



NEWS AND NOTES

from
The Fauquier Historical Society

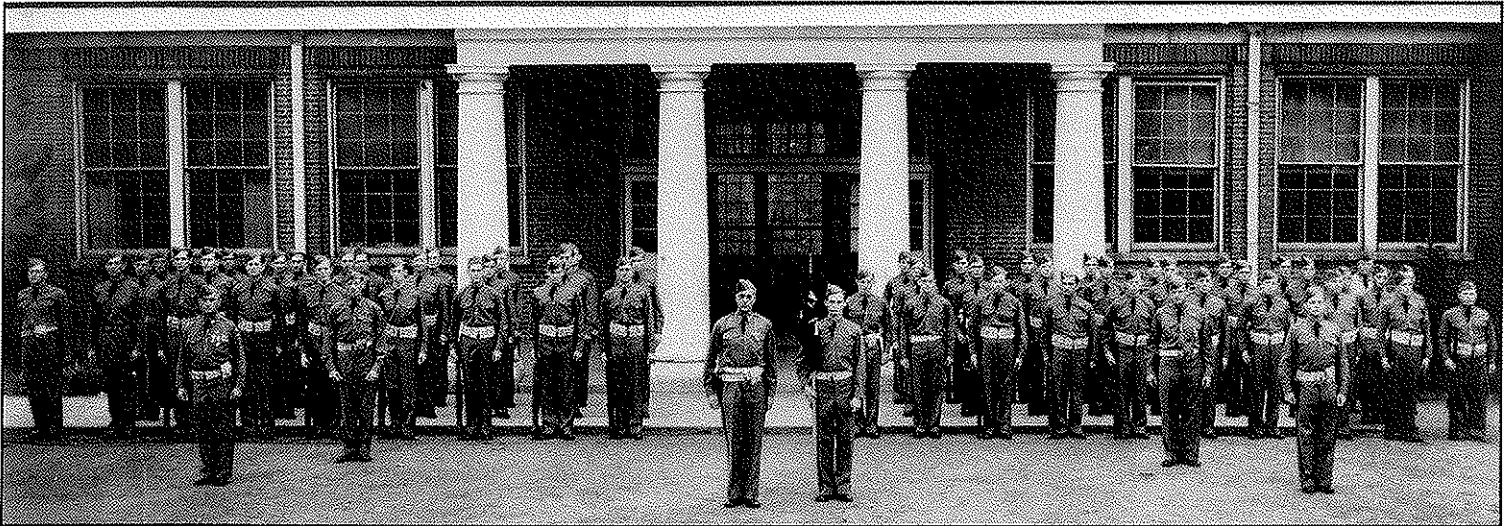
Vol. 26, No. 2

WARRENTON, VIRGINIA

Fall & Winter 2004

Fauquier's militia companies in World War II, Part I

The Warrenton Rifles: they also served



ATTENTION: the Warrenton Rifles stand in front of their headquarters in the old Warrenton High School on Academy Hill. Courtesy of D. H. Lees.

BY JOHN T. TOLER

EDITOR, NEWS AND NOTES

Throughout World War II, local militia units were active in Fauquier County, charged with the mission of protecting the homefront.

These units consisted mainly of local men who were either too young or too old to serve in the regular U.S. Armed Forces, but who wished to do their part for the war effort.

The Virginia Protective Force (V.P.F.) was created by the state after the Virginia Army National Guard was called into Federal service just before the outbreak of World War II. At full strength, the V.P.F. consisted of 4,000 men in 50 companies, making up 12 battalions.

The first militia unit to be formed in Fauquier was a company of the V.P.F. in 1941 - which took on the time-honored name, "The Warrenton Rifles."

In 1942, two companies of the Virginia Reserve Militia (V.R.M.) were started in Fauquier. Company 31 was led by Capt. Llewellyn Wood and 1st Lt. H.

M. Pearson, and was drawn mainly from Warrenton and Southern Fauquier. Company 131, led by Capt. L. I. Poe and 1st Lt. A. E. Walker Jr., was made up of men from Marshall and northern Fauquier.

The V.R.M. served as a back-up to the V.P.F., and were known collectively as the Fauquier Minutemen. About one-

third of the V.R.M. were veterans of World War I, and over 50 year of age.

The "new" Warrenton Rifles company was a direct descendent of the unit originally formed in the days just before the War Between the States. They fought in several battles, including the skirmish at Fairfax Court House on June 1, 1861,

(Continued on Page 6)

In appreciation of John K. Gott

1929-2004

When John Gott died Aug. 4 at age 75, he left behind a community whose appreciation of its past - and indeed, a great deal of what we know about it - was processed through his mind and hands.

It now falls to those who follow John Gott to make sure that new inquiries into our past are made; that facts are left unvarnished; and that the joy of discovering our roots and what makes us unique is shared with others.

While his focus may have been on the past, John Gott knew that the study of local history will continue only if it is preserved, and passed along to future residents.

Having established the magnificent library in Marshall, he has achieved this first goal; and by showing at least two generations the importance - and joy - of studying and understanding history, he accomplished the second.

Thank you, John.

Society's activities highlighted at 2004 Annual Meeting

The Fauquier Historical Society held its Annual Meeting on June 3, 2004, at Fauquier Springs Country Club. About 100 members and guests attended.

Following the approval of the minutes of the 2003 meeting and the treasurer's report, committee reports were given.

Museum Report: As of May 2004, the Old Jail Museum had received about 2,800 visitors, up about 15 percent from May 2003. It was noted that 27 percent of the visitors were from Fauquier County, 24 percent from other counties in Virginia; 21 percent from other states; and three percent from foreign countries.

As for the Old Jail Museum itself, it was reported that water leakage problems on the Ashby Street side of the building continue to be evident.

Education Committee: Bill Barr reported that proceeds from the Lafayette Festival make it possible for the Society to grant scholarships to Fauquier County students who have demonstrated an exceptional aptitude in advanced studies in history (*See separate story*).

This year's recipients of the \$1,000 scholarships were Gregory Lowden of Fauquier High School and Jamie Farnsworth of Liberty High School.



HISTORICALLY SPEAKING: Author Gen. Lew Helm chats with Society member Ann Power (center) and Kathi Brown, who will write the proposed new Fauquier County history book.

New Board Members: Co-president Richard Gookin welcomed new directors Susan Clarke and Carolyn Hartman to the board. Both ladies have already been active with the Society and earned their places on the board.

Co-President's Address: Mr. Gookin reported on the Society's efforts to preserve as much of the interior of the Warren Green Building as it is remodeled, once again, as county office space.

The Society was consulted on several matters, including the exterior color,

which is now a handsome yellow.

As part of the Sept. 19 Open House, Society members were urged to find and loan artifacts related to the hotel for a display. Co-President Gookin added that our presence at the Open House would be a good opportunity to add membership.

Other activities in which the Society is involved include:

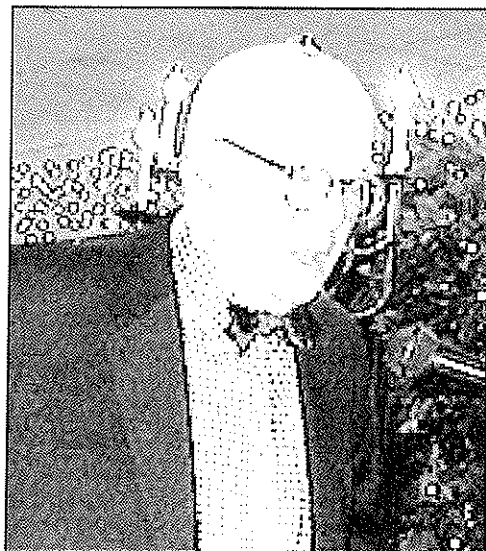
- Providing initial leadership for the preservation of the Warrenton Cemetery. The Society conducted meetings with interested citizens, and an independent cemetery preservation group was formed.

- The Society supported the TEA-21 grant application for \$220,000 to refurbish the old Bealeton Depot as an adjunct to the Bealeton Branch of the Fauquier County Public Library.

- At the 2003 Annual Meeting, the guest speaker was architectural historian Maral Kalbian, who discussed the creation of Rural Historic Districts in Fauquier County.

Since then, the first State and National Rural Historic District was established for the Crooked Run Valley in Northern Fauquier County. Others that have followed include New Baltimore, Asheville, Delaplane and Morgantown.

It was proposed that another rural historic district be created for the area of the



Co-President Richard Gookin

NEWS and NOTES

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Black Horse cavalymen endured danger, privation - and capture

An excerpt from Black Horse Cavalry Defend Our Beloved Country, by Lewis Marshall Helm, taken from Part Four, "The Cause is Lost."

The lot of the Black Horse slipped from bad to worse at the end of December 1863. They were posted for the rest of the winter at Madison Court House, surrounded by the wretchedness of Madison County.

There were no food, no forage, and no shelter except for scrub pines. Farmers survived by scavenging abandoned Union camps for anything that could be eaten or worn. They begged to join the troop in order to kill Yankees and take plunder.

Black Horse mounts were in worse shape than their riders were. Without fodder from the army commissary command and fields too barren to sustain animals, horses ate bark and branches to fill their bellies.

They became bloated from gas. The harsh roughage cut their guts as it worked through their bowels, frequently causing them to bleed. Many horses could barely stand, much less carry cavalymen into battle.

In the Confederacy, cavalry horses were the troopers' personal property. If they didn't own a horse, soldiers became infantry and were transferred out.

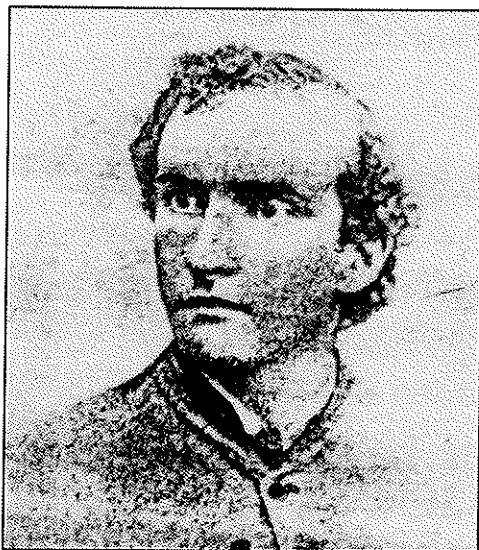
Therefore, unit members were permitted to go on "horse detail" to spot Yankees, kill or capture them, and take well-fed Union animals along with the food and weapons carried by their riders.

Alexander Hunter and five other Black Horse soldiers left camp on "a horse detail" at dawn on a cold January day in 1863. They headed for Little Washington 25 miles away.

At an old farmhouse overlooking a river, the occupants provided them the bit of food that they could spare, and for a few dollars agreed to care for the soldiers' horses when they slipped across the river.

The night sky poured sheets of icy rain as the troopers slipped down the riverbank and into frigid waist deep water.

They feared clothes and boots may drag them down, drowning them in the rushing torrent, so they bundled their trousers and boots, holding them and their pistols and ammunition above their heads. Sabers were hidden in



Alexander Hunter

brush along the shore.

The stream was swollen by the heavy rain, so for safety each man used one hand to hold onto the man in front.

Suddenly one man slipped. He grabbed his companion to his front, who toppled into the next soldier. Like dominoes, they all fell while desperately clutching their weapons. Clothes were swept away.

The half-naked soldiers slithered up the far bank, covered with mud, shaking from cold. No Yankee was nearby, so they worked their way about a mile to a farmhouse.

A farmer answered their knock and puzzlement swept his face as he examined the Confederates... then burst into laughter until tumbling into a chair, tears rolling down his face.

"I have lived here as a boy and man for 58 years and never saw a sight like this; O' Lord!" he exclaimed.

Upstairs, he provided a bowl of water for washing and then passed along clothing that came in all sizes and shapes.

The farmer was short and portly, and the troopers were all tall and skinny. Lanky Lawrence Ashton put on the trousers that reached only to his kneecaps. His jacket reached half way down his back.

The men slept until morning, when they trooped downstairs. The farmer's wife had made a hot meal for them but doubled with laughter at their appearance. The rain still pounded down as they left the farmhouse. They stopped in a stand of pine trees several miles away. After a heated discussion, George W.

Taylor declared he had decided to visit his wife, who lived not far from there.

Marshall N. Butler and E. L. Butler wanted to go home. William O. Caynor didn't know what he wanted to do, but trying to steal a horse was not on his list. Ashton was focused on getting another set of clothes, so they scattered.

Hunter and Ned Martin remained committed to their original mission and headed for a Union camp near Bristoe Station.

For three days they waited in ambush just outside the camp's perimeter, but the only men to venture nearby were a score of very tough looking deserters who had neither horses nor provisions.

Hunter and Martin gave up and headed home. They avoided farms that had Negroes present since the slaves would most certainly turn them in to the Yankees.

On January 16, 1864, Hunter went alone on a horse detail, heading toward Warrenton. About two miles from Fauquier Springs he saw a Union patrol coming along the Warrenton-Springs Road, quickly hid his horse in a gully, then ran for cover to a small church nearby.

A Union soldier 50 yards away was smoking his pipe while watering his horse. Hunter's horse neighed, and the soldier shouted for the rest of the patrol and headed toward the noise.

Hunter jumped through the church's door. He shimmied up a ladder to the attic as the soldiers burst in. Unable to spot their quarry, they guessed he was upstairs.

When there was talk about shooting into the attic or burning the building, Hunter tossed down his weapons and surrendered.

The patrol from Company F, First Pennsylvania Cavalry, led Hunter to the Army's provost marshal in Warrenton, who insisted that he would be shot as guerrilla.

However, Hunter finally was sent with other prisoners to Brandy Station and put into a forty-acre pen, where prisoners stamped around with no blankets, no overcoats, no fires, and no shelter to break the bone-freezing wind that swept through. Only half had shoes or socks.

After several wild escapes and recaptures, Hunter successfully eluded his Union guards in West Virginia and rejoined the Black Horse Troop.

First book on the famed Black Horse Cavalry is published

After more than seven years of intensive research and discovery, Fauquier Historical Society member Brig. Gen. Lewis Marshall Helm (AUS, ret.) has published *Black Horse Cavalry Defend Our Beloved Country*, a comprehensive history of one of Northern Virginia's most distinguished military units, Fauquier County's Black Horse Troop.

The new book is available at the Old Jail Museum and the *Fauquier Times-Democrat* in Warrenton, and at the Fauquier Heritage Society in Marshall.

In addition, the book may be purchased on-line at the Hakenson and Dudding Civil War Site, www.hakenson.net

Descendant writes

Gen. Helm is the grandson of William Pickett Helm, who served in the Black Horse Cavalry from 1862 until he was paroled in May 1865, a month after the end of the War Between the States.

Three of William Helm's brothers - who also were members of the Black Horse Cavalry - died in the War. Another brother, Francis Helm, was one of Mosby's Rangers.

While the activities of the Black Horse Cavalry are the focal point of the book, Gen. Helm provides additional background through accounts of other units and military actions involving the Black Horse, and the effect of the War on the folks on the Fauquier homefront.

Black Horse Cavalry Defend Our Beloved Country is divided into five parts. In Part I, "In the Beginning, 1858-1861," the clouds of civil war gather, and prominent Fauquier men meet to discuss forming a militia unit to protect their homeland -

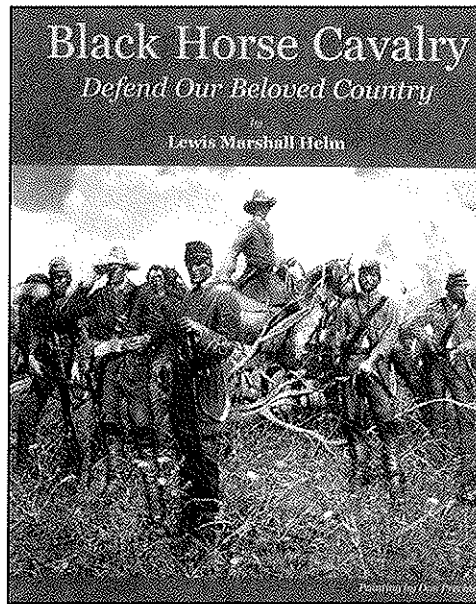


William Pickett Helm, c. 1890

which upon the South's secession from the Union became their "beloved country."

Part Two, "The South Attacks, 1862," deals with the early Confederate victories; Part Three, "The Union Endures, 1863," describes the bitter war of attrition that leads to Part Four, "The Cause is Lost, 1864-1865," and the end of the War.

An excerpt taken from the opening chapter of Part Four, "The Elusive



Alexander Hunter," appears on Page 5. This example shows the depth of detail that is found in each account in the book, as well as the colorful writing style.

Part Five, "Afterward," is an account of local conditions after the War in the "No Man's Land" that was Fauquier.

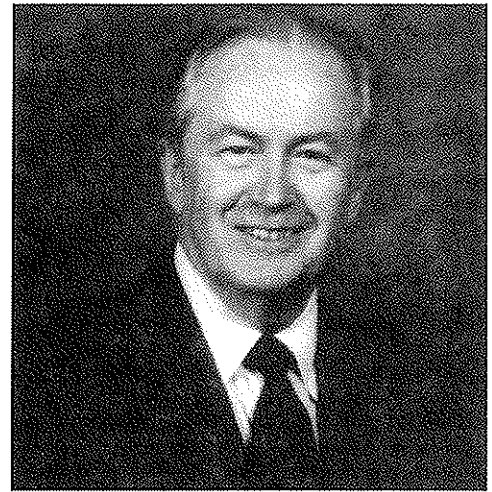
Gen. Helm covers new ground, describing the devastation of the countryside and suffering of both the former combatants and their families. The first reunion of the Black Horse Troop does not take place until 1890 - 25 years after the end of the War. But life goes on, and the veterans maintained their pride and connection with their former comrades until the end.

Unique images

Along with the historical text, Gen. Helm has assembled a large number of photographs and drawings for *Black Horse Cavalry Defend Our Beloved Country*, including many unique vintage images, and a number of previously-unpublished original photos loaned by descendants of the Black Horse.

The book also has two appendices, the first an enumeration of the Black Horse Troop casualties during the War, and the second, a "morning report" listing each man who served in the Black Horse, and a brief synopsis of what Gen. Helm has uncovered about him.

In his acknowledgments, Gen. Helm gives special thanks to Old Jail Museum Director Jackie Lee and museum docent Margaret Robinson, wife of the late Ripley Robinson, for their assistance in



Brig. Gen. Lewis M. Helm, AUS

collecting many of the photographs, and gathering information.

In an unusual act of generosity and as a way to share his work, Gen. Helm has donated 700 copies of the 1,000 copy limited edition to the Fauquier Historical Society, which will handle the sale and distribution of *Black Horse Cavalry Defend Our Beloved Country*.

Black Horse Cavalry Defend Our Beloved Country, copyright 2004 by Lewis M. Helm, 4400 East-West Highway, Bethesda, Maryland 20814. ISBN #: 0-914927-45-0. Hardbound with full-color dust jacket; 302 pages, including many black-and-white photos and drawings. \$40 plus tax and shipping (if applicable).

Published by Higher Education Publications, Falls Church, VA.

Book signing event planned for Oct. 10

A very special book signing event is planned for Sunday, Oct. 10, 2004 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Black Horse Inn (of course!) on Meetze Road just outside of Warrenton.

Society members are invited to attend the event, which will feature a demonstration by Black Horse Troop re-enactors, a Confederate balladeer, refreshments and sweets.

Please RSVP to the Old Jail Museum at (540) 347-5525.

Annual Meeting

(Continued from Page 2)

Springs Road from Warrenton to the Fauquier-Culpeper county line.

Co-President Gookin pointed out that the designation of a community or area as a Rural Historic District is honorary, and while it confers some advantages for preservation projects, it does not infringe on property rights.

The Society continues working with the Mosby Museum Foundation at Brentmoor, the Spilman-Mosby House in Warrenton.

Co-President Gookin pointed out that both organizations are involved in the promotion of heritage, and with the opening of the Mosby Museum, Warrenton would have historic attractions at both ends of Main Street.

Acknowledgements: Co-President Gookin recognized the following members for their contributions during the past year: **John Toler**, for writing and publishing *News and Notes*, the Society's newsletter; **Matt Carson**, for creating and maintaining the Society's Web page, www.fauquierhistory.org; **David Binning**, for his work collecting and organizing membership data; and Museum Director **Jackie Lee**, for the countless hours she spent over the past year at the Old Jail, and for helping to arrange for the Annual Meeting.

Also Treasurer **William Skinker**, for handling the Society's books and financial reports for the past year; and Recording Secretary **Diane Gulick**, for taking and preparing the minutes of all board meetings.

Special thanks and commendation to our **Museum Docents**, for their dedicated service over the past year; and to County Administrator **G. Robert Lee**, the **Town of Warrenton**, and the **Fauquier County Board of Supervisors** for their continued support of the Society and the Old Jail Museum.

"The Fauquier Historical Society will play an active part in our communities in the years ahead," concluded Co-Pres. Gookin.

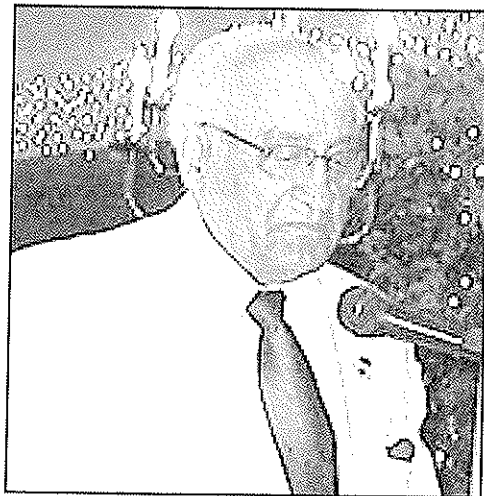
Following dinner and the business meeting, former Society president Maxwell Harway, who was appointed to serve on the committee appointed by the Fauquier County Board of Supervisors to produce a new county history book as part of the 250th Anniversary celebration, introduced Jack Censer of George Mason University, and author Kathi Brown of Charlottesville.

Education Committee names 2004 Historical Society scholarship winners

This year, our local history stars are attending UVA., Virginia Tech

BY WILLIAM BARR
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

An outgrowth of the Fauquier Historical Society's Lafayette Festival in 2000 was the establishment of an educational fund, from which selected Fauquier County graduating seniors would receive financial awards in the amount of \$1,000.



Director William Barr

This year's recipients are Jamie Lynn Farnsworth of Liberty High School, and Gregory Spence Lowden of Fauquier High School.

Jamie Farnsworth has excelled in Advanced Placement History and Government classes at Liberty High School. She is a member of the National Honor Society, graduating 18th in her class of 337 students, with a grade point average of 4.1667.

Peter Gredler, the chairman of Liberty's History and Social Sciences Department, writes that "Maintaining her excellent GPA while participating in extracurricular activities, having a job, and participating in community service activities are Jamie's greatest achievements in high school."

Her employer, Jacqueline Jones of Fauquier Accounting Services, adds that "Any financial assistance provided to Jamie in the form of scholarships will be money well spent."

Jamie will begin her studies at Virginia Tech this autumn.

Gregory Lowden has also excelled in



Jamie Lynn
Farnsworth



Gregory Spence
Lowden

his Advanced Placement History and Government classes at Fauquier High.

He graduates 16th in his class of 331 students with an impressive 4.3036 grade point average, and a two-page list of extracurricular activities, awards, and honors.

Greg received early admission into the University of Virginia.

James Wilson, his Advanced Placement History teacher, writes that Greg is "Most worthy of any consideration that you may give to his scholarship application, and you will not be disappointed with his performance at the University!"

Dr. Norris Royston, himself a graduate of UVA., noted that "Greg has acquired his love for history from his father," and that he is "genuinely deserving of this financial assistance."

Former Principal Dave Graham added that "Greg is the kind of young man that will bring pride to the Fauquier Historical Society in future years."

Gregory's essay was about the financial devastation suffered by a Confederate family, and its impact upon their sole surviving son, who is worried that he can no longer attend the University.

Remarkably, it contained the following foreshadowing statement, "I ask those of my community for any help they can give. All hope lies upon a scholarship."

Both Jamie Farnsworth and Greg Lowden and their parents have repeatedly expressed their sincere gratitude for the Fauquier Historical Society's recognition and financial assistance.

We congratulate both recipients, and wish them continued success.

Warrenton Rifles

(Continued from Page 1)

where their commander, Capt. John Quincy Marr, was killed.

The Warrenton Rifles was re-established in March 1907 as Co. C, 72nd Infantry Regiment, under the command of Capt. E. Beverley Slater, and later under Capt. J. Brad Beverley.

On July 4, 1916, the Warrenton Rifles was mustered into the U.S. Army as Co. C, 2nd Virginia Infantry Regiment, and first served on the U.S. Mexican border near Brownsville, Texas, under Capt. Wood.

When America declared war on Germany in 1917, the Warrenton Rifles were sent to fight in France, where they served with distinction (see *News and Notes*, Vol. 15, No. 2, Fall-Winter 1993).

Mustered-out after World War I, the Warrenton Rifles were organized once again on March 27, 1941, and designated by the state as Company 111 of the 11th Battalion, Virginia Protective Force.

On the day they received state recognition, the Warrenton Rifles was up to two officers and 43 men. Commanding officer was Capt. W. Murray Black, a former Army field artillery officer.

Drills were held every Thursday night at the gymnasium of the old Warrenton High School on Academy Hill, which later became the unit's armory.

The men were issued rifles, cartridge belts, bayonets and scabbards from the federal government, but state funding was severely limited.

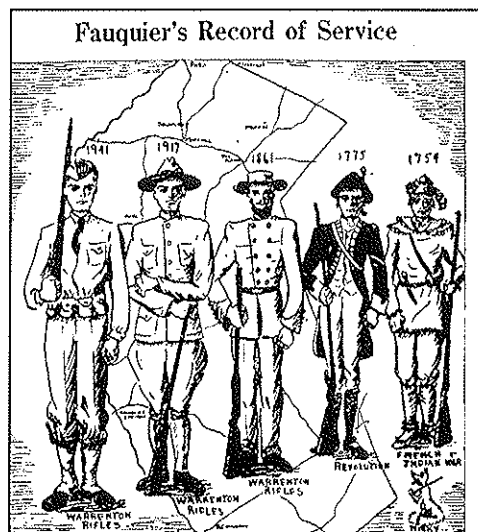
From the very beginning, losing qualified enlistees to the active duty military was a continuous problem for V.P.F. units. In July 1943, for example, eight members of the Warrenton Rifles were called up by the Selective Service, two more left for college, and another took a job outside the county. The company was left at less than half of its authorized strength of 64 men.

Volunteers

A strictly volunteer unit, local militiamen endured serious equipment shortages, limited training opportunities, and travel hampered by gas rationing.

For some, the cost of their uniform — \$12.50 for the regulation trousers, shirt, overseas cap and web belt — was prohibitive. State support for the unit was severely limited, so a unit finance committee was set up to raise the \$750 needed to buy uniforms for the entire unit.

Donations were sought from public-spirited individuals and businesses, and fundraisers held by the troops.



TO ARMS: Cartoon in the March 12, 1942 edition of *The Fauquier Democrat* put the Warrenton Rifles in an historical perspective.

The Fauquier County Board of Supervisors later appropriated \$500 to the unit, with the funds earmarked for the construction of a rifle range on the Benner farm on Cedar Run near Warrenton.

By late April, the Warrenton Rifles was at its full authorized strength of 60 officers and men — a situation that would change dramatically with the outbreak of World War II, just eight months later.

Training, maneuvers

In the meantime, the local company was growing in strength and reputation.

As the effort to build the V.P.F. statewide continued, men from the Warrenton Rifles underwent specialized training at active duty military bases in Virginia, including Fort Eustis, VMI, and the Quantico Marine Barracks, where they were "gassed" for the first time.

At a polo match at the Goose Creek polo field on Oct. 5, 1941, the Warrenton Rifles were invited to demonstrate riot control techniques and perform a bayonet drill during a break between chukkers.

After polo game was over, the company was inspected by 11th Battalion Commander Col. Frank Wray, of Berryville, and his adjutant, Capt. William Bartenstein, of Warrenton, who were generous in their praise of the unit's performance after just six months of training.

World War II starts

This training would soon be put to use, with the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, and the events that followed.

The first state-ordered call-up of the Warrenton Rifles came on Dec. 17, 1941, when Capt. Black received orders from Col. Wray to send 12 of his men to stand guard over the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad bridge near Occoquan.

The bridge was one of six "sensitive" areas in the region assigned to the V.P.F. for protection, and the assignment lasted about three weeks.

With the military draft now fully in effect, most of the younger members of the V.P.F. were called to active federal duty as soon as they were old enough.

The experience gained with the home unit went far to prepare them for active duty training, but the continuous turnover of V.P.F. enlistees made it harder and harder to fill the ranks.

To be continued

Part 2 will appear in our next issue, Spring and Summer 2005.

The Fauquier Historical Society
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