

1888, being engaged in a campaign for Governor; J. B. Morello was elected to fill the vacancy. J. E. McGinnis was captain in 1889 and the forepart of 1890. Failing to enlist under the law of 1890, the company was without a commissioned captain until it was reorganized under the law of 1891, when L. H. Mattair was commissioned captain; he commanded the company until August, 1895.

Jacksonville Rifles

The Jacksonville Rifles was a direct reorganization of the Metropolitan Light Infantry. This reorganization took place on September 4, 1895, with a new constitution and new by-laws, under the name Jacksonville Rifles. On September 18, 1895, the Rifles elected its first officers, namely, Wm. LeFils, captain; A. G. Hartridge, first lieutenant.^e

The company immediately took on new life and ever afterward was an important factor in the military life of the State. It was reorganized April 25, 1898, with 77 men, for service in the Spanish-American war and soon recruited to full war strength. Under the command of J. Y. Wilson, captain; C. H. Chesnut and J. H. Stephens, first lieutenants, and T. C. Watts, second lieutenant, the company entrained for Fort Brooke (Tampa) May 12, 1898, and was there mustered into the United States service May 27. It was then transferred to camp at Palmetto Beach. The company was not sent to Cuba. On July 21 it entrained for Fernandina and remained there a month, going thence to Huntsville, Ala. It was mustered out of the U. S. service at Huntsville January 27, 1899. Returning to Jacksonville, the Rifles resumed its former designation in the Florida State troops. Soon afterward its letter designation was changed from C. to F., as the latter was its war designation and it wished to retain it.

In the following years the company kept very well recruited and came to be one of the prize military companies of the State, and one of the most feared in competitive drills at State encampments. However, it felt the lack of interest that beset the other military organizations preceding the World war, though it was successful in recruiting to full strength as required by the National Defense Act of 1916, and was preserved as a full company of the First Separate Battalion. This battalion formed the central unit about which was built the Florida regiment that was sent to Camp