possessions thus marking the beginning of US overseas expansions. In the Pacific Commodore Dewey's activities proved glorious, a fact not lost on the citizens of Calaveras County. Several children born in the county that year were given the name Dewey. The Spanish-American War proved insignificant otherwise to Calaveras County but resulted in the United States emerging as a world power, a position from which they never relinquished and in fact formed the basis of their presence in every successive war in which they were involved. Military spirit had evolved from continental-expansion and the domestic duties of a growing country to a world-wide presence as a growing world power. Veterans of the Spanish-American conflict are known to be interred in Calaveras County cemeteries.

California was a state of immigrants and the populations of the mining communities were by nature constantly moving. Local records of military enlistment and service were very vague. By the end of the century Calaveras County continued to conduct registration for the military but did not have to call upon the rolls for more members than those who already served in the regular military. The Historical Society and County Archives contain detailed lists called the Military Roll which were filed annually and certified by the county clerk. These rolls registered hundreds of men noted as "liable for military duty" between the years 1887 to 1913. Between 16 December 1890 and 1 July 1916 the county clerk dutifully recorded the burials of military veterans who were interred in the county. Known as the *Record of Burial of Ex-Union Soldiers, Sailors and Marines*, this document actually listed all veterans whether from the Civil War, Spanish American War, or the Mexican War. Their service, such as their regiment, was noted. We had veterans from the volunteer units of Delaware, Ohio, Indiana, and of course California. Their burial sites such as the "Soldier's Burying Ground" in San Andreas, or their communities from Independence to Double Springs are listed. From A (Armstrong) to Z (Zanoli), county records indicate 87 veterans buried here within this time frame.

During the same time that Calaveras County was attempting to be thorough in their records of veterans

and military registration, the United States was attempting to formalize all activities associated with the military. The military was enacting their "Root Reform", named for Secretary of War Elihu Root who was behind the reform movement, rather than any insinuation of reforming the root of the matter. The reform called for all aspects of military work to be standardized according to strict procedures. Every single military function, from enlistment procedures to discharge was carefully standardized. Gone were the days when a local unit could be mustered from volunteers and sent to combat knowing that their national government would embrace them as a full unit of the regular army. Further, the National Defense Act passed in 1916 bolstered the regular army during peacetime and allowed for increases during times of war. The act established military schools and the Reserve Officers Training Corps



Joe Raggio in uniform, 1918.

(ROTC). It also "obligated" the National Guard to respond when called upon, a duty previously regarded as somewhat discretionary. Ironically the National Guard still functioned as a state entity however had to fall in line with strict military procedures per the reform. After the advent of war with Germany, and after careful study of the effect of conscription during the Civil War, congress enacted the Selective Service Act in May of 1917. This new act made registration for military service mandatory and no longer voluntary. The Selective Service Act also allowed for local civilian boards to administer

the military registration as well as the discretion to grant exemptions. Although the civilian boards administered the registrations, all of the records of registration and enlistment were ultimately turned over to the military and not retained locally.

The reforms, spanning the early part of the century between the Spanish-American War and WWI, completely changed the make-up of the United States military. The military leapt from a domestic, frontier-based force to one of modern, global effect. The US military was on its way to becoming the most powerful in the world.

WAS THE FIRST CALAVERAS BOY TO FALL AT FRONT

**DANIEL McCORMICK VICTIM
OF SHELL FIRE**

**Copperopolis Soldier Fell in the
Meuse-Argonne Drive—A
Splendid Tribute**


COPPEROPOLIS, April 5.—

"Private McCormick was instantly killed by shell fire about noon of September 30, 1918, near Epinonville, France, during the Meuse-Argonne offensive. When hit he was fearlessly advancing with his company against the hotly contested positions at this point. He was buried near where he fell by the regimental chaplain.

"Private McCormick was an excellent soldier, loved and honored by all his comrades and the officers and men of this company keenly feel his loss. He died a hero's death while doing his duty in his customary manner.

"I extend to you the sympathy of every man in the company as well as from myself."

A CALAVERAS HERO



DANIEL MC CORMICK.



Calaveras Hero: Newspaper article from the *Stockton Record* reporting the death of Calaveras' first soldier in World War I

World War I and Beyond

The successful Spanish-American conflict and the performance of the Navy had encouraged support for global expansion and modernization of the military. Further, the conflict served to illuminate the need for expanding our own coastal defenses. Strife erupted on our southern border as well. Francisco "Pancho" Villa harassed the Mexican border between 1911 and 1916 distracting the west coast from the issues flaring in Europe. President Wilson, at heart a pacifist, was keeping an eye on the Mexican border while hoping that Europe could find a peaceful resolution to the conflicts with Germany. The United States supported neutrality and wanted peace in Europe but was empathetic to the carnage. Finally after German aggressions proved too much to endure, we entered in to war with Germany on April 16, 1917.

The Root Reform proved useful when WWI called up major troops. The formalized organization of the military structure was necessary for such a large involvement. By the time we entered the war the county had established a draft board replete with instructions from congress as to how to enlist enrollees. The 1917 Registration Regulations Act by Congress even had provisions for registering Indians, provided detailed instructions to county clerks, and so forth. Whether enlisted in the regular army, drafted by selective service, or a National Guard reserve called to duty, all three branches were absorbed in to active duty.

WWI saw changes never seen before in warfare - technical, chemical, biological, transport, trenches, etc. The military's meteorologic observations made in the 1870's had remained dormant until found useful in WWI. The automatic weapons developed in the previous forty years were universally utilized. The new organized, highly trained, and well-equipped style of warfare was far different than the methods employed in the last major conflict.

The solemnity of the European scene cast a cloud of despair on the United States. Everywhere there were signs of

the times. War was a serious matter, and patriotism was encouraged at every event. Two months after the declaration of war the State Council of Defense issued instructions (Bulletin No. 31) as to how to conduct an appropriate Fourth of July celebration. The bulletin discouraged the use of firecrackers, but encouraged rallying speeches which covered the following criteria: First, the causes of war. Second, the gravity of the situation. Third, the duty of all of our people. And fourth,



Sid Danielson in France in Company F, 27th Engineers, 1918.

practical ways in which the people can find opportunity for service. Despite these instructions to remain diligent to the cause, the citizens of Calaveras embraced the war effort with an almost festive attitude. Large celebrations were held to send "our soldier boys" on their journey to war. Their departures included dances, receptions, speeches, gift packages, and *bon voyage* meals in their honors. Undoubtedly the intent was to celebrate the conviction and distract the young men from the true horrors of their assignments. The *Calaveras Prospect* described in detail such a departure that took place in October of 1917. Twenty-eight men were dispatched from the county, including notable names as Raggio, Cuneo, Oneto and Zwinge. Six months later Calaveras County was in mourning as we learned that our first soldier had made "the supreme sacrifice" and had fallen in battle. Private Daniel McCormick of Copperopolis had died instantly under enemy fire while advancing with his company in France. The regimental chaplain said

of the young soldier in a letter to his parents: "Private McCormick was an excellent soldier, loved and honored by all his comrades and the officers and men of this company keenly feel his loss. He died a hero's death while doing his duty in his customary manner".

The records are not clear as to who, or how many young men served in WWI from Calaveras County. Sadly though, we do know of eleven who did not return. A beautiful bronze plaque in relief adorns the wall of the main breeze way at the historical Hall of Records where the Historical Society office is located in San Andreas. The plaque was placed after the conflict and is dedicated to those who lost their lives and reads:

"Erected in honor of the men and women of Calaveras County who served with the forces of the United States during the World War and in memory of those who lost their lives in the service of their country."



World War I draftees, circa 1917.

The Military Presence Today

Calaveras County has many tributes to our military history present throughout our communities. Honors have been bestowed and memorials dedicated to the various military actions in which our citizens have been involved, including several subsequent to WWI.

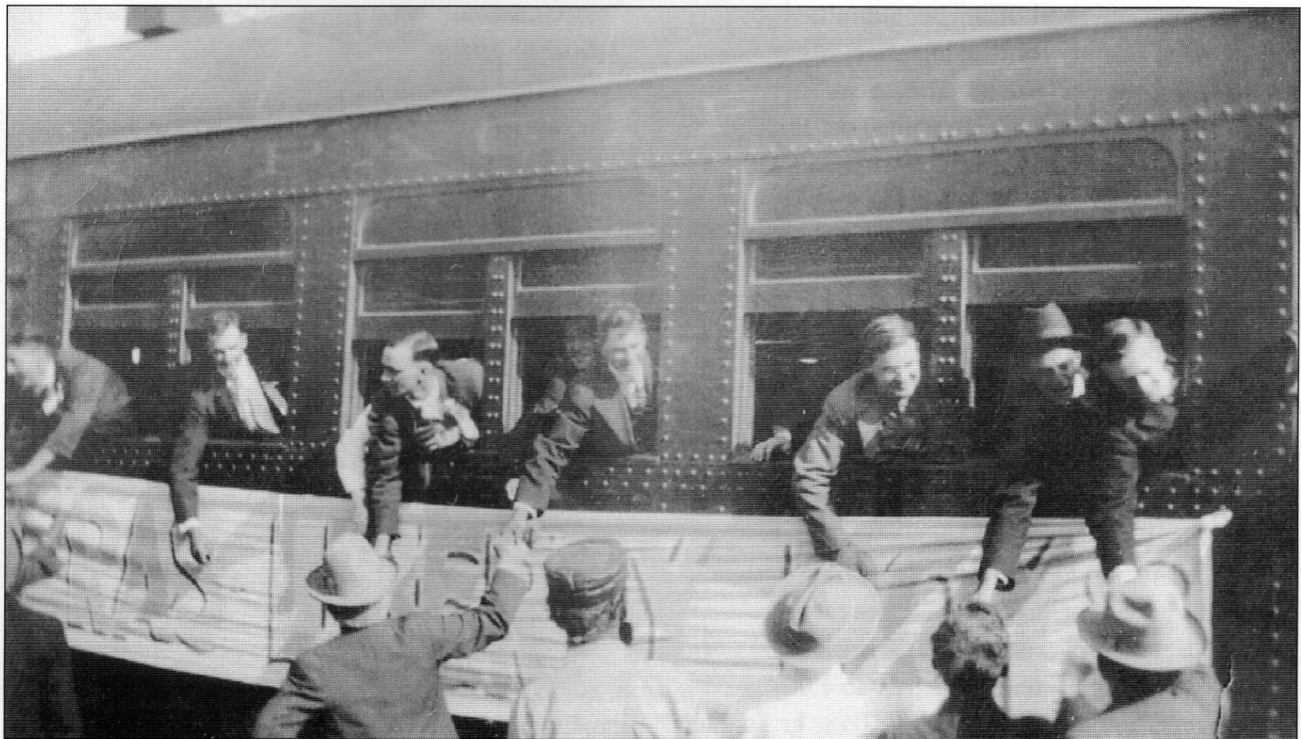
In 1948 the Copperopolis Community Center acquired the Copper Armory. Through the efforts of the Historical Society's past president, the late Charlie Stone and his wife Rhoda, on 30 December 1997 the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places as Building No. 97001588. Today the Copperopolis Community Center also houses a six foot by seven foot silk flag bearing 36 stars which was presented to the Union Guard on April 22, 1865.

In 1988 the Mokelumne Hill Historical Trust honored a Civil War veteran buried in the Mokelumne Hill Protestant Cemetery. Private Edward R Hanford was a farmer from New York who had enlisted on the Union side at Harper's Ferry. He received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his role in the capture of the Confederate flag at Woodstock, Virginia on 14 October, 1862. After his military service he moved to Mokelumne Hill where he took up the occupation of miner and married local girl Emma Nuner. Tragically he died in a mining

accident at the Quaker City Mine in 1890 and left Emma a young widow with four young children. The decorated veteran was posthumously honored with a 21 gun salute and full military honors including re-enactors dressed in period uniforms.

The American Legion, which grew from the veterans of WWI, has a post in Calaveras County in Valley Springs. The Veterans of Foreign Wars has four posts in the county, Valley Springs Post #102, Murphys Post # 290, Rail Road Flat Post #376, and West Point Post #787. In all our county Veterans' Services confirm that Calaveras County is home to approximately 8000 veterans. This is a proud number indeed when one considers that this represents approximately twenty percent of the population.

When you celebrate the Fourth of July this year, you may wish to attend a parade. There are many in this county which celebrate our patriotic history. We celebrate not only our independence, but the freedom which we gained. And may we not forget those fine military personnel who fought for our right to freedom.



Troop train of World War I recruits leaving Valley Springs Depot, 1917.

Calaveras County Historical Society

30 No. Main Street P.O. Box 721 San Andreas, CA 95249

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The Calaveras County Historical Society is a non-profit corporation. It meets on the fourth Thursday of each month in various communities throughout the County. Locations and scheduled programs are announced in advance. Some meetings include a dinner program, and visitors are always welcome.

The Society operates the Calaveras County Museum which is open daily from 10:00 to 4:00 in the historic County courthouse located at 30 Main Street in San Andreas.

The Society's office is located in historic San Andreas, the Calaveras County seat. Visitors are always welcome to stop by the office for assistance with research, and are encouraged to visit the museum while in the area. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 4:00, and the telephone number is (209) 754-1058, or contact us at: CCHS@goldrush.com.

New Members

The Historical Society welcomes the following new members:

March 2003

DC Betts, Arnold
Lee & Marlen Chapple, Valley Springs
Richard & Maureen Elliott, Murphys

April 2003

Sidney & Lynne Storm, Valley Springs
Brian Clemetson, Murphys
Elliott Smart, Murphys
Robert L. Fienberg, Angels Camp
Anne B. Forrest, Angels Camp

May 2003

Gary Hamrich, Acampo
Joseph T. Sanderson, San Andreas
Marshall & Shirley Atkinson, San Andreas

Donations

The Historical Society is grateful for the following donations:

March 2003

Book from Bonnie Miller of Mountain Ranch
Logging artifacts from Lloyd Ames of Glencoe

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

The July meeting will be the annual business meeting of the Calaveras County Historical Society. The annual reports and installation of officers will be conducted in an outdoor ceremony in the picturesque jail courtyard in San Andreas. A dinner prepared by chef Don Cuneo will be available for the cost of \$17.50 per person. Please plan to join us for this important meeting on July 24th, 2003 beginning at 6:00 pm. Please RSVP at your earliest convenience at 754-1058.