

From the VANG Files: Virginia Protective Force Uniforms in WWII (pt. 1)

The VANG is very lucky that a number of years ago someone had the foresight to pack away and save all of the paper State Headquarters documents from the 1920s to the early 1960s.

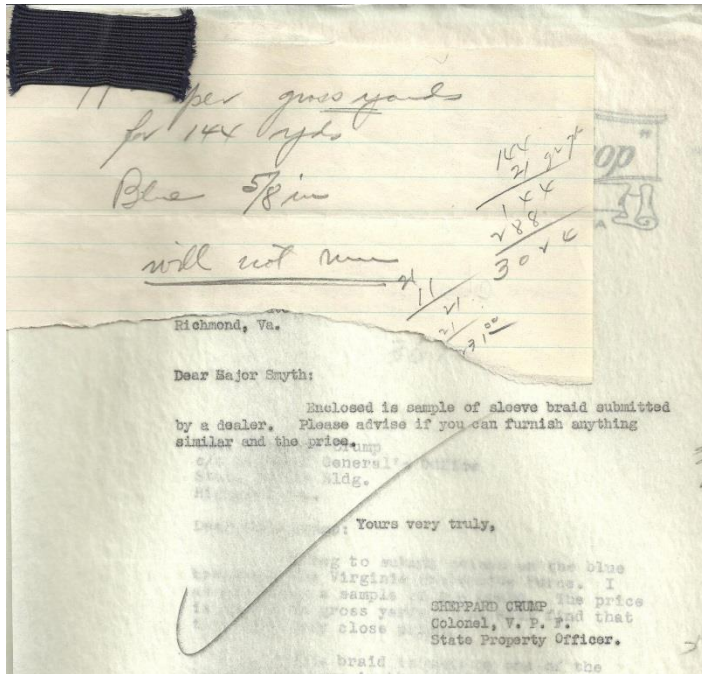
Something a little different in this update as we dig into the history of the Virginia Protective Force and the Virginia Reserve Militia (precursors to today's VDF).

With the nationwide mobilization of the National Guard units in February 1941, the need for a replacement military force was obvious in many states and so they began, as they had done in WWI, to start creating a "Home Guard." As should be expected, each state came up with a different idea on uniform for its force. Very quickly, the National Guard Bureau sent out a letter chastising the states for, in some cases, using regular Army uniforms. With many State Guard liaison officers in the DC area, it was impossible to tell who was a regular Army officer, a National Guard Officer or a recently created State Guard officer. It therefore quickly became important to develop distinctive Uniforms.

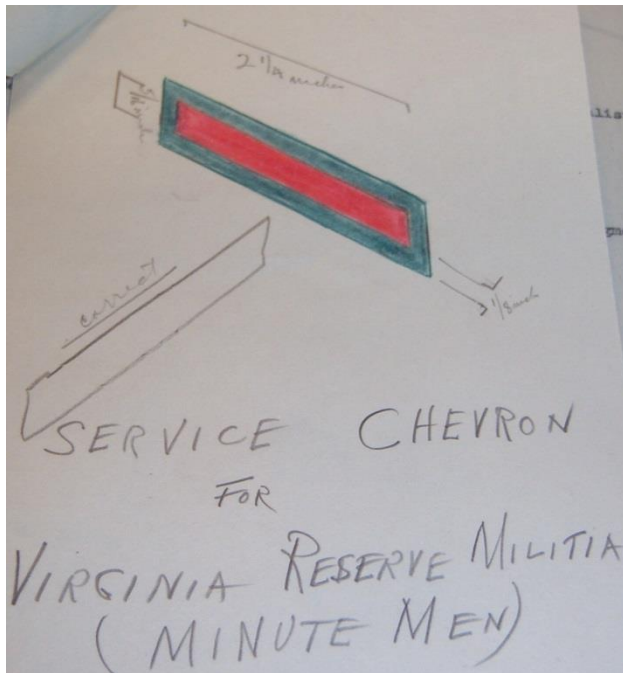
Here is the design for a gray uniform (later dark brown; almost like pinks and greens) from a Virginia officer:



From our files we also have a sample of the cuff braid:



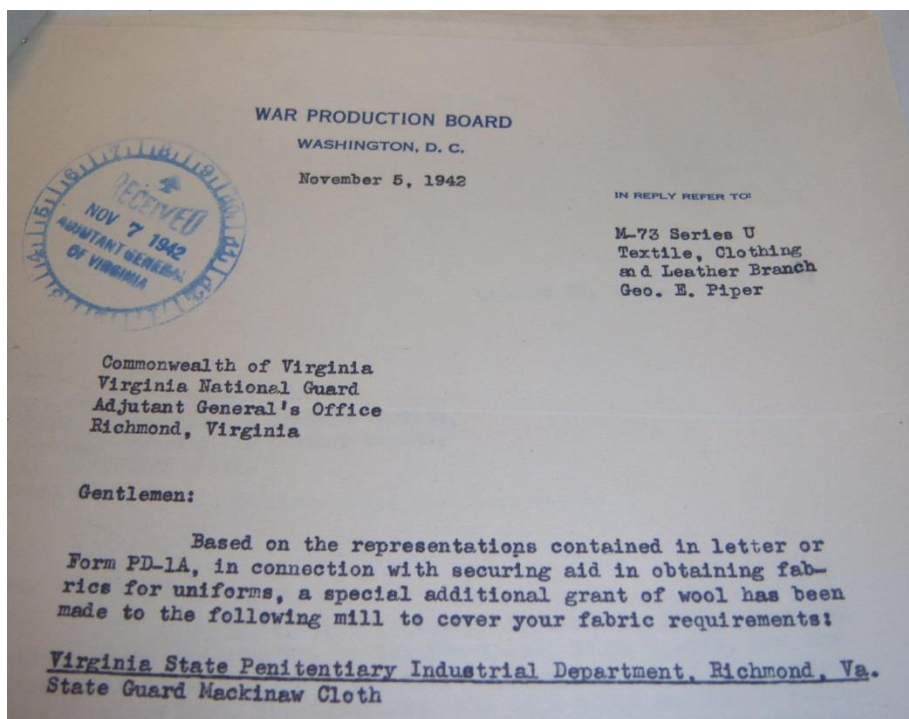
And a nice example of Service Stripe design:



And even a chart showing how to give instructions to the tailors in the Virginia Penitentiary who were going to make the uniforms.



Here is the letter from the War Production Board letting the TAG's office know that the required wool material would be shipped to the VA Prison for the uniforms:



And finally, there was also a requirement for weapons for the Virginia Protective Force—one of the VA Guardsmen noted that Civil War bayonets could work with the shotguns being issued to them. He also found that the large surplus store “Bannerman’s” was selling Civil War bayonets in lots of 100 for \$35.00 so there was a source of supply. The suggestion was forwarded to NGB.

The Chief of the Guard Bureau responded quickly. The NGB had no intention of issuing bayonets with the shotguns so go ahead if you like, but don't incur any cost on our behalf and don't damage our shotguns. Somethings never change.

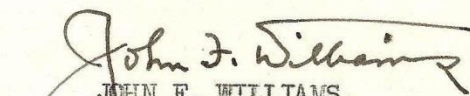
My dear General:

With reference to your letter of 9 November 1943 relative to bayonets and adapters for shotguns, the issue of either bayonets or of adapters for use with the presently issued Federal shotguns is not contemplated.

There is no objection to the attachment of bayonet adapters to Federally owned shotguns, provided that no expense to the Federal government is involved and that the attachment is not of a permanent nature, such as welding to the barrel.

With kindest personal regards.

Sincerely yours,


JOHN F. WILLIAMS,
Major General,
Chief, National Guard Bureau.



MG John F Williams (C, NGB 1940-46)

Till next time when we will walk again through the history of the Virginia National Guard; one event or one document at a time.

Alexander F. Barnes
CW4 (ret), VaARNG

VANG Command Historian