



## **The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 141<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery (Battalion Washington Artillery) Louisiana National Guard**



The Battalion Washington Artillery, of the Louisiana National Guard, traces its origin to the Washington Artillery Company of the Fourth Regiment, Louisiana Militia which was organized in New Orleans on September 7, 1838. Its first commander was Captain Elisha Tracey.

In 1841, the Washington Artillery Company was reorganized and re-designated as the Native American Artillery and saw service in the Mexican War, first as a battery of light artillery in 1845 and later as a company of infantry of the Washington Regiment in 1846.

In 1848, the Native American Artillery was re-designated the Washington Artillery Company. During the next few years and into the late 1850's the Company continued to improve its efficiency by regular drill and training periods.

In 1857, Captain John B. Walton, a former Adjutant of the Washington Regiment during the Mexican War, left the defunct Crescent City Hussars to take command of the Washington Artillery. He brought with him the Irate Tiger Flag and the motto "Try Us!"

By March 28, 1861 the Washington Artillery expanded its organization and became the Battalion Washington Artillery and mustered into Confederate States of America service on May 26<sup>th</sup> 1861. It volunteered its services directly to Jefferson Davis, he accepted, and thus the Washington Artillery became the first regular unit of the Confederate Army; all other units were state militia units offered to the Confederacy by their states.

The Battalion saw its first action at the First Battle of Bull Run and during the Civil War the Washington Artillery fought in sixty battles. Out of the 808 men who served in its ranks 139 were killed or died of wounds. It was the first artillery battalion to fight as a battalion. Before the war artillery companies were assigned to infantry regiments. The entire Confederate Army, and then the Federal Army later adopted the concept of deploying artillery at battalion strength. The Washington Artillery was the only unit to serve in both theatres of war, Companies 1-4 in the Army of Northern Virginia and the 5<sup>th</sup> Company in the Army of Tennessee.

Due to the ban on Southern militia during the Reconstruction Era, the battalion formed the Washington Artillery Benevolent Association. This organization raised funds to care for the sick and wounded veterans of the organization, as well as the orphans and widows of its deceased members. This organization exists today within the Washington Artillery. Now functioning as the Washington Artillery Board of Managers, it manages the private investments of the modern battalion.

In 1875, the ban on southern militias was lifted. The men purchased, at their own expense, a battery of ten pound Parrott rifles. From 1883 through 1893, the battalion would enter then depart service as a state militia unit. As a private organization, owning

its own cannons and equipment, it had that luxury. In 1896, then Governor Murphy Foster designated members of the Washington Artillery as his person honor guard.

In 1898, the United States entered into war with Spain. One battalion of artillery was requested from the State of Louisiana. Louisiana had 3 battalions within its borders; The Louisiana Field Artillery, the Washington Artillery (commanded by Captain Fred Kornbeck), and the Donaldsonville Cannoneers. Each unit offered a consolidated battery for representation. The Louisiana Field Artillery provided a Battery A, the Washington Artillery provided a Battery B and the Donaldsonville Cannoneers provided a Battery C. This collective unit was designated the Louisiana Volunteer Field Artillery. Due to antiquated equipment, this unit fielded 10 pounder parrot rifles while the US Army was fielding the new French 75mm cannon. The unit never deployed to Cuba. However, while assigned to Camp Cuba Libre, near Tampa Florida, members of Bravo Battery invented a drink, the "Cuba Libre".

On June 18, 1916, the battalion was mustered into Federal Service as the Washington Artillery and served on the Mexican border. The Battalion returned to New Orleans and was mustered out of Federal Service on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1917.

Scarcely had the Washington Artillery returned to New Orleans, when war was declared between the United States and Germany on April 6, 1917. To meet this emergency, the Battalion Washington Artillery was expanded into a regiment of two battalions and recalled into Federal Service on September 27, 1917, as the 141<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery Regiment. After service in France and after the armistice, the Regiment returned to the United States on May 23, 1919, thus concluding the Washington Artillery's fourth tour of war duty.

With the growing hostility in Europe the United States was required to ready itself. The 141<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery Regiment (consisting of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>d</sup> Battalions Washington Artillery) was inducted into Federal Service on January 13, 1941, for a period one year and sent to Camp Shelby Mississippi for training. Less than a year after its induction, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States entered the Second World War.

After intense training the regiment was broken into two separate battalions; the 141<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery and the 935<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery. Both units sailed from New York in August 1943, and debarked at Oran to make a 900 mile march to Bizerte in North Africa.

The 141<sup>st</sup> was then transferred to Bagnoli, Italy. Arriving there on November 19<sup>th</sup>, the battalion quickly moved to its first combat position along the Volturrno River, firing its first rounds on November 30<sup>th</sup>. After participating in the action near Casino and at the Anzio beachhead, the 141<sup>st</sup>, with Allied Forces, pursued the German and Italian Armies northward and on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1944, became the first American Artillery unit to enter Rome.

Meanwhile, the 935<sup>th</sup>, after departing Bizerti, moved via Salerno and Naples to Sparnise, firing its first combat rounds on October 31<sup>st</sup>. After heavy engagement at Monte Casino, the 935<sup>th</sup> moved forward and entered Rome on June 5, several hours after the 141<sup>st</sup>.

Both battalions participated in the push to force the German Army into their homeland. At the end of the war, May 5th found the 141<sup>st</sup> near Munich and the 935<sup>th</sup> at Augsburg. The 141<sup>st</sup> had been in combat 463 days and fired 150,871 rounds during 7,004 missions and occupied 108 positions. The 935<sup>th</sup> fired in excess of 141,000 rounds during 8,845 missions, had been in combat 462 days and supported 18 divisions and six different corps.

After World War II, the Battalions of the Washington Artillery were released from active duty and on November 8, 1946, were deactivated and placed back into the Louisiana National Guard.

During the 1950's the Washington Artillery was increased to 3 battalions, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Howitzer battalions. During the 1960's the battalions were consolidated, forming the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 141<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery. In 1971, the battalion was assigned to the 256<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade of the Louisiana National Guard. Also in 1971, the Secretary of the Army, Stanley Resor, officially recognized the designation of Washington Artillery for the battalion.

In 1978, the 256 Infantry Brigade, to include the Washington Artillery, was attached to the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Mechanized (Ft. Polk) as a part of the "Round-Out" brigade concept. The 5<sup>th</sup> ID (M), along with several other active component divisions was assigned only two active component brigades and a National Guard brigade. During this same time frame the Washington Artillery turned in their traditional towed howitzers and entered a new era of firepower with the fielding of the M109A1 (155mm) self-propelled howitzer.

In December 1990, the Battalion Washington Artillery was mobilized and entered Federal Service during Operation Desert Shield and served at Fort Hood with the 256 Infantry Brigade while attached to the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and later with the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. Because Desert Storm ended with the surrender of the Iraqi Forces, the battalion was released from active duty.

Shortly after the devastating attack on American soil on September 11, 2001, the Washington Artillery was deployed to provide security details for several key infrastructure sites in Southeastern Louisiana in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

In May of 2004, the Washington Artillery was called to arms to participate in the Global War on Terrorism as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom III. The Battalion conducted its pre-mobilization training at Fort Hood, Texas just as it did in Operation Desert Shield/Storm. The Battalion validated its training in a three week Mission Readiness Exercise (MRE) at the National Training Center (NTC) in the Mojave Desert of California, then deployed to Kuwait. While in Kuwait, the battalion spent three weeks preparing itself and task organizing into Task Force Thunder, one of the largest battalion sized units in theater consisting of just over 740 soldiers. The battalion conducted a three day tactical road march into Baghdad, Iraq and immediately began combat operations. The battalion conducted a myriad of missions ranging from artillery

missions to combat patrols and base defense operations and insurgent detainee operations through September 2005. The battalion was awarded the Meritorious Unit Citation for its outstanding performance as well as a Campaign Streamer for "Governance" for the battalion's role in the first Iraqi Democratic Election. It also received a Battle Streamer for Operation Iraqi Freedom III.

In August of 2005, shortly before its scheduled redeployment home, the battalion could only watch in horror at the devastation inflicted on their homes and to their families by Hurricane Katrina. A majority of the unit's members lost their homes and their possessions. Upon arrival stateside, the US Army made numerous arrangements to care for these soldiers and their families. Those able to remained on active duty to participate in the recovery efforts. No sooner were they deployed for state emergency missions, than Hurricane Rita devastated southwestern Louisiana. Many soldiers spent over nine months on duty working the recovery and relief efforts.

In October of 2006, the Washington Artillery was reconfigured in accordance with the new Unit of Action concept adopted by the US Army. This new configuration saw the casing of Charlie and Service Batteries guidons and the attachment of Golf Company (service support) to the battalion. In addition, the battalion turned in their self-propelled howitzers for the new M119 (105mm) Towed Howitzer.

The Battle Honors of the Washington Artillery, since its existent, earned the following Campaign streamers:

Mexican War-1  
Civil War- 14  
World War I- 1  
World War II- 8  
Operation Iraqi Freedom - 1