



NEWS AND NOTES

from

The Fauquier Historical Society

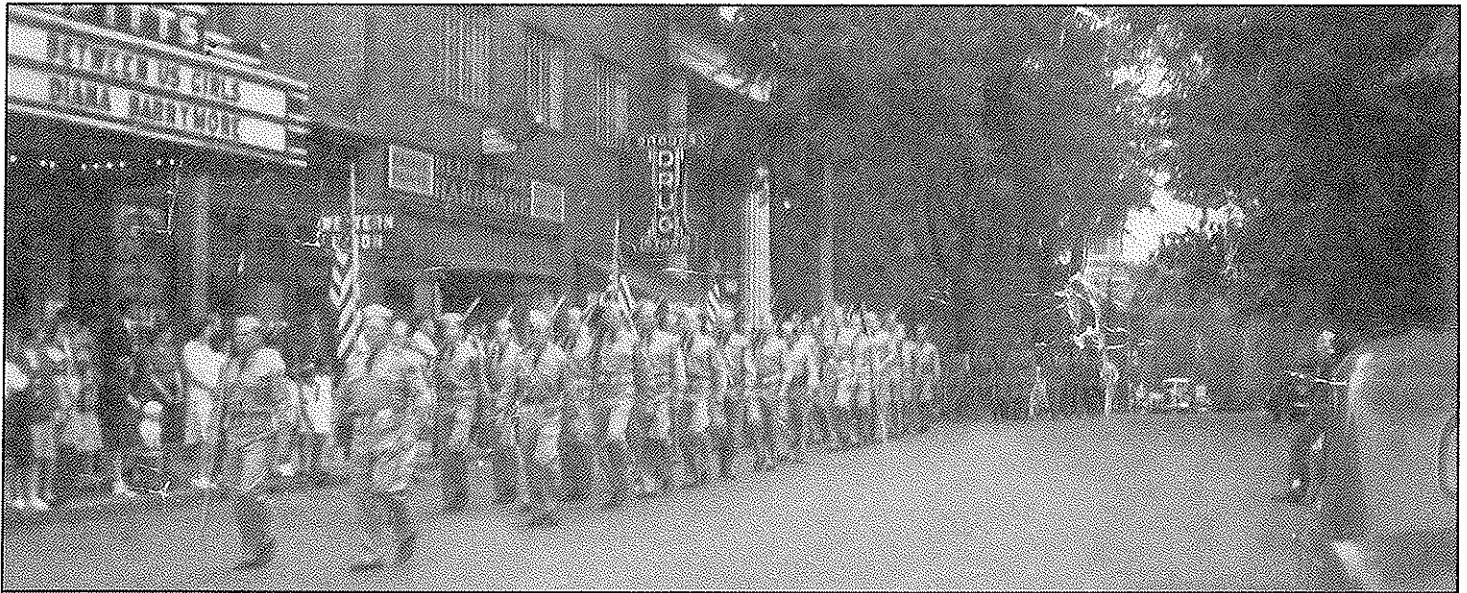
Vol. 27, No. 1

WARRENTON, VIRGINIA

Spring & Summer 2005

Fauquier's Militia Companies During World War II, Part II

Warrenton Rifles carried on a proud tradition



HOME GUARD: Members of the Warrenton Rifles and V.R.M. Co. 31 and Co. 131 marched in the 1943 Memorial Day Parade.

By **JOHN T. TOLER**
NEWS AND NOTES EDITOR

Continued from Vol. 26, No. 2

In January 1942, Capt. W. Murray Black resigned from the Warrenton Rifles to go on active duty with the U.S. Army. A farewell ceremony was held on January 14, which included a visit by senior V.P.F. officers and a parade down Main Street.

After thanking his men for their loyal service while under his command, Capt. Black announced that Lt. John C. Butler, who had retired from the Army as a lieutenant colonel before joining the V.P.F., would take over as the CO.

First Sgt. C.V.B. Cushman presented Capt. Black with a watch from the company, in appreciation for his leadership.

The following week, another local appeal for new recruits was made, noting that the company was approaching its first

anniversary, and should do so at its full authorized strength of 60 men.

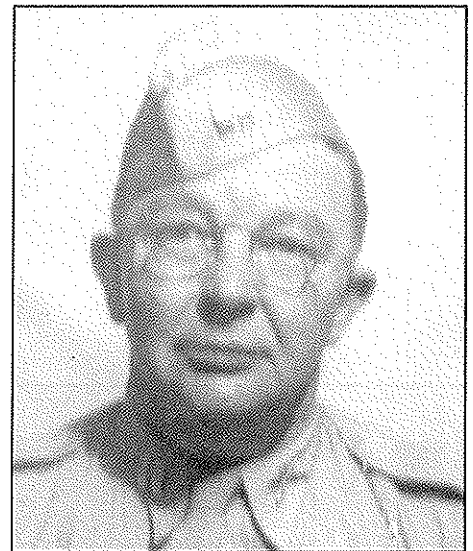
A special evening "recruitment night" was scheduled, with interested parties invited to meet with then-Sgt. Laurence R. Bartenstein at the armory, or during the day at his office. It was noted that men from the ages of 18-44 were needed; older men with prior service were also urged to join.

In June, Capt. Butler was asked to serve as the executive officer of the 11th Battalion, and left the Warrenton Rifles.

Sgt. Bartenstein, who had been serving as the company supply sergeant, was promoted to second lieutenant on May 22, and to first lieutenant on June 20.

As part of the reorganization that followed, six members of the company were selected to undergo intensive training at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Va. and at Garrett Park, Md.

Attending the training at V.M.I. on



Capt. Laurence R. Bartenstein, V.P.F.

June 21-26 were Lt. Bartenstein, First Sgt. Francis Yeager, Sgt. James F. Austin, Pvt. James Albert Robinson, and Pvt. Norman

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Warrenton Rifles

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H. Wampler.

The purpose of the training was to raise the men's level of proficiency in a wide range of military skills, and enable them to return to their unit and teach the rest of the men.

Company Supply Sergeant L. L. Hutchison reported to Garrett Park, Md., where he underwent training at a school held by the U.S. Army Third Corps Area. Others who later trained at Garrett Park were Maj. Butler, Sgt. J. C. Hamilton, Sgt. Henri deHeller and Pvt. B. E. B. Hall.

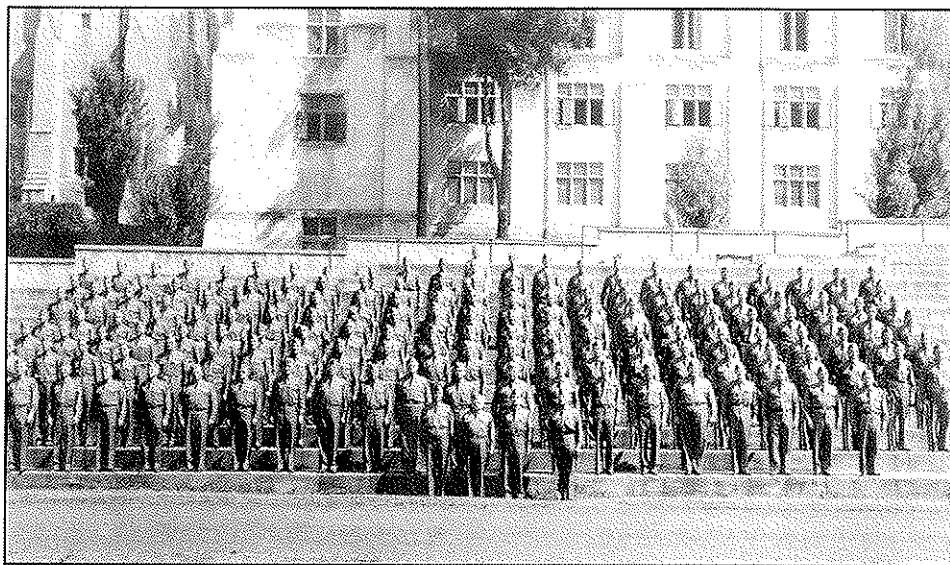
In July, Lt. Bartenstein was promoted to the rank of captain, and made commanding officer of the Warrenton Rifles.

V.R.M. is established

One of Capt. Bartenstein's first ceremonial duties was the swearing-in of the men of the newly-formed Co. 31, Virginia Reserve Militia, on July 27.

On that day, 46 volunteers reaffirmed their allegiance to the United States and vowed to defend their country. Many of the men had seen prior service, most during World War I.

As a new home guard until supporting the V.P.F., members of the V.R.M. "would be the first on the scene of any disturbance



ADVANCED TRAINING: Local militiamen underwent special training at VMI (shown above), and at an Army facility at Garrett Park, Md. in June 1942. *Courtesy of Norman Wampler.*

or violence in their neighborhood, and will furnish information to other authorities on any evidence of enemy activity, sabotage, or suspicious occurrences in their localities."

Capt. Llewellyn Wood commanded the new unit; Lt. Charles F. Taylor was appointed first lieutenant and leader of the Warrenton platoon; and L. I. Poe, second lieutenant and leader of the Marshall platoon. A third platoon was planned for Southern Fauquier.

New weapons, trials

In August, federal authorities collected the rifles originally provided to the unit, and replaced them with shotguns and Thompson sub-machine guns.

Company training on the new weapons was conducted over the next several months, along with map reading, terrain appreciation, and scouting.

At that point, only 17 of the 60 men originally in the Warrenton Rifles remained; replacements were slow in coming, and the unit was under-strength at only 52 of the 63 officers and men authorized. Yet another ambitious recruitment drive was started, which succeeded in bringing the unit up to full strength by the end of October.

On Nov. 16, the Warrenton Rifles underwent their first surprise mobilization drill, during which an emergency order was issued and all men had to report to the armory in Warrenton within 90 minutes.

According to Capt. Bartenstein, the mobilization was "a complete success," with personnel from all corners of the

county and surrounding areas assembled at the armory within the allotted time.

Winter '42 and spring '43 were spent in unit training including riot duty, extended-order drill, and weapons qualification on the outdoor range.

Other activities over the months included joint training exercises with the V.R.M. unit in Middleburg.

'Fourth Battle of Manassas'

In mid-June 1943, Fauquier County's militia units would undertake their largest and most ambitious combined training exercise.

On orders from the 11th Battalion headquarters, the Warrenton Rifles and Fauquier's V.R.M. units prepared for joint maneuvers, to be conducted during a 24-hour encampment on June 19-20 at the Manassas Battlefield.

The Warrenton Rifles sent 38 men, and the county's V.R.M. units sent an additional 62 men.

They were joined by about 550 men from other units in the region, including four other V.P.F. companies from the 11th Battalion, and 11 V.R.M. companies.

Informally called the "Fourth Battle of Manassas," the purpose of the encampment was to "provide experience for company commanders in the supervision and care of their companies in the field; to teach the individual soldier to provide himself with proper equipment; to get the battalion acquainted and to build esprit de corps."

Following extensive preparation at
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NEWS and NOTES

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Address Inquiries to:
The Fauquier Historical Society
P.O. Box 675

Warrenton, VA 20188 Telephone: (540) 347-5525

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and V.R.M. personnel at the battlefield, where they were joined by two platoons of Fauquier's V.R.M. companies, totaling 48 men.

The overnight exercise included an approach march at night, and organizing a platoon defense area the following morning.

The Warrenton Rifles returned to Manassas for a third exercise again at the end of October. This time, the problem was "street fighting," known today as "combat in urban terrain." About 500 men from around the region were involved in the joint exercise."

Three officers and 51 men of the Warrenton Rifles participated, along with four officers and 59 men of the two Fauquier V.R.M. units. Men from Company 79 of Rappahannock County also participated.

According to newspaper accounts, "The Warrenton Rifles advanced in extended order down Grant Avenue, wiping out a simulated machine gun nest in the Court House, which was then occupied by V.R.M. Company 131 of Marshall. They then proceeded to the high school, which was taken over by the Rappahannock Company, and the railroad, captured by the Marshall outfit."

The exercise was completed on schedule, and the troops reassembled and marched through town.

The day ended with a precision drill demonstration by members of the Warrenton Rifles under Lt. James F. Austin. Participating were 1st Sgt. C. T. Hayes, Sgt. B.E.B. Hall, Sgt. Albert Robinson, Sgt. Tom Parr, Sgt. Allwyn Ash, Cpl. Myron Burdette and Sgt. William Grant.

More training, a new name

In addition to the regular Thursday night training at their armory, in early November 20 men of the Warrenton Rifles traveled to Quantico for training by Marine Corps personnel in judo and other forms of unarmed defense.

They were expected to come back to the unit and train the other members of the company after they had qualified.

A great deal of time was spent in preparation for the quarterly inspections conducted by the Battalion staff, and the Warrenton Rifles always earned a satisfactory or better rating.

The beginning of 1944 saw many



PROGRESSION: As this 1943 *Fauquier Democrat* cartoon illustrates, V.P.F. service often led to active duty service.

changes in the V.P.F.

In February, Virginia Governor Colgate Darden signed into law a bill changing the name of the V.P.F. to the Virginia State Guard. Another bill created a Virginia "unorganized militia," made up of all able-bodied males between the ages of 16 and 55 living in the state.

The idea was that if a true emergency arose, the Governor could call-up just about every able-bodied man in the state to fill out the ranks of the organized militia.

For the first time, the General Assembly set aside enough funds to provide for five days of field training per year for all V.S.G. companies.

In March, members of the Virginia State Guard were issued new olive drab and khaki uniforms, and the shotguns and Thompson sub-machine guns were replaced with rifles.

A federal inspection in late April found few deficiencies; not so for some other units in the state. The Clifton Forge unit, rated unsatisfactory, was ordered to disband. It was reported that most of the 50 V.S.G. companies were at or over strength.

The Company was aided in its recruitment efforts in May, when the Company 134 - the Middleburg V.R.M. unit led by Capt. C. Oliver Iselin - discharged 12 of its members so that they could join the V.S.G. as the Middleburg platoon of the Warrenton Rifles.

The balance of 1944 was spent in armory and rifle range training, appearances in local parades, and specialized field exercises on the Benner farm and in

Winchester.

In November, the Warrenton Rifles were issued new, standard issue Army olive drab wool uniforms, and were assigned an Army troop truck, which they nicknamed "Miss Odessa."

Early 1945 was spent in chemical warfare training, which was given in Middleburg by Regular Army Chemical Corps personnel.

The problem of maintaining company strength returned again, with the unit down to 46 men out of an authorized strength of 64 by mid-April.

In spite of its decreased strength, the Warrenton Rifles earned another "satisfactory" rating by the federal inspectors. Recruitment efforts were redoubled, and the company was up to 55 officers and men by the end of May.

Memorial Day 1945 - with victory in Europe assured and VJ Day only months away - was celebrated enthusiastically in Fauquier, and the Warrenton Rifles marched in the parade in Warrenton.

Field training continued through the summer of 1945, with maneuvers conducted in Berryville in June, and a "sham battle" in Middleburg in August.

When World War II was officially over in early August, the future role of the V.S.G. came into question.

On Sept. 15, 1945, the Virginia Reserve Militia was disbanded by the Governor, and former members urged to join the V.S.G.

A week later, Lt. Gen. Ben Lear, commander of the U.S. Army Ground Forces, sought to reassure V.S.G. members that they would still be needed.

"I want to more than emphasize the importance of the duty the V.S.G. is doing," said Gen. Lear. "You are part of the armed forces of your country, and you are entitled accordingly to the respect and appreciation of all persons within your state, and the United States."

Changing times

This sense of appreciation was fortified when the Warrenton Rifles were invited to participate in the Armistice Day celebration in Berryville, during which their company and the units from Winchester and Berryville were reviewed by Gen. George C. Marshall.

But the world was changing, and the concept of homeland defense was moving into another phase.

A battalion-wide mobilization sched-

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Warrenton Rifles

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uled to take place in Warrenton on Jan. 13, 1946 was canceled after Lt. Col. Hellmuth was notified by the War Department that a plan to reorganize the National Guard under federal jurisdiction was under consideration.

Strike Services

When employees of the Virginia Electric and Power Co. threatened to strike in late March 1946, Gov. William Tuck responded by calling out the remaining state militiamen.

Members of the Warrenton Rifles were put on alert. In Warrenton, Capt. Bartenstein formed his unit at the local Vepco office, and served each essential worker (automatically members of the "unorganized militia") with a notice that he had been drafted into his militia company.

Vepco workers were further advised that they had been "temporarily suspended from active duty," but would be returned to active status immediately upon a cessation of company operations by the strike and ordered to perform the job they held before striking.

This move was challenged by the union's legal counsel, but fortunately, Gov. Tuck arbitrated an agreement with the parties involved, ending the threat of a strike.

Most of the officers connected with the V.S.G., including now-Col. Black and Capt. Bartenstein, knew that plans to create a new National Guard were moving ahead, and the days of the Warrenton Rifles were numbered.


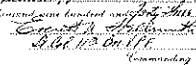
What they hoped to accomplish - with the help of American Legion Post 72 - was the establishment of a National Guard unit in Warrenton to take their place.

At the end of May, Gov. Tuck asked the remaining members of the V.S.G. to re-enlist on or before June 30, 1946 for one more year, in order to give the U.S. Congress time to pass the Act creating the new National Guard and the establishment of units in Virginia.

Most of the men in the Warrenton Rifles stayed on, some with the expectation that they would enlist in the new Virginia Army National Guard, once it became a reality.

Warrenton Rifles disbanded

At an officers' conference held in Arlington on Nov. 18, 1946, it was decided

Commonwealth of Virginia			
 Honorable Discharge From the Virginia Protective Force To all whom it may concern:			
This is to Certify, That <u>Norman H. Wampler</u>			
Warrenton Rifles Co. 111 V.P.F.			
is a Constitutional of Honest and Faithful			
Service is hereby Honorably Discharged from the Virginia Protective			
Force, by reason of Resurrection into the Army of the United States			
Said <u>Norman H. Wampler</u> was born			
on <u>November 10, 1905</u> in the State of <u>Virginia</u>			
When enlisted he was <u>20</u> years of age and by completion a <u>Private</u>			
He had <u>12000</u> days <u>Service</u> <u>has</u> <u>None</u> completion, and was			
at <u>102</u> inches in height			
Enlisted Record of			
<u>Wampler</u>	<u>Norman H.</u>	<u>H.</u>	<u>Corporal</u>
<u>Rank</u>	<u>Service</u>	<u>Branch</u>	<u>Station</u>
<u>Enlisted</u>	<u>February 5</u>	<u>1942</u>	<u>Warrenton, Virginia</u>
<u>Discharged</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>1947</u>	<u>Warrenton, Virginia</u>
<u>Reason</u>	<u>Resurrection from state of discharge</u>		
<u>Remarks</u>	<u>None</u>		
<u>Character of Service</u>	<u>Excellent</u>		
<u>Religious Qualification</u>	<u>None</u>		
<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>None</u>		
<u>Married</u>	<u>None</u>		
<u>Number of Dependents</u>	<u>None</u>		
<u>Character of Discharge</u>	<u>Excellent</u>		
Signed under my hand at <u>Warrenton, Va.</u> this			
20th day of <u>February</u> 1947			
 <u>W. H. H. H. H.</u> Commanding			
50921 1/25/48			

HONORABLY DISCHARGED - from the V.P.F. to serve in the Regular Army. Norman Wampler went on to have a distinguished military career.

that the men of the 11th Battalion, V.S.G., would conduct their final maneuvers on Dec. 1 and 2, in Arlington.

Gov. Tuck ordered the deactivation of all V.S.G. units to take place on Jan. 31, 1947, but then changed the order to July 1. By then, the Warrenton Rifles was down to just two officers and 26 men.

Memorial Day 1947 marked the last public parade in which the Warrenton Rifles marched, joining the Sons and Daughters of the Confederacy, American Legion, former V.R.M. personnel, local fire companies and the Boy Scouts.

The official disbanding of the Warrenton Rifles took place on June 5, 1947. It was noted in *The Fauquier Democrat* that during its six years of existence, the unit

had a total of nine officers and 282 enlisted men on its muster roles. Of those, three officers and 74 men were discharged for entry into the Armed Forces, and another 52 entered the service after completing their tours with the Warrenton Rifles.

Two former members of the unit serving in the Army, Pvt. Lester D. Laing and Pvt. Calvin C. Downs, lost their lives fighting in WWII. A third, Sam Hall, III would die in the Korean War.

As a final footnote, an advertisement for an auction of former Warrenton Rifles property was published in the *Democrat* in early November 1947.

Among the items listed to be sold "at the Grade School Building" in Warrenton on Nov. 8, were "one desk, one steel cabinet, lot of web belts, lot of black neckties, one large tent, several chairs, pistol holsters, cal. .45, pistol clips, a large gas grill and other articles too numerous to mention. Auctioneer: L. T. Shumate."

Sadly, Capt. Bartenstein, who had provided leadership and inspiration for the men of the Warrenton Rifles for most of their WWII service, died just two months later, on Jan. 16, 1948 at age 48.

In his obituary, it was noted that "Capt. Bartenstein's work with the Guard was recognized as outstanding throughout the state. Through his wholehearted efforts, his company was kept at near full strength, even after the war, when interest began to lag.

"The organization which he headed was of the finest in the Virginia State Guard," concluded his obituary.

In final tribute to Capt. Bartenstein, his casket was draped with the Virginia state flag given to the Warrenton Rifles by local supporters in June 1944.

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