



**The 71st Pennsylvania Volunteers
(Bakers California Regiment)
part of the Philadelphia Brigade
then and now**

A Brief History of the California Regiment

Recruiting for the Seventy-first, originally known as the California Regiment, was commenced in Philadelphia in the early part of April, 1861, under the direction of Edward D. Baker, United States Senator from California, who had been especially commissioned by President Lincoln for the purpose. The business was under the immediate charge of Isaac J. Wistar of Philadelphia, who had been a trapper in the Hudson Bay Company, had commanded Indian Rangers in Oregon and California in 1850-51, and was inured to wild warfare in the early settlement of the Pacific coast. In one month's time eleven hundred men were enlisted, and were sent by squads and companies to report to the headquarters of the regiment established in New York, subsequently at Fort Schuyler, near the city, where it was mustered into service and organized by the choice of the following field officers:

- * Edward D. Baker, Colonel
- * Isaac J. Wistar, Lieutenant Colonel
- * R. A. Parrish, Major

Not having been recognized by either Pennsylvania or New York, it was treated as belonging to the regular army, and its returns were made accordingly. Here it remained engaged in drill and discipline until the 1st of July, when it proceeded to Fortress Monroe via Philadelphia, parading in the latter city, to the great credit of its officers and the satisfaction of its friends. Upon its arrival at the Fortress it was assigned to arduous picket and scouting duty, and rendered important service in obtaining valuable information of the movements of the enemy while in the vicinity of Big Bethel.

The story of the formation of this command as the "1st California" Regiment has been outlined in the book "The California Brigade. Soon after the death of Col. Edward D. Baker at Ball's Bluff, a lamentable affair in which the regiment lost heavily, the brigade was claimed as a part of its quota by the State of Pennsylvania and was so credited. The four commands were designated the 69th, the 71st, 72d and 106th Regiments, and became the "Philadelphia Brigade," Pennsylvania Infantry. Upon recovery from his wounds, inflicted at Ball's Bluff, Lieut.-Col. Isaac J. Wistar became colonel of the 71st. Brig.-Gen. W. W. Burns commanded the brigade, which was attached to Sedgwick's Division of the Second Corps. Early in 1862 the 71st was engaged under Gen. N. P. Banks in West Virginia. The Philadelphia Brigade was soon transferred to the Virginia peninsula, where Gen. McClellan was operating against the enemy at Yorktown and Williamsburg. The Union advance was pushed to within sight of Richmond. At Fair Oaks the 71st was engaged in constant fighting and skirmishing for four weeks. After the battle of Gaines Mills the "change of base" from the Chickahominy River to the James River resulted in several attacks upon the army's endless wagon trains, in the course of which the regiment participated in four battles, making repeated charges and losing many officers and men before resting at Malvern Hill. At Harrison's Landing, upon the James River, five companies, L, M, N, P and R, were disbanded, the men being assigned to the

depleted original ten companies. The scene of action was now transferred to the region in front of Washington, resulting in the battles of Chantilly and Second Bull Run, where the 71st assisted in covering the rear of Pope's retreat. In the northward movement which checked the Confederates at Antietam, Brig.-Gen. O. O. Howard commanded the Philadelphia Brigade.

The 71st left upon the field of Antietam one-third of its strength. In the Fredericksburg campaign, nearly three months later, the regiment, led to fruitless sacrifice by Lieut. Col. John Markoe, was again a heavy loser. The survivors fought again, under Hooker, at Fredericksburg, after which they wintered in camp at Falmouth. The Second Corps, under Maj.-Gen. Hancock was sent, in June, 1863, to Pennsylvania. The 71st was now under command of Col. Richard Penn Smith. Arriving at Gettysburg the regiment was placed in the center of the battle-line. Upon the afternoon of July 2d the brigade became involved in a charge during the attack upon Gen. Sickles' position, but the supreme test of its endurance was reserved for the final scene. It was just at this point that the "high-water line" of the great Rebellion is now fittingly marked. Here the gray billow broke against the solid wall of the Army of the Potomac, never to return. At Gettysburg the regiment lost ninety-eight officers and men. Following the retreating enemy back to the soil of Virginia, the Second Corps fought, through the autumn, over long-familiar ground. The 71st wintered at Stevensburg. When the army resumed operations in May, 1864, Lieut.-Col. C. Kochersperger was in command. He was wounded at the battle of the Wilderness. Capt. Mitchell Smith, who succeeded him, was killed at Spotsylvania. At Cold Harbor the regiment made its last stand. It was now entitled to discharge. The veterans and recruits were transferred to the 69th Regiment. One hundred and fifty-three men returned to Philadelphia and were mustered out on July 2d, 1864.

Total Losses

Killed or died from wounds - 14 officers; 147 men
Died from disease or other causes - 1 officer~
98 men
Wounded - 24 officers; 372 men
Captured or missing - 10 officers; 320 men

Battles

Falls Church, Poolesville, Ball's Bluff, Fair Oaks, Peach Orchard, Savage Station, Glendale, Antietam, Fredericksburg (1862), Fredericksburg (1863), Gettysburg, Mine Run, Wilderness, Spotsylvania, North Anna, Bethesda Church, Cold Harbor. Present also at Yorktown, Malvern Hill, Bristoe Station, and Totopotomoy.

Our Impression as Civil War Reenactors

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We are portraying Company B of the 71st Pennsylvania Infantry as it may have appeared in the early Spring of 1864. The 71st is still in its winter quarters at Stevensburg, Virginia. The unit has been outfitted and supplied with new uniforms, equipment and most importantly replacements. This company uses a mixture of Wall tents, larger sized wedge tents, and "Dog tents for the soldiers and because the Civilian Relief Society along with several of the officer. NCO and junior enlisted families have joined the Brigade in camp we have more wall tents than most units would have. Our unit is a mixture of veterans who are eating well for the first time in many months (as you can probably tell!) and replacements just arrived from Pennsylvania. Some of the replacements have carry the 1853 Enfield Rifled Musket and some

veterans have picked the Enfield up on the battlefield. Most of our unit carries the 1861 or 1863 Springfield Rifled Musket. You will see a variety of weapons is present in camp. This all occurred none to soon considering the Wilderness Campaign, Spotsylvania Court House and Cold Harbor were still to come.

Our Chain of Command

Union Army: Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant
Army of the Potomac: Major General George C. Meade
2nd Army Corps: Major General Winfield S. Hancock
1st Division: Brigadier General John Gibbon
2nd Brigade: Brigadier General Alexander S. Webb
71st Penn. Infantry Lieut. Colonel C. Kochersperger

Recruitment Points of Contact

Company Commander
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Company 1st Sergeant
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American Civil War Society Website:

acws.net

Who we are:

The 71st Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, also known as the 1st California Regiment is a non-profit living history unit within the American Civil War Society of Southern California. We've come together for the purpose of portraying the life of the soldier in the Union Army of the Potomac to the general public. We are a family-friendly unit that emphasizes historical research, authenticity, safety, drill, and battlefield tactics. Members dress in authentic uniforms and equipment of the historical list Pennsylvania, carry reproduction weapons, and camp in period tents. We meet regularly for battle reenactments, parades, and living history events from February through November.

Members are encouraged to bring their families to all events. Many of these family members come to events in authentic period dress and reenact under the name of the 71st Pennsylvania. The unit has a strong component of experienced reenactors in the ranks, both military and civilian, all of whom are ready and willing to assist new recruits and family members to learn the finer points of 19th century life.

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