



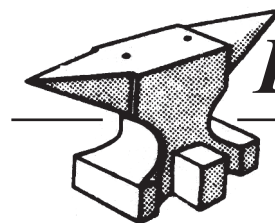
*Monument honoring the California Battalion*

established himself as a farmer in Soldier Township, Shawnee Co., Kansas. Census information shows that the Rawsons were in Shawnee County, KS, in 1870 and 1880. They had no children and retired to Monterey, California. The California Death Index indicates that Benjamin died on March 24, 1917 in Contra Costa County at the age of 80. Cordelia E. Rawson died in Contra Costa County on July 13, 1915 at the age of 72. There is no record of how it was that Ben and Cordelia were buried in Sunset View Cemetery.

They have a large headstone with patriotic markings and showing Ben was a Freemason as well as a member of the GAR - Grand Army of the Republic veteran's organization. Cordelia was a member of the WRC - Woman's Relief Corps,

an Auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic. Beside their handsome stone is a sharp angled pyramid monument erected by Ben honoring the California Battalion. There are inscriptions on the monument including "ERECTED BY B. F. RAWSON, Sarg't Co F, 2nd Mass. Cav." "TO HIS COMRADS" "IN MEMORY OF CAL. BATT'N of 500, 2nd MASS. CAVALRY" "The stars will shine brighter as we pass to the beautiful home." There is also an enamel photo of the CAL 100 & Battalion flag showing the seal of California surrounded by battle names.

It is not only interesting to have a Civil War veteran buried in Sunset View Cemetery, but to have one who served as a Californian and with inspiring stone memorials is unique. One can visit and take a moment to reflect on what Ben, as well as the others who served, experienced during the Civil War.



# ***El Cerrito Historical Society***

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## *The Forge*

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### ***El Cerrito's Gambling Past: A Walking Tour. Noon Sunday, November 11 Start at El Cerrito Plaza near Macaroni Grill***

El Cerrito's Gambling Past: A Walking Tour. Join Historical Society Vice President Chris Horn to learn about El Cerrito's past, when gambling and nightlife thrived. From the teens into the 1940's, El Cerrito was a center for gambling, dog racing, drinking, and vice. This walk will pass by the site of some of these clubs including the Rancho, the Hollywood Club, the Wagon Wheel and the It Club. This event is Sunday, November 11, 2018 from noon until 2 PM. It's free and we'll meet in the El Cerrito Plaza parking lot near Macaroni Grill.

The El Cerrito Historical Society is a volunteer, non-political, non-profit corporation that has as its purpose the preservation and appreciation of the history of El Cerrito. It does this by providing educational and research opportunities; by collecting of historic photographs, documents, artifacts and cultural objects; by advocating for the preservation of historic resources in the city; and by encouraging others to help further these aims. Anyone may join; dues are \$25 (Household member), \$60 (Sponsoring member), and \$300 (Life member).

# Ben Rawson - Civil War Veteran

by Chris Horn

Did you know there is a Civil War veteran buried in Sunset View Cemetery?

His name is Benjamin Franklin Rawson and he served with a cavalry unit during the Civil War. Born on November 17, 1836 in Schoolcraft, Michigan he and his brother Caleb were farming in Plumas County when they volunteered for the Union. They enlisted on May 10, 1863 and would become members of what would be known as the “California Battalion,” Californians who served with the 2nd Massachusetts Volunteer Cavalry in the Eastern Theater of the Civil War. The “California Hundred” and “California Battalion” would serve admirably within the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry earning accolades among their peers, officers and even the enemy. Mr. Rawson would serve throughout the war in Company F, raising to the rank of sergeant, and mustered out on August 3, 1865.

California Hundred vs. California Battalion



### Cavalry Company for the East.

**THE UNDERSIGNED HAS BEEN** authorized by the Secretary of War to raise a company of Cavalry for service in the East to make part of the Massachusetts quota.

A Roll of the company is at Assembly Hall, corner of Post and Kearny Streets, where persons desirous of joining can enroll their names.

No one need apply who is not a good horseman and in good health. Men from the country preferred. The Roll will be kept open a reasonable time before selections are made.

All expenses will be paid as soon as accepted.

Further particulars apply to Office, corner Post and Kearny street.

cc28 - 2ptf      J. SEWALL REED.

There were many in California interested in following the Civil War from newspaper accounts and some were anxious for a chance to join the fight. But they knew if they joined a California unit they would be stationed in the west guarding wagon trains or doing garrison duties. There was a new cavalry unit being formed in

A white flag was brought forth from the Rebel lines and presented to the Cavalry Corps.

The war in Virginia was over; both the “California Hundred” and the “California Battalion” would now be part of what they all had wished for two and a half years, the final surrender at Appomattox Courthouse. They would also participate in The Grand Review parade through Washington on May 23rd. The Californians proudly bore the Bear Guidon of The Hundred and the wreath encircled Star Guidons of The Battalion aloft to the cheers of the multitude.

The cheering over, the Regiment returned to camp and were mustered out of United States service at Fairfax Court House, Virginia July 20th. Two days later they were on the way back to Camp Meigs at Readville, Massachusetts where the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry was paid off and disbanded August 3rd, 1865.

Of the nearly five hundred Californians who began the adventure, only one hundred eighty-two were left to muster out. Those who wished to return to California were left to find and finance their own way home.

In the years after the war the veterans of The Hundred and Battalion would meet, on occasion, at reunions of the Grand Army of the Republic veteran’s organization. Regimental Comrades spread across the full width of the country, from Maine to Florida to California. Those who returned to California settled from Northern California to Los Angeles, with the greatest concentration being in the San Francisco area.

After the war, Ben married Cordelia Elsin Spalding on April 15, 1868, and

*To visit Ben’s grave site*

- Sunset View Cemetery is at the top of Fairmount Avenue
- Drive around the right side of the main building
- Continue on this drive, past the small hill on the left
- The drive will bend to the left, around the hill
- Shortly there is a small side drive, first one on the right
- Halfway up this short drive, on the left edge of the drive is the grave and pyramid monument.

Massachusetts and that state's Governor agreed to incorporate 100 volunteers from California. There was a large number of volunteers who applied but only 100 were chosen. Those first 100 troopers raised by Captain J. Sewell Reed mustered into the Union in San Francisco on Dec. 10, 1862. They would become Company A of the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry but would also be known as the "California Hundred."

They sailed out of San Francisco, marched across the Isthmus of Panama, then continued their journey up the eastern seaboard, eventually arriving in Boston on January 3, 1863. After several weeks of basic training in Camp Meigs, just outside of Boston, the Company was transported to Fortress Monroe, Virginia and placed on active duty at Gloucester Point on February 22, 1863.

The raising, transporting, training and placement of the "CAL 100" was so successful that not long after four more companies were raised in California. These 400 additional troopers formed Companies E, F, L, and M of the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry and became known as the "California Battalion". Brothers Ben and Caleb Rawson were part of Company F of the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry.

During their early service around Washington D.C. the 2nd Massachusetts defended against guerilla raids by the confederacy's "Gray Ghost," John S. Mosby's cavalry forces. This occurred from mid-1863 to July 1864. Mosby would harass Union installments in a series of lightning like strikes. After a raid Mosby's Rangers would scatter to the wind. The Californians were well matched for this duty as their skills as horsemen and gunmen were on par with their antagonists. However, they were frustrated as they felt the Command didn't understand how to properly counter Mosby's guerrilla tactics.

The Californians performed their duties with honor, even winning the admiration of their foes. One Mosby Ranger writing "...his men began breaking through the fences and into the fields, but fighting all the while..." His

Californians, especially good fighters, were standing up to the rack like men, dealing out to us best they had. They rallied at every call on them and went down with banners flying."

In August 1864 the 2nd Massachusetts became part of Major General Phil Sheridan's Army of Shenandoah. The task assigned Sheridan by General Grant was to clear the Shenandoah Valley of confederate forces led by Jubal Early. The valley had provided food and cover for the enemy since the beginning of the war and Sheridan was to clear the valley and destroy Early's army. The Californians were on the move for twenty-one days while constantly fighting and performing bravely. They played a major role in the decisive battles of Winchester, Toms Run, and Cedar Creek. After Early's expulsion from the Valley, the Regiment stayed in the area doing picket and patrol duty until February 1865.

Battle scarred and worn the Californians participated in one of the hardest marches of the war when Sheridan left Winchester for Petersburg on February 27th, 1865. Here they joined the Army of the Potomac in its campaign against confederate General Robert E. Lee. For the next month the Regiment marched, fought, skirmished and destroyed all that could be of use to the enemy for almost three hundred miles. The entire journey was made worse by unrelenting rain and torturous mud.

Arriving in camp at Petersburg they rested for three days before they were back in the saddle again. This time they were to play a pivotal part in the last chapter of the Civil War. On March 31st, the 2nd Massachusetts participated in the attack on Dinwiddie Court House and, on April 1st, they were in the thick of the fight at Five Forks breaking the Confederate right and insuring the fall of Petersburg. The Regiment participated in the fight at Sailors Creek on April 6th, capturing Ewell's Corps, and on the 8th they helped capture Lee's desperately needed supply train at Appomattox Station. The next day they stood in the path of Lee's Army, with the rest of the Cavalry Corps. Six grueling weeks of pushing human endurance to the limit would now pay off.