COLONEL STEPHEN WARREN

A Study of the Vermont Militia 1764-1851

BY RALPH SHEPARD



Introduction: As collectors we all share a passion for old and historical artifacts, yet we each have entirely different reasons to justify our hobby. Over time, and perhaps with maturity, my initial quest for objects morphed into a mission to understand and preserve the historical context of the items for which I am only a temporary custodian. My presentation today will discuss how I came to that understanding. The journey began with one simple question. Why, after purchasing an expensive uniform and sword, did Colonel Warren command the 6th Vermont militia for only one year?

Forty odd years ago, my friend Rodney Ralston and I were driving along the New York shore of Lake Champlain looking for antique guns. We stopped at a shop in Chazy and discovered three early to mid-19th century US military swords for sale. Rodney won the toss and bought 2 and I one. Some weeks later the dealer contacted Rodney to say he had acquired additional items from the estate. Included were a chapeau and epaulets, each it is own box, a belt with buckle, sword hanger, and uniform buttons. The chapeau and epaulets indicated the original owner had been a field grade officer. The buttons were mounted on a sheet of cardboard and the dealer said he had cut them from the uniform "because it was too badly mothed". Too bad, those shreds might have answered a lot of questions.

18 ea. Albert GS 1: « SCOVILLS EXTRA »

Detail of buttons that antique dealer cut from uniform. The three ball buttons suggest a Captain's uniform, but the 18 US Infantry buttons do not conform to any standard US uniform regulation. Too many for Company Grade, not enough for Field Grade!

The entire grouping had been purchased in Orwell, Vermont from the Royce family estate. Later generations were known to local Orwell residents by the names of Rice, Royce, and Royse. All these names can be found in various published historical sketches of Colonel Warren. Over the years, we were unable to contact any family members with knowledge of who might have carried these items. Only one tantalizing bit of information about sword ownership emerged; Albert F. Rice served as a Private and Sergeant with Captain Cady's Company of the Texas Mounted Volunteers from Feb 16th 1846 until July 4th 1846.... when he was mustered out! He died in Port Isabel, Texas on 12 October 1846 at the age of 20. This is the perfect time and place for a family member with a Mexican War connection. Port Isabel is near the mouth of the Rio Grande and the place Zachary Taylor made his headquarters after May 1st of 1846. Why he was mustered out remains a mystery, was he wounded, injured, or sick? Regardless of which it was, it is extremely unlikely a 20-year-old would have carried any sword like the ones in this grouping. So, back to the drawing board.

Additional genealogical research determined the great uncle of the seller was named Stephen Northrup Warren who had been Colonel of the 6th Vermont Militia in 1844-45. His wife was Albert Rice's sister, Jane.

Section One: The Man and Artifacts

Right: Stephen Northrup Warren late is life

Below: The three swords found in the Chazy, New York antique shop in the late 1970's







Belt, Buckle, Buttons, Sword Hangers, and Buckskin Sword Case acquired as part of the group.

The Man: Quoting from History of Addison County Vermont.

"Colonel Stephen Northrup Warren, was born in the town of Schroon, Essex county, New York on May 26, 1815. He became a resident of the town of Orwell, VT in 1817 when his family moved to Vermont. His father, Captain Philip Warren, was an officer in the War of 1812, and commanded an artillery company at the battle of Plattsburgh. Philip Warren was a native of the town of Townsend, Windham county, Vt., where he was born on July 19, 1788. He moved to the town of Lanesboro, Berkshire county, Mass., and from there he went to the town of Schroon, N. Y., in 1811. He married Electa Northrup, a daughter of Stephen Northrup, of Cheshire, Mass., where she was born on May 4, 1788. They had a family of four children born to them -- Stephen N; Almeda T; Electa (deceased); and Earl L. Colonel Warren was married on September 10, 1846, to Jane A. Royce (Rice), a daughter of Alpheus Royce, who was a native of Orwell, Vt., and a son of Jonas Royce, who was one of the pioneers of Orwell, Vt. Mrs. Warren was born in Orwell, Vt., on April 10, 1820. They had one daughter -- Jennie N., who was born in Orwell, Vt., on February 3, 1861. Mr. Warren attended a military school located at Norwich, Vt. He has been colonel of the Sixth Regiment Vermont militia, having previously held commissions as captain, major and lieutenant-colonel. His regiment disbanded in 1850. He has figured somewhat prominently in the public affairs of the town, having held the office of justice of the peace since 1860, and has been lister and assessor at various periods since 1855. His estate consists of two hundred acres." 1

Like many of the "Granny Letters" we often acquire along with our treasures, there are a couple of historical errors in the text above. His father, Philip, was actually a Sergeant in the 6th Artillery Regiment, New York Militia, during the Battle of Plattsburgh. When Philip brought his family to Orwell Vermont in 1817, he would have been 29 years old and obligated for another 16 years' service with the Vermont Militia. More than enough time for the former Sergeant and combat veteran to become a Captain in the Vermont

Militia. The second significant error is that with the exception of the "uniformed" companies, Colonel Warren's regiment, the 6th Vermont Militia was dissolved by an Act of The Vermont Legislature passed October 30th 1844.

Following graduation from Norwich University in 1841, Stephen Warren became an assistant instructor of Mathematics for the school year 1841-1842. In 1842 he returned to farming in Orwell and remained prominent in town affairs, serving as Justice of the Peace, State Legislator, and town Lister during various periods. He eventually served as President of the Bank of Orwell



Present day view of Orwell Bank where Stephen Warren was President 1893-1898

The Artifacts:

At the heart of this paper are three swords and some uniform parts once belonging to Col Stephen Warren. Initially, I wondered why he would have three swords, did they represent his cadet, instructor, and Colonel roles? The discovery of Captain Philip Warren in the family tree, suggested the earliest sword, the 1810-1820 Infantry Sword, was not Colonel Warren's at all. Rather, it had been carried by his father as commander of the Orwell Company of the 6th Vermont Militia. I base this conclusion on passages from the Orwell town history. ²

The straight swords of a later date where most likely carried by Colonel Warren during his tenure as an instructor at Norwich and as commander of the 6th Regiment Vermont Militia, but which is which? The Norwich museum collection contains a similar Indian Princess sword carried by Alonzo Jackman who graduated from Norwich with the class of 1836 and served as an instructor into the 1840's.

This would suggest the Indian Princess was carried at Norwich and the straight blade eaglehead was carried by Stephen Warren as Lt. Colonel and Colonel of the 6th regiment Vermont Militia ca. 1843-44.

The chapeau and epaulets were made in Albany New York. The obvious question was how someone

living in rural Vermont, had acquired a hat and epaulettes made 75 miles to the south? There were military dealers in Vermont who advertised in various local papers. Rutland would have been about 25 miles away and a fairly easy trip through the Otter Valley. The state capitol Montpelier was a tough 65-mile trip over the mountains. If one lived in Orwell/Benson area they certainly would have opted for a dealer in Rutland vs. Montpelier, but Albany and Burlington were easily accessible via water. There were regular steamboat runs from Benson Landing, a few miles from his home, to Burlington 50 miles north, and canal boat service 75 miles south to Albany Of the two, Burlington would be a much quicker trip because it avoided all 11 locks on the Champlain Canal. It is also entirely possible a Rutland dealer might have travelled to the Muster Day location and offered a selection of military goods. However, this theory has not been confirmed through contemporary newspaper advertisements.

The chapeau and epaulettes in the grouping are for a field grade officer and their date of purchase would have been in the spring 1843 as will be seen below. A newspaper announcement by the Commander of the Second Brigade Vermont Militia in the June 8th 1843 Rutland Herald orders Lt. Col Stephen Warren to serve on a Board of Appeals for the 6th regiment. Walton's Vermont Register and Farmer's Almanac for 1843, published in September 1842, lists the Lt. Colonel position in the 6th Regiment vacant. Consequently, his appointment as Lt, Colonel must have been made sometime between September 1842 and May 15th 1843. One must presume he would have purchased his field grade uniform during that period.

John Mayell, the hat maker, worked for his family's business from 1829 through 1844. The firm was at 355 Market Street, Albany from 1832-39. The maker's marks inside the crown suggests the chapeau was made prior to 1839, but the 27 Market Street address on the box suggests it was sold at a later date. With the exception of an Albany, NY box maker's label, the epaulets and box are unmarked. However, newspaper scraps from which the epaulet box was fabricated show excerpts from a letter concerning the "Monterrey Affair" written on December 24th,1842 in Mexico City.

Swords of Colonel Stephen N. Warren, 6th Vermont Militia





Infantry Officers' Saber, c. 1812-20

Very fine French-made saber with eaglehead pommel, plain reverse-P knucklebow, carved-ivory grip, ornately embossed ferrule, and patriotic shield-shaped langets displaying the American eagle. The brass parts of the hilt retain virtually all the original silvered finish. The curved blade, probably made in Solingen, is in superb condition, its brilliant fire-blued and fire-gilt decoration fully intact. The only mark appears on its ricasso, which is etched with the quality-assurance "Warranted." The silvered-brass scabbard is finely chased in the French manner and mounted with two ornamental ring bands, carrying rings, and a tip with a shaped drag.

*Note: In 1821, a change in uniform regulations for Army officers specified that swords with straight blades were to be worn. Reference: Peterson, p. 72.



Infantry Officers' Sword, c. 1821-1835

Very fine French-made sword with eaglehead pommel, plain reverse-P knucklebow, carved-ivory grip, ornately embossed ferrule, and patriotic shield-shaped langets displaying the American eagle. The brass parts of the hilt retain virtually all the original silvered finish. The straight blade is unmarked and was

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probably made in Solingen, its brilliant fire-blued and fire-gilt decoration in superb condition. The plain, silvered-brass scabbard has an anthemion-decorated frog stud, two attached carrying rings, and an ornamental crown-like tip.

Infantry Officers' Sword with Indian Princess Pommel, c. 1825-45



Indian Princess Pommel of 1825-1855 Infantry Officers Sword



A very fine, somewhat unusual, and probably early version of swords with Indian Princess hilts that became popular among regular and militia officers before the Civil War. The hilt on this French-made example includes a pommel displaying the wellformed bust of an Indian Princess, an ornamental reverse-P knucklebow, mother-of-pearl grip plagues, embossed ferrule, and a large shell-shaped counterguard unusually decorated with "American Peace and Plenty" motifs. These include a sitting Native American warrior proffering what appears to be laurel leaves. He is surrounded by an American eagle, national flags, Federal shield, hemispheric half-globe, a large cornucopia, the winged caduceus of Hermes (signifying "Commerce"), a bundle of rope-bound cargo goods, and a ship's anchor. The brass parts of the hilt retain most of their original silvered finish. The straight blade is wider than most and was probably made in Solingen. It bears on its ricasso the cursive initials of the still-unidentified bladesmith "T.D." The blade's brilliant fire-blued and fire-gilt decoration is in superb, original condition and fully intact. The leather scabbard on this example is unusual, most swords with similar hilts being accompanied by brass scabbards. The scabbard's three silvered-brass mounts include an upper mount with an anthemion-decorated frog stud and two carrying rings, a middle mount with

*Source: Peterson, Harold L. *The American Sword* 1775-1945. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Ray Riling Arms Books Co., 1988.

Section Two: Norwich University.

a third carrying ring, and a tapered tip. 3



The Norwich University South Barracks in Norwich Vermont during the late 1850's

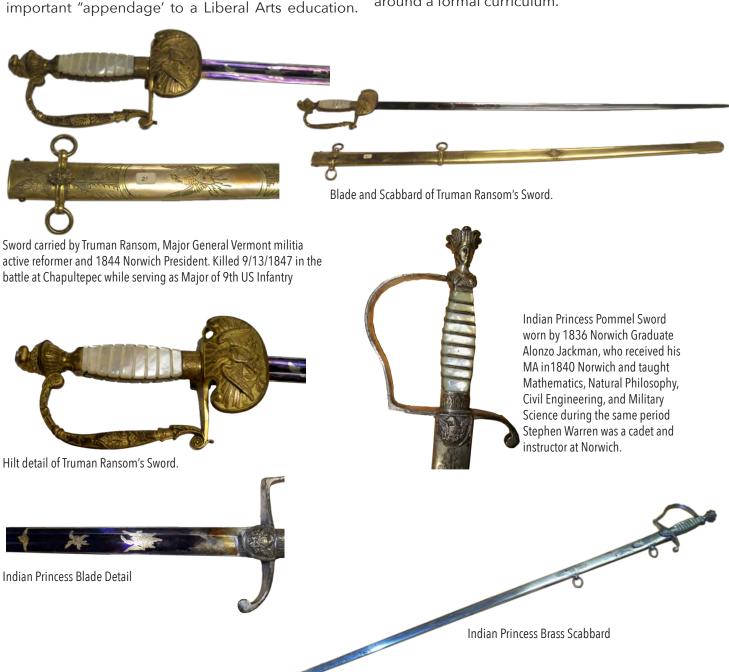
A brief discussion of Norwich University is in order here, not only because Colonel Warren attended and instructed there, but more importantly it was Vermont's official military academy. Captain Alden Partridge, its founder, wrote extensively about how the interests of the state and citizen were best served by an organized militia. The views and opinions he and the faculty, including Truman Ransom and Alonzo Jackman, expressed informed nearly all contemporary discussions about the Vermont militia, and it was a cadre of Norwich officers who spearheaded efforts to revive the militia system in the early 1840's

"Founded in Norwich, Vermont, by Captain Alden Partridge in 1819 as the American Literary and Scientific and Military Academy, Norwich is the nation's oldest private military college and is recognized by the Department of Defense as the birthplace of the nation's Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) concept. Norwich is regarded as one of the nation's leading military educational institutions."

Captain Partridge was an 1806 West Point graduate, Mathematics Professor and later served as acting USMA Superintendent 1814-1817. The traditional West Point gray uniform was adopted during his tenure and certainly influenced the uniform he designed for Norwich cadets. He was forward thinking and promoted what he called the "American System of Education" in which military studies would be an important "appendage" to a Liberal Arts education.

In October 1823, an amendment to the Militia Act authorized the Vermont Quartermaster General to loan Captain Partridge 150 stands of arms for use in training cadets. The college temporarily relocated to Middletown, Connecticut where it could offer naval courses. After Connecticut's refusal to grant the college a charter, Partridge moved the school back to Norwich in 1829. A Vermont Charter was received in 1834 and the school remained in Norwich Vermont until a fire destroyed the main buildings in 1866, after which it moved to its present location in Northfield.

In the 1830-50 period, the course of study generally lasted two years and an A.B. degree was awarded; a further year of study would result in a A.M. or M.C.E. (Masters in Civil Engineering) degrees. By the 1850's the undergraduate course became three years built around a formal curriculum.



Cadet Warren began his education at Norwich in June of 1839. In addition to his classwork and militia drill, we don't know much about his life at Norwich except that he participated in several theatrical presentations. However, the Special Collections at the Norwich University Library contains a fascinating series of letters written by a fellow classmate David Crowell to his Perth Amboy, New Jersey parents between 1839 and 1840. Among the interesting details provided

by these letters: cadet uniforms contained 5 dozen ball buttons costing \$.50/dozen; muskets were furnished by the State of Vermont, and graduation was a huge social event. More mundane topics concerned the course of study, student life, expenses, and living conditions at the time. The entire text of one letter is included in the end notes and is well worth reading if you are at all curious about 1839 cadet life in rural Vermont.⁵



Ca. 1839 cadet coatee buttons designed by Aldridge Partridge



1839 Coatee detail. Cadet Edward Crowell describes the cost and number of buttons.



1839 Coatee detail



1839 Coatee detail



type worn in 1850's picture

After graduation in 1841, Stephen Warren returned to Norwich as an instructor of Mathematics for the academic year of 1841-42. He returned to farming in Orwell Vermont at the end of the academic year. Little is known of his involvement with other Norwich faculty who strived in vain to revive the Vermont Militia system.

Section Three: The Rise and Decline of the Vermont Militia.

Vermont was born out of a cauldron of controversy. At the end of the Seven Years War, what is now Vermont was a wild frontier inhabited by Abenaki Indians and recently vacated by French settlers. Neither New Hampshire, nor New York, could claim clear title to the land. Connecticut settlers with land grants from the Royal Governor of New Hampshire soon began moving to Vermont and building homesteads. New York objected and put the question before the King. In 1764, King George III, decreed the boundary between New York and New Hampshire to be from the west bank of the Connecticut River, north to the 45th parallel and westward. This extended the boundary of New York east from the Champlain Valley to include all of present day Vermont. Unresolved by this decree was the status of existing land grants from the New Hampshire Royal Governor. Settlers understood New Hampshire was banned from making further grants, but felt that their claims were grandfathered in.

New York saw things differently! Surveyors drew new maps and New York land titles were granted. New York settlers soon arrived accompanied by a New York Sheriff to evict the original settlers from the improved, yet disputed, land.

The first Vermont Militia Company was formed in Bennington on October 24th 1764, not for protection from the Indians, but from New York Land speculators. Other towns soon followed suit. Land speculators, in collusion with their Royal Governor, William Tryon, soon began to lay claim to improved parcels in the Champlain Valley and beyond. Many outrageous acts were committed by both sides in the early 1770's In the midst of this controversy Ethan Allen became: "Captain of the Mob" and along with Remember Baker began an organized resistance to land seizures. As early as 1771 Allen had several hundred followers. Initially, New York referred this this band merely as rioters. By 1772 they had become known as the Green Mountain Boys.⁷ In 1775 Vermont settlers led by Ethan Allen were in open rebellion against New York Authority. The question of title to the initial settlements had again been placed before the King's Council in 1774, and both sides were awaiting a decision until the onset of hostiles with Great Britain in 1775 made the question moot 8

On May 10th,1775 Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold along with 83 of the Green Mountain Boys captured Fort Ticonderoga with its ordnance stores. On May 11th, Seth Warner captured more ordnance at Crown Point about 15 miles to the north. During the next two years Vermont support of the war effort was limited to the northern department.

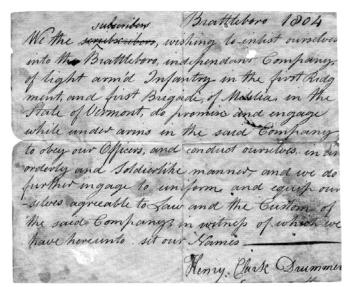
The Republic of Vermont Constitution was adopted July 2, 1777 just as Burgoyne was advancing up the Champlain Valley. Congress had authorized a Vermont regiment in 1775 and Seth Warner raised a regiment called the Green Mountain Rangers. On August 16th, 1777, Warner's regiment arrived at a critical moment during the second phase of the battle of Bennington to save the day.

As an Independent Republic, Vermont's wartime contribution after 1777 was limited to protecting its citizens from British and Indian raids. Vermont remained an Independent Republic and continued to resist land claims from New York. A settlement with New York was finally negotiated in 1790 and \$30,000 was paid to New York to release all claims against disputed land in the Green Mountain State. This paved the way for Vermont to enter the union as the 14th state on March 4th, 1791.9

The Vermont State Constitution, adopted on July 4th,1793, outlawed adult slavery, granted suffrage to non-landowning males, and established a free public education. It made only a few brief statements about the militia. It recognized the need for citizens to be armed for their own protection as well as that of their communities and state, and at the same time abhorred the notion of a standing army! As for formal militia organization, it noted:

Sect xxii: The inhabitants of this State shall be trained and armed for its defense under such regulations, restrictions, and exceptions as agreeably to the Constitution of the United States, and the Legislature of this State, shall direct. The several companies of militia shall as often as vacancies happen, elect their captain and other officers, and the captains and subalterns shall nominate and recommend the field officers of their respective regiments who shall appoint their staff officers.¹⁰

Between 1790 and 1812 Vermont pursued a mostly agrarian existence and with the exception of its trade with Canada remained mostly isolated from the rest of the country. It appears Vermont Militia laws during this period closely mirrored the Federal Laws.



1804 Enlistment paper for volunteer Light Infantry Company, Illustrating that volunteer companies existed far earlier than generally believed

While a detailed discussion the War of 1812 is beyond the scope of this text, a brief summary of Vermont's experience in the war is essential to the story. Roughly 60% of the wartime population in the Champlain Valley lived on the Vermont side. Lake Champlain flows north into Canada which was Vermont's largest trading partner. The Embargo Act of 1807 was contrary to many Vermont economic interests. Potash, timber, cattle, and crops were staples of the Vermont cash economy and the embargo posed a significant economic hardship. Throughout the war smuggling remained a lucrative activity. The revenue service was at a loss to stop this smuggling and several firefights with fatalities resulted. 1813-14 Commodore Mc-Donough's fleet seized several shipments including masts, spars, and other naval stores headed north (down the lake) to the British Naval Shipyard at Île aux Noix on the Richelieu River in Quebec. 11

While trade with Canada was vital, so was national security. Vermont citizens were offended by Britain's actions on the high seas, and concern about potential raids when the Indians sided with Great Britain after the US Army defeated Chief Tecumseh at Tippecanoe in 1811. Consequently, when President Madison issued a call for troops in the summer of 1812, Vermont Governor Jonas Galusha in turn asked for 3,000 volunteers for Federal Service and over 3,000 Vermonters answered the call.

The Federal Militia Act of 1792 authorized the President to call out the militias of the several states whenever national security or insurrection occurred. However, the law was extremely ambiguous with respect to command and control of the militia once called to national service. Because the states bore the sole responsibility of organizing and equipping the militia prior to the Militia act of 1808 (after which time they began to receive support, mainly in the form of muskets), most governors refused to order their militia to duty outside their state borders. Vermont, like most New England states exhibited a strong ambivalence

about the role of the militia for national defense, as will be seen below.

Facing an immediate threat to the border in 1812, Vermont Governor Galusha ordered a Brigade of 4 regiments under General Orms of West Haven into service at Burlington. One regiment was immediately put under the command of Federal Colonel Isaac Clark at the battery defending Burlington's harbor. The other three regiments were deployed closer to the border and some eventually stationed at Plattsburgh, NY in preparation of an invasion into Canada.

While massing for the proposed invasion of Canada in late 1813, Vermont troops at Plattsburgh demonstrated the ambiguities in the Federal Militia Act. The Vermont gubernatorial election of 1813, was a three-way race and no candidate received a majority. Anti-war Federalist candidate Martin Chittenden was confirmed Governor in October by the Legislature with a one vote margin. As Commander in Chief, he ordered the Vermont 3rd Brigade of the 3rd Division then stationed at Plattsburgh, back to Vermont to protect the state and potentially avoid reprisals from the Canadians. He was technically within his rights to do this. However, troops at Plattsburgh saw things differently and refused to leave stating that now they were in Federal Service the Governor had no right to recall them; further, their obligation to the nation superseded local interests. The representative sent by the Governor to bring the troops home, General Jacob Davis, was taken into custody by the troops and held captive. Fortunately, the Canadian Invasion was soon called off, the troops dismissed, and sent home without further incident.

In another instance, Governor Chittenden ordered Colonel Sumner of Middlebury on April 10th 1814 to mobilize his regiment and march them to Vergennes to protect the fleet being built by Commodore McDonough from British attack. In the days following, Lieutenant Justus Foote in command of a "Floodwood"¹² company of the Middlebury Regiment supposedly dismissed his company and sent them home, rather than submit them to the command of a Federal officer. While this has been widely reported as fact, a close reading of footnotes in the original work cited for this example, 13 suggests there was much more to this story, and while it serves to illustrate major issues with the Militia Chain of Command, it may not have been purely a State vs. Federal authority issue.

When the Champlain Valley was again seriously threatened by a British invasion force in the late summer of 1814, General Alexander Macomb commander of the Federal forces at Plattsburgh asked Governor Chittenden for additional troops. Mindful of resistance to his strong anti-war position and perceiving some threat to the state, the Governor now "permitted" Vermonters to "individually" volunteer for Federal service.

General Samuel Strong of Vergennes led a force of roughly 2500 volunteers to Plattsburgh. Their contribution was instrumental in determining the outcome of the land battle. Individual terms of service ranged from a few days to over 2 weeks. As volunteers, Governor Chittenden did not feel their pay was Vermont's responsibility and the exigencies of the battle had precluded the volunteers from being formally mustered into Federal service. Despite numerous appeals to both the State and Federal governments, the Vermont volunteers were never paid for their service at Plattsburgh. An appeal made directly to the US House Committee on Military Affairs by a company commander on behalf of his men in 1837 was flatly rejected because Congress feared establishing a precedent of paying for undocumented Federal service. Obviously, this experience didn't sit well with many of Vermont's citizen soldiers.

In 1818 the Vermont Legislature formalized the state militia laws. The lengthy 1818 Militia Act restated many of the Federal laws in a detailed and comprehensive document. It specified the organization structure, leadership duties and responsibilities, rules and fines for failure to comply, court martial procedures, and enforcement provisions. It also increased the number of exemptions from enrollment beyond the statutory Federal exemptions which under Section 2 of the Militia Act of 1792 were:

And be it further enacted, That the Vice-President of the United States, the Officers, judicial and executives, of the government of the United States; the members of both houses of Congress, and their respective officers; all custom house officers, with the clerks; all post officers, and stage-drivers who are employed in the care and conveyance of the mail of the post office of the United States; all Ferrymen employed at any ferry on the post road; all inspectors of exports; all pilots, all mariners actually employed in the sea service of any citizen or merchant within the United States; and all persons who now are or may be hereafter exempted by the laws of the respective states, shall be and are hereby exempted from militia duty, notwithstanding their being above the age of eighteen and under the age of forty-five years. 14

The 1818 Vermont exemptions, included tanners, millers, all ferrymen, law-enforcement officers, college students, and many occupations considered vital to the economy or civil government. In November 1820 Norwich Officers and cadets were specifically exempted. By 1825 the exemption list included iron workers when the furnace "was in blast". In1839 the list included clergy, teachers and students in all colleges and teachers in common schools, listers, town clerks, justices and judges of the supreme and county courts, judges and registers of probate, sheriffs and their deputies, high bailiff's and constables, practicing physicians and surgeons, members of fire companies (not to exceed 20 per engine), Quakers, and

persons previously commissioned and having been honorably discharged, officers who are or may be commissioned and have served 5 years.

The 1818 Act also increased the annual training requirements from one day to two. The traditional Company Muster Day, first Tuesday in June, was augmented with a Battalion or Regimental Muster Day to be held between the first Tuesday in September and the first Tuesday in October each year. It also formalized the equipment each militiaman required:

"...shall constantly keep himself provided with a good musket equipped with an iron or steel rod, a sufficient bayonet and belt, a priming wire and brush, two spare flints and cartridge box and pouch, with a box therein sufficient contain at least twenty-four cartridges, suited to the bore of the musket, a canteen, and knapsack". 15

In the event any individual was destitute, the town select board was required to furnish that individual with equipment at town expense. Each foot officer was required to be equipped with a sword or hanger, and every officer whose duty shall require him to be mounted shall possess a sound horse of at least 14 hands, a pair of pistols in bear-skin covered holsters and a sword. All officers were required to be uniformed. The equipment list for enlisted horsemen was extensive and included:

"Each horseman shall furnish himself with a serviceable horse, of at least fourteen hands and a half high, a good saddle, bridle, mail pillion and valise, holsters, a breast plate and crupper, a pair of boots and spurs, a pair of pistols and sabre, and cartridge box, to contain twelve cartridges for pistols."

In the event the militia was called out for emergency service each militiaman was to carry three days' subsistence and the Selectmen were further required to furnish "carriages" with camp utensils, subsistence, and other supplies until told to desist by competent authority. It specified fines for failure to attend annual inspection properly equipped; \$2.00 for failure to attend, \$.75 for his musket, and \$.25 for each additional piece of equipment. (Some militiamen arranged to have their equipment present for inspection and were willing to pay the \$2.00 so as not to lose 2-3 days of work). As an incentive and recognition of the burden this Act imposed on individual citizens, the Militia Act of 1818 exempted members of the "Enrolled Militia" from state poll taxes.

In early 19th century, "Enrolled Militia" referred to all citizens between the ages of 18 and 45 not given exemption by statute. The "enrolled" Vermont companies were all line infantry! The "standby militia" included all individuals exempted from general service except in time of national peril. Under the Vermont 1818 Militia Act, elite "uniform" companies were authorized to be formed by "exempt" persons (i.e. standby militia) who volunteered for service. These

organizations were referred to as either volunteer, or uniformed militia. Ostensibly there were 4 volunteer companies per regiment, one each of cavalry, artillery, riflemen, and light infantry. In practice, however this was never achieved. The Quartermaster General's Report for 1840 lists the following uniformed companies: 6 cavalry; 20 artillery; 22 light infantry; and 34 rifle. There were also 209 companies of line infantry organized into 27 regiments, 3 brigades and 3 divisions. The 34 rifle companies were organized into a single regiment with its own regimental staff and a combined band of 151 musicians. The number of uniformed company members, including staff was 5008 in 1840, By contract there were 21,296 members of the enrolled militia, including general staff.

LILIANIO HELYA	Cavalry.	Artillery.	Light Infantry	Riflemen.	Infantry.
Captains,	6	20	22	34	189
Lieutenants, Cornets,	12	57	43	68	382
Musicians,	10	94	83	151	813
Sergeants,	18	74	83	132	708
Corporals, Privates,	18 176	72	79 1049	130 1785	594 18310
Commissioned officers, Non-com. off. and privates,	24	15,000	62	110	769
Aggregate,	246	1097	1356	*2309	†21238
*Including field and staff, and lished in the first brigade of the sec † Not including general, field a	cond div	rision.		rifle regin	nent estab-

Page from State of Vermont General Order No. XVIII, October 1840 listing strength of Vermont militia by rank and type of company and/or regiment.

The incentives offered to uniform company members varied, but generally consisted of prestige and enhanced tax benefits. Membership afforded an individual the opportunity to join with like-minded men in a more professional setting than the enrolled companies. In the larger cities members of a company often shared a political, cultural, or social connections. In the rural areas membership was generally more egalitarian. Evidence suggests membership in these elite units provided the members with a social benefit that might today be called "male-bonding". Musters would include more competitive and team building activities than typical of the enrolled companies. The Militia Act of 1837 increased eligibility to included members of the enrolled militia provided the size of the local enrolled company did not drop below 64 members.

In addition to the mandated equipment listed above, members of the volunteer/uniform companies were required to furnish their own uniforms. In the 1830's when Vermont received arms from the Federal Government under the Militia Act of 1808 they would often issue them directly to the local volunteer companies where proper care and storage became another

responsibility for the Captain. Uniformed members were exempt from state \$10 poll taxes collected by the listers via the Grand List. In addition, their horse, if required for service, (a \$3.00 assessment), and an additional \$20, were removed from the town Grand List and not subject to taxation; nor could they be sued for debts or delinquent taxes while serving. Revisions constantly changed the amount of tax exemptions and by 1848 they were eliminated altogether, and the volunteers were paid \$2.00 in cash per year if they show up for muster properly uniformed and equipped.



Late 1830's General List showing the rate at which personal property was to be assessed and taxed. The legislature frequently tinkered with specific exemptions from items of this list depending on a militiaman status and unit. For example, a uniform company cavalry or artillery member might be exempt from both the poll \$10.00 and the value if his horse.

Many of the provisions of the 1818 Act were never formally enacted. During the 1820's interest in the militia began to decline. Vermont had no Adjutant General between 1825 and 1837. Consequently, no annual "Return of the Vermont Militia" was sent to the United States Secretary of War between March 20th,1824 and late1840.16 Under pressure from enrolled officers, especially the Norwich faction, for a more workable system, the Vermont Legislature adopted a comprehensive revision and restatement in the Militia Act of October 1837. This act addressed some of the social injustices and attempted to instill a sense of responsibility and accountability to the entire system. Not only did the Act clearly define the organization and structure of the Militia, but more importantly it went into great detail about individual duties and responsibilities. Furthermore, it established a list of specific fines for failure to performs one's duty, and then went on to describe a comprehensive court-martial procedure. Still people were not satisfied about the unequal burden the act imposed.

The appointment of a new Vermont Adjutant General following the Militia Act of 1837 should have ad-

dressed the issue of delinquent reports, but it did not. He received very few unit returns in 1838 and only fourteen in 1839. His only remedy was to court-martial those who failed to compile and forward the reports; and that proved to be problematic. First of all, courts-martials cost money and the state soon discovered it spent nearly as much to conduct the trials as it collected in fines. 17 In addition, a suit was soon before the Vermont Supreme Court questioning how civilians could legally be tried and fined by a military court. The result was the fines became a civil matter, and were to be collected by the Sheriff and/or local Justice of the Peace. The politics of the day made prosecutions difficult as few officers would charge and/or testify against members of their company if a loophole could be found.

A legitimate threat to the state in 1837 inspired citizens to take the new reforms more seriously. The Canadian Patriots Rebellion began on November 23rd 1837 with a battle on the Richelieu River just north of the Vermont border. On February 25, 1838, the US Arsenal in Elizabethtown, New York was broken into and 1000 stands of arms taken, presumably by the Canadian Patriots. Many Vermonters saw the conflict in the reflection of the American Revolution 60 years before and were sympathetic to the Patriot cause. However, President Martin Van Buren, and Vermont Governor Silas Jenison insisted the state and its citizens maintain strict neutrality. Loyal Canadians, mindful of Vermont sympathies became hostile toward Vermont businessmen travelling in Canada and there was fear Canadian Militia might invade Vermont to search out the rebels. Federal General John E. Wool commanded both Federal and Vermont Militia troops on duty near the border in Vermont during the turmoil. 18 In 1856 Vermont petitioned Congress for reimbursement of expenses incurred "... for protecting the frontiers between this State (Vermont) and the province of Canada". The supporting documentation lists 7 specific occasion between November 19,1839 and November 7, 1842 when units ranging from individual companies to entire regiments were called out. 19

This may help explain why a survey of newspaper articles and advertisements for the period between 1838 and the mid 1840's suggests there was in fact a renewed military spirit in Vermont. Dealers in major commerce centers were offering "a large assortment of MILITARY GOODS suitable for the present regulations of the Militia of this state" ²⁰



Vermont Watchman and State Journal (Montpelier, Vermont) -Fri, Jun 21, 1844



Vermont Watchman and State Journal (Montpelier, Vermont) · Mon, Jun 21, 1841



Vermont Watchman and State Journal (Montpelier, Vermont) · Fri, Sep 8, 1843

These events, coupled with a public relations campaign led by the officers at Norwich, pointed out that failure to provide proper annual returns was self-defeating because Vermont's annual Federal Military appropriation was based on the completeness and accuracy of the annual returns it filed with the Secretary of War. Thus, in October 1840, the state Quartermaster was able to prepare and submit the first complete return in 16 years.²¹

MILITARY GOODS.

UST received from New York, by R. R. RIKER,
State street, opposite the Bank, a large assortment of
MILITARY GOODS, suitable for the present regulation
of the Militia of this State. Terms—Cash.
May 6th, 1839.

The Vermont Union Whig (Rutland, Vermont)
Sat, Aug 17, 1839 · First Edition



Page from State of Vermont General Order No. XVIII, October 1840 showing Public stores distributed among the various Vermont brigades and in stored in the U. S. Arsenal Vergennes.

ABUTANT AND INSPECTOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

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ABUTANT AND INSPECTOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

ABUTANT AND INSPECTOR GENERAL'S OFFICE,
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Compilation of all arms and equipment owned by the State of Vermont in 1840

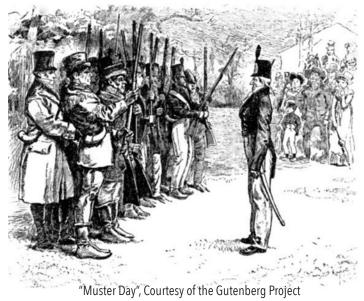
Scarcely a year after passage of the 1837 reform, on August 15th 1838, Captain Alden Partridge and colleagues presented a plan developed at a military convention in Norwich. All exemptions would be eliminated and all individuals between 21 and 50 would be enrolled. They in turn would be divided into 3 classes, a Junior class up to age 31 who would receive the majority of annual training and become the mainstay of defense for the state. The second class, those between 31 and 40, and the senior class, those between 41 and 50 would only be required to show up once a year for an annual inspection. This suggestion was totally ignored by the legislature in the October session that year.²²

In the days before formal 4th of July celebrations, Muster Day was an occasion to celebrate. Even if the troops were reluctant to attend, they made the best of the occasion. The spectacle was entertaining, mounted officers in fancy uniforms and plumed hats would prance around, swords and bayonets flashed in the sunlight. Then came the inspection, drill and marching, followed by a mock battle. Families would often arrive the day before and camp for the night. It was the one day during the year when children were not required to work and entire communities would turn out to renew friendships and gossip after a long winter. Company commanders were elected, and often provided a keg of beer or rum to keep their troops happy. One mainstay was a bucket with a mixture of rum and molasses. Consequently, there was lots of drinking and the spectacle generally took on the atmosphere of a country fair. One commentator at the time observed that the commands for a cavalry troop were: "Mount! Drink! Fall Off"!²³ Unfortunately, this also led to incidents, most of which were humorous, but occasionally there were accidents At least one lawsuit was filed for compensation resulting from

an injury on Muster Day. The stern and more conservative Calvinistic members of the community were not amused by these activities and the militia in general and Muster Day in particular became lightning rods for the Temperance Movement.

Throughout the nation overall militia interest declined in the 1830's as peace continued and the practical limitations and burden of the system became apparent. There was a growing resentment on the part of the enrolled militia that the burden was not fair. Individuals who could least afford to take time from their work were required to attend muster, while more affluent member of their communities were exempt. This situation accentuated class distinctions where one group looked down on the other while they in turn were met with resentment. These influences combined with the Temperance Movement squared off against the ardent patriots who believed in the necessity of a well-trained mi-

The Vermont Legislature was caught in the middle and attempted to please everyone. Laws passed one year would be repealed the next. In November 1831, all Vermont militia tax exemptions were repealed, but after the June 1832 muster day attendance dropped significantly, the legislative session quickly reinstated the poll tax exemption and dropped the September training day. In 1839 all persons required by law to do military duty were exempt from all state taxes except the highway tax. While laws were strict and financial punishment significant, there was little accountability. A captain, who must deal with someone from his company at his place of business all year, might easily overlook infractions on muster day. Moreover, the burdens placed on company commanders were significant and increasingly few were willing to take on the responsibility. In addition to preparing reports of inspections, fines, orders, etc. it was the Captain's



responsibility to keep track of all male citizens within his town to insure those without exemption were properly enrolled. This not only meant keeping track of their ages, but also a record of all men who moved into or out of his district. Eventually the Legislature authorized a payment of \$5.00 per year for a company clerk to assist with these duties.

During the October 1840, Legislative session, opponents of the militia system introduced a bill to reform it out of existence. A strong coalition of pro Militia supporters, encouraged by articles in "The Citizen Soldier", a short-lived publication authored by Norwich University personnel, fought back. 41 officers signed an article appearing in the January 1841 edition urging unified action to defend and promote the militia. Coincidently, Stephen Warren graduated from Norwich and assumed a faculty position later that same year!²⁴

The Vermont Militia Act of 1842 was a departure from tradition. It designated the Uniform Companies as "active militia" and the first line of defense. It provided for additional instruction days and stated they would be furnished arms by the state! There is an interesting footnote regarding the issue of arms to the rifle companies. In 1839, the Champlain Arsenal in Vergennes received 400 Hall rifles for issue to the Vermont rifle companies. A letter sent to the Vermont Quartermaster General by the Military Storekeeper at Vergennes and dated February 2, 1841, states the Governor of the State of Vermont has "declined to receive the Hall Patent Rifles sent to this arsenal in 1839". The storekeeper requests the return of 80 Hall Rifles issued to Colonel Thomas of the ninth reqiment in June 1840 so the entire lot can be returned. They were eventually sent to Watervliet Arsenal and exchanged for Common Rifles.²⁵



Contemporary view of the former U. S. Arsenal at Vergennes, Vermont

Also in the Militia Act of 1842, all arms furnished by the state were to be marked by permanent branding on wood, metal, or both. Any unauthorized individuals found to be in possession of public property would be fined 10 times the value of such equipment. The members of uniformed companies were liable for 8 years' service, but exempt from enrollment thereafter! The Captain of the local company remained respon-

sible for maintaining the enrollment list for his district. Both the enrolled and uniform militia were subject to one annual parade on the 1st Tuesday in June. Additionally, the uniform companies were required to attend two successive days of drill in September. Drinking and gambling was prohibited within limits of "Parade" established by commander without his expressed permission. Commanders were authorized to place under arrest any individual(s) "who may disturb" the orderly proceedings of those under arms. Fines were increased for: failure to attend, enroll, be properly equipped, submit proper returns, etc. Mindful of the 1841 legal case, these fines were to be "sued for and be recovered by an action of debt". Uniformed company members exempt from \$10 poll tax, the enrolled militia was not!



Example of "Uniform Company" buttons ca. 1842-1844

The Militia Act of 1843, provided a 5-day window for the company clerk to assign fines and a 12-day grace period to appeal them. All fines collected by a Justice of the Peace belong to the organization collecting them. In addition, certain categories of exempt individuals were required to pay a \$2.00 fee to the town treasurer. This list included judges, clerks, sheriffs, teachers in common schools etc. All others were categorically exempt from the fee, i.e., fire brigade members, Quakers, college faculty, former officers, etc. Pay to staff officers was repealed, and Uniformed Militia training was reduced to 2 days per year. Finally, imprisonment for failure to pay militia fines abolished!

Obviously, the system was broken and no amount of tinkering was going to address the social issues and inequity. On October 18th, 1844 Vermont House Representative Hiram Harlow from Springfield, in Winsor County introduced a resolution: "That the Committee on Military Affairs be instructed to inquire into the expediency of bringing in a bill, abolishing the service of the Enrolled Militia in times of peace, together with all the reduction in taxation; and allowing the sum of ____ dollars to each member of the Uniform Militia who shall be returned legally uniformed and equipped and shall have done faithful and with delinquency during each year, instead of the exemption from taxation now allowed by law."²⁶ The resulting Mi-

litia Act of 1844 was signed into law by the Governor William Slade on October 30,1844. In read in part: "All acts, and parts of acts, requiring the enrolled militia to do military duty, are repealed, except in cases of insurrection and invasion and as provided in Title seventeen of the Act of 1842." The town Listers were to perform the duty of enrollment each May and were paid to compile and forward the resulting list to adjutant general in June every year.

Within the former bounds of each regiment, 6 uniform companies of not more than 100 men each were authorized. There are no indications that volunteers ever approached that limit. The commissions of enrolled Company Officers expired with the passage of the bill on October 30, 1844. However, General, Field, and Staff Officers remained members of the uniform militia. How this personally affected Colonel Warren remains a mystery. One account suggests he served until 1850, but after October 30, 1844 he no longer had a regiment to command!

From this point, onward Vermont placed its security in the hands of the volunteer "Uniform" companies. After the excitement and glory of the Mexican War (in which Vermont barely participated) interest militia continued to decline. In 1848 the legislature passed a law granting \$2.00 cash to members in good standing. In 1851 even this amount was eliminated, and most of the remaining companies disbanded. In the last half of the 1850's there was a militia resurgence and Vermont eventually sent 28,967 of 60,719 eligible men off to service during the Civil War, but that is another story!

Transcript of letter from Edward Crowell to his father, 26 August 1839: Norwich University, Aug. 26, 1839.

I have bought from Capt. Partridge Paley Moral Philosophy, Blair's rhetoric and Button's mathematics, all of which cost \$5.00/100, the mathematics he sent to New York, and Boston for, but they were not to be had in either place, he was therefore obliged to send to Charleston, S. Ca. for them where he obtained them, they cost me \$4.00/100. they are the principal books studied in the University, and it is necessary to get a complete knowledge of their contents before a person can graduate and get his diploma. I am nearly through the first volume. I bought also an undress and dress cap of him, the former cost \$2 and the latter \$5.25; but when a cadet leaves the institution he takes back the dress cap at a small discount, charging enough for the injury done it. My military coat he had made for \$2.50. the Buttons (5 doz.) cost me \$2.50. therefore after footing up I owe him at present 25 cents. My Tuition from May 24 to Aug. 22nd is \$8.00/100 Room rent \$2.00 contingent expenses 83 cents, the expenses of each cadet on the 4th Amounted to \$3.50/100 and the commencement expenses for each one the same \$3.50. Our commencement was last Thursday, on the day previous we made two splendid addresses,

one, to the Trustees of the Institution by J. Wentworth from 111. another in behalf of the Cadets by a former graduate, Cyrus II. Fay of Hartford, Conn. In the evening of the same day we performed an historical Tragedy, written by one of the graduates, it was praised and applauded by priests, Deacons, church members and in fact all who heard and saw it performed. on Commencement day the exercises were many and good all were pleased. There were I suppose nearly three thousand strangers in the place, the church was crowded the whole time. When our military exercises came on which was about 4 o'clock it commenced raining very hard. I think I never saw it rain faster in my life, but we stood in the ranks (although wet to the skin) and continued firing 'till not a gun would go off. it pleased the people (collected in the church and institution to see us perform our military exercises) to find that we were not only dressed and equipped as soldiers, but acted like them, our band for the occasion was splendid, composed of I4 instruments mostly all brass, they charged for playing 2 days for us \$80.00. The five dollar bill you sent me but only paid my 4 of July Bill and what I had previously borrowed, therefore my expenses for Commencement remain unpaid. There will be no more public days that will cost the students anything until the next Fourth. My board for 13 2/7 weeks at \$1.75 amounts to \$23.25 which added to what is enumerated above makes what I owe at present Tuition & C. \$10.83 Commencement 3.50 Board 23.25 \$37.58

Your obedient and affectionate son

Edward Crowell

David Crowell Perth Amboy.

P.S. Direct your letters to Vermont in full not Vt. for sometimes they take Vt. for Ct. and send the letters to Connecticut, excuse all mistakes for it is written in a hurry in order to send it by Mr. Winon who is going to N. Haven.

Endnotes

- 1 H. P. Smith, History of Addison County, Vermont 1886
- 2 A fire destroyed the Vermont State Armory on August 31st 1945. Nearly all pre-Civil War militia records were lost. Consequently, there are very few records documenting Vermont militia service prior to the Civil War.
- 3 Descriptions courtesy of Jack Bethune citing the Peterson book American Swords
- 4 Norwich University, Cadet Handbook, Northfield Vermont 2013
- 5 See the Crowell letter containing these comments immediately preceding these end notes. All of his letters are available on line from the Norwich Special Collections. There is a link in the bibliography.
- 5 John Pell, Ethan Allen, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1929
- 7 Vermont History, Proceedings of the Vermont historical Society: Vol 64, No 4, Fall 1996

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- 11 Keith A. Herkalo, The Battles at Plattsburgh, Charleston, History Press. 2012
- 12 Flood wood Militia, a contemporary term of derision used to suggest their appearance on parade was about as precise as the arrange of drift wood after a large storm. Vermont Historical Gazette Volume II 1871.
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- 14 Militia Act of 1792, Second Congress, Session I. Chapter XXVIII, Passed May 2, 1792,
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- 25 Letters Sent by the Commanding Officer and Champlain Arsenal Military Storekeeper, the Arsenal Commissary of Subsistence, and the Arsenal Quartermaster, 1/1839 6/1848 Boston Nat Archives RG 146 Identifier: 2733351
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