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History of Battalion

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COMPANY "B"

Company "B" was officially organized September 23, 1931. Previously various groups of patriotic citizens, centering in Rheims Post No. 564, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Kenneth Hawkins Post No.61, American Legion, had faithfully worked for the formation of a local military unit to be officered and manned by Negroes.

Following the authorization of the formation of a Negro Battalion by the State Legislature, the then Adjutant General of New Jersey, Major General Frederick Gillyson, addressed a letter under date of July 8, 1931, to Harry E. Harmon, Commander of Rheims Post, No. 564. The following pertinent passages are quoted:

"The Honorable Enoch L. Johnson has submitted to me your name, together with that of Mr. Richard R. Queen and Edwin Lockwood as the most desirable persons in Atlantic City to cooperate with this Department in the organization of one of the companies of the Colored Battalion of Militia authorized under Chapter 149, Laws of 1930. I therefore desire to appoint you as a committee in effecting such organization, you to be Chairman of the committee."

"It is the desire of this Department, and I know in making the statement I am about to make, I represent the feelings of those men in Atlantic City who have been behind this movement and are interested in it, that we fix the standard of this company high as it is possible to attain, and that at its completion it will reflect credit on not only your community but on the entire Colored people of the State. In order that you may refer to the company officially, I would advise you that it will be designated as Company B, First Separate Battalion, State Militia, Atlantic City."

114th Infantry
Captain Peter Smith, later appointed Commanding Officer of the Battalion, with the assistance of the above committee selected and enlisted the personnel of the company. These sixty enlisted men thereafter elected the following Commissioned Officers, who following examinations before a military Board were duly commissioned by Governor Moore:

Commanding Officer and Captain, Thomas M. Gregory
First Lieutenant, Richard R. Queen
Second Lieutenant, Edwin Lockwood

Upon the appointment of First Lieutenant Queen as Battalion Adjutant, Second Lieutenant Lockwood was advanced to First Lieutenant and Supply Sergeant Charles H. Donaway was advanced to Second Lieutenant.

Harold Parsons, the original First Sergeant, organized and trained the Battalion Band and became Its leader. He was succeeded as First Sergeant by Richard Lockett. Attorney William Dart served as corporal and Company Clerk for several years; Rupert Chase has been Mess Sergeant continuously, Harry Harmon has been Armorer, and William Winkler succeeded Charles H. Donaway as Supply Sergeant.

The officers and men of Company B were cited for distinguished service for their heroic performance of duty in caring for the victims of the Moro Castle disaster at Sea Girt, N.J., September 8, 1924, by the Adjutant General of New Jersey, by the Commanding General of the 44th Division, and in a resolution passed by the State Legislature. The City Commissioners of Atlantic presented a bronze plaque to the Company in recognition and appreciation of its heroic and devoted services to the Community, the State, and the Nation.