

A Guide to the Organization cards of the Virginia Dept. of Military Affairs, 1876-1947

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1876-1947

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History

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Historical Information

Following the conclusion of the Civil War, no Virginia military units were authorized until the General Assembly passed an act on March 29, 1871, providing for the reorganization of the militia and the reestablishment of the Office of the Adjutant General, which had been vacant through the Reconstruction period. It was not until March 17, 1884, however, that the General Assembly passed an act funding the new militia known as the Virginia Volunteers. On June 3, 1916, the Volunteers became the Virginia National Guard under the provisions of the National Defense Act passed by the United States Congress.

The General Assembly passed an act on April 18, 1927, that reorganized state government and created within the governor's office the Division of Military Affairs headed by the adjutant general. On March 31, 1964, the General Assembly passed an act establishing the Department of Military Affairs to assume the responsibilities of the division, which was abolished, and the department was placed under the secretary of transportation and public safety by an act passed on April 8, 1972. The General Assembly created separate secretariats for transportation and for public safety on April 12, 1976, and placed the department under the secretary of public safety. On June 30, 1978, Governor John N. Dalton issued Executive Order No. 16, transferring the department to the secretary of transportation. Effective July 1, 1984, the secretariats of transportation and public safety again were combined. As of 2018, the Dept. of Military Affairs falls under the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security.

The Department of Military Affairs continues to be responsible for the training and supervision of the National Guard, in accordance with federal guidelines. In the event of a national or state emergency, the governor as commander in chief is empowered to activate the National Guard. The agency is comprised of the Virginia National Guard, Virginia Air National Guard, and Virginia Defense Force.

On April 25, 1898, the United States declared war on Spain. Immediately, the Secretary of War telegraphed J. Hodge Tyler, the Governor of Virginia, stating that three regiments of twelve companies of infantry were required for the war effort. The three regiments consisted of four companies from the 1st Regiment Infantry, eight companies from the 2nd Regiment Infantry, nine companies from the 3rd Regiment Infantry, eight companies from the 4th Regiment Infantry, two companies of the 3rd Battalion Infantry, and two companies of the 4th Battalion Infantry. With the addition of three new companies organized in Fairfax, Wytheville, and Lynchburg, these thirty-six companies comprised the three regiments which were designated the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Virginia Infantry. Later, another regiment, designated the 6th Virginia Infantry, was created to fulfill the President's additional call for volunteers. The 1st and 2nd Battalions Infantry, consisting of colored soldiers, were mustered into this regiment. A peace agreement was reached between the United States and Spain in August 1898 before any Virginia regiment made it overseas. The 4th Infantry, however, took part in occupation duties in Cuba and mustered out of service on April 27, 1899. The 2nd Infantry mustered out of service in Richmond in December 1898, the 3rd Infantry mustered out in November, and the 6th Infantry mustered out at Macon, Georgia, in January 1899.

Following the draft into federal service and mobilization of the Virginia National Guard for Mexican Border Service and later war against Germany in 1917, a need arose to create a new militia force in Virginia. By order of Governor Henry C. Stuart, Adjutant General W.W. Sale issued a form letter authorizing the immediate formation of Home Defense organizations to be known as "Virginia State Volunteers" to serve during "the emergency." Two classes of Home Defense Organizations were created consisting of the Virginia State Volunteers and Virginia Home Guard. Lt. Col. Jo Lane Stern, State Inspector, was assigned the duty of organizing these volunteers. The Virginia State Volunteers was organized for home defense during the First World War between 1917 and 1918. Companies of Virginia Volunteers were raised throughout the state including two battalions of infantry and over twenty individual companies. After the signing of the Armistice, most of these units disbanded or mustered out by 1920, although three companies passed over into the National Guard. The Virginia Home Guard were organized and controlled by local officials with the Adjutant General providing advice and guidance.

On March 9, 1916, Pancho Villa and a band of Mexican bandits raided the town of Columbus, New Mexico, killing seventeen Americans. President Woodrow Wilson ordered Maj. Gen. John J. Pershing and a 15,000-man force on a "Punitive Expedition" into Mexico. The War Department telegraphed the governor of Virginia to mobilize the Virginia National Guard to protect the Mexican Border while the Regular Army units carried out the expedition. Two regiments of infantry (the 1st and 2nd Regiments), four batteries of artillery, and the signal and field hospital units were sent. In addition, the Richmond Light Infantry Blues, who petitioned the War Department to be included, joined as the 1st Squadron, Cavalry. Later, an engineer company was added

to the force of over 3,000 men from Virginia. After a relatively uneventful service, these forces were demobilized in early 1917.

Scope and Content

These cards provide information about Virginia soldiers in various military organizations, 1876-1947. The index cards are generally pre-printed with fields to include name, rank, company and regiment, dates of service and various other types of information (specific information for each type of card provided below). The cards include details of military service for enlisted soldiers and officers from Virginia in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Virginia Protective Force, Virginia Reserve Militia, and Virginia National Guard. The majority of the cards document Virginia soldiers who participated in World War I, but there are a few series of cards that document World War II soldiers, as well as a few series of cards that document soldiers prior to WWI.

Cards are only available on microfilm (16 mm). Cards are in alphabetical order by surname of soldier within each type of card, but cards were filmed in two rows. For each reel, records begin on the bottom row and run forwards in alphabetical order, and then are in reverse alphabetical order on the top row. Some cards may be dark and difficult to read.

These cards document the following:

Army (WWI) - Enlisted, 1917-1919. These cards include name, serial number, race, residence, where inducted and date, place and date of birth, organizations served in with dates of assignment and transfers, grades (rank) with date(s) of appointment, engagements, Wounded in Action/injuries received in action (degree of injury and date), served overseas with dates, honorably discharged on demobilization with date, percent disabled in view of occupation, and remarks. May also include information on decorations and citations. Cards are separated by race (White or African-American).

Army (WWI) - Officers, 1917-1919. These cards include name, race, residence, where born, appointed from and date, attended, promotions, organizations and staff assignments, principal stations, engagements, wounds received, served overseas and dates, honorable discharge and date, percent disabled in view of occupation, and remarks. Cards are separated by race (White or African-American). May also include Applications for Victory Medal, which include name, rank and organization, major operations participated in, defensive sector service, service abroad, applicant signature, address and approving officer signature.

Army Deaths (WWI) - Enlisted, 1917-1919. These cards include name, serial number, race, residence, place of birth, date of birth or age, organizations served in with dates of assignment and transfers, grade (rank) with date of appointment, engagement, killed in action and date, wounds or other injuries received in action, served overseas with dates, death date and cause of death, name of person notified of the death and relationship to the deceased, and remarks. Cards are separated by race (White or African-American).

Army Deaths (WWI) - Officers, 1917-1919. Cards include name, race, residence, inducted at and date, place and date of birth, organizations served in with dates and assignments and transfers, grade (rank) with date of appointment, engagements, wounds or other injuries received in action, and remarks.

Army Wounded (WWI) - Enlisted, 1917-1919. Cards include name, serial number, race, residence, where inducted and date, place of birth, date of birth or age, organizations served in with dates of assignment and transfers, grade (rank) with date of appointment, engagements, wounded in action/injuries received in service (degree of injury and date), served overseas with date, honorably discharged on demobilization date, percent disabled in view of occupation, and remarks. May also note any decoration or citations and whether applications for medals have been filed. Cards are separated by race (White or African-American).

Army Wounded (WWI) - Officers, 1917-1919. Cards include name, race, where born and age, where appointed and date, rank, promotions, organizations, assignments, principal stations, served overseas and date, wounded in action (place, date, extent) and remarks. Remarks may include overflow from other fields. May also include Applications for Victory Medal, which include name, rank and organization, major operations participated in, defensive sector service, service abroad, applicant signature, address and approving officer signature.

German War (WWI), 1916-1917. Cards include name, rank, date enlisted, and date discharged. Also include a reference to muster roll book and page number.

Marine Corps (WWI) - Officers, 1917-1919. Cards include name, serial number, race, residence, date and location of enlistment, place and date of birth, organizations served in with dates of assignments and transfers, grade (rank) with date of appointment, engagements, wounds or other injuries received in action, served overseas and date, exit from service date with notes on character, and remarks, which may include notes on awards, medals or citations.

Marine Corps (WWI) - Enlisted, 1917-1919. Cards include name, serial number, race, residence, date and location of enlistment, place and date of birth, organizations served in with dates of assignments and transfers, grade (rank) with date of appointment, engagements, wounds or other injuries received in action, served overseas and date, exit from service date with notes on character, and remarks, which may include

notes on awards, medals or citations.

Marine Corps Deaths (WWI) - Officers, 1917-1919. Cards include name, serial number, race, residence, date and location of enlistment, place and date of birth, organizations served in with dates of assignments and transfers, grade (rank) with date of appointment, engagements, wounds or other injuries received in action, served overseas and date, exit from service with death date and notes on character, and remarks, which may include notes on awards, medals or citations.

Mexican Border (Virginia National Guard), 1916-1917. Cards include name, rank, company and regiment, date commissioned or enlisted, and date discharged. May also note if mustered out to federal service and date. Cards for enlisted soldiers and officers are filed together.

Navy (WWI) - Enlisted and Officers, 1917-1919. Cards include name, serial number, where enlisted and date, age at entrance, rate (rank), home address, served at and dates, served as (rank) and number of days, date of discharge, place and rating at discharge, and remarks. Cards of enlisted men and officers, and white and African-American soldiers are interfiled.

Navy Deaths (WWI) - Enlisted and Officers, 1917-1919. Cards include name, serial number, where enlisted and date, age at entrance, rate (rank), home address, served at and dates, served as (rank) and number of days, date and place where died, rating at death, and remarks. Cards of enlisted men and officers, and white and African-American soldiers are interfiled.

Naval Reserves and Naval Reserves Deaths (WWI) - Enlisted and Officers, 1917-1919. Cards of enlisted men and officers, and white and African-American soldiers are interfiled. Cards for enlisted and officers are slightly different. Cards for enlisted soldiers include name, rank, date and place of birth, appointed from, record of service, appointments, inactive duty, and resignation/disenrollment/discharge. Cards for officers include name, date and place of birth, appointed from, home address, date of appointment, rank on appointment, promotions, duty assignments, and final disposition. Naval Reserve Deaths cards note date and place of death.

Spanish American War, 1898-1899. Cards include name, rank, company and regiment, date enlisted, date mustered into federal service, and date discharged.

Virginia National Guard (WWII), 1941-1942. Cards include name, inducted and reverted to state control date, National Guard unit in federal service, date enlisted in National Guard with number of years, attached to state department, date transferred, and date discharged. May also note if recalled to active duty, released from federal service, reverted to state control or detailed to active duty.

Virginia National Guard Locator Cards, 1919-1941. Cards include name, company and regiment, enlisted date (may include duration of enlistment), and may include discharged or transferred dates.

Virginia Protective Force/Virginia State Guard - Enlisted, 1941-1947. Cards include name, company name (may also include battalion), date enlisted (may also include multiple enlistment dates and duration of each enlistment), and dates discharged or transferred. May also note if company was disbanded with date and general order number.

Virginia Reserve Militia "Minute Men" (WWII) - Enlisted, 1942-1945. Cards include name, rank, company number, date enlisted, date discharged or transferred. May also note if company was disbanded with date and general order number.

Virginia Reserve Militia "Minute Men" (WWII) - Officers, 1942-1945. Cards include name, rank, company number, date enlisted, date discharged or transferred. May also note if company was disbanded with date and general order number and may include appointment dates for rank changes.

Virginia Volunteers, 1884-1917. Cards include name, company and regiment, date enlisted, and date discharged. May also note if called into federal service and if company was disbanded with date and general order number.

Virginia Volunteers - African-American troops, 1876-1897. Cards include name, company and regiment, date enlisted, date mustered into federal service, and discharge date.

Volunteers for Emergencies (WWI), 1917-1920. Cards include name, rank, company, date enlisted, and date discharged. May also note if company was disbanded with date and general order number.

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Extent

Extent: 23 reels of microfilm.

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Miscellaneous Reel 6420 (reel)

Virginia Reserve Militia Minute Men - Enlisted (A-S), 1942-1945.

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