

BATTALION DAYS IN LANCASTER COUNTY

By MAJOR-GENERAL EDWARD C. SHANNON

From the days when the Blue Ridge was the frontier of Penn's province, the inhabitants of Lancaster county have been actively interested in military affairs, and the names of many of them have been enrolled in the list of armed forces of Pennsylvania for nearly three centuries. From the ranks of our militia men have gone into every war in which our people have engaged and they represent some of the best known leaders in our district, whether of town or country. I have had the honor to command in this country, in Porto Rico and in France, descendants of rangers who guarded the harassed frontier in French and Indian War days, and of soldiers who marched in the regiments of the line clear to Yorktown.

The record of Lancaster county militia is one of shining service. In all the years, this fine record does not contain a hint of a single unit failing to serve province, commonwealth or republic. It is fitting to-day that we commemorate the presence of the distinguished Frenchman, General Lafayette, who cooperated in making our Pennsylvania's trained troops and who shared their reverses and their triumphs.

Ten years after our county was erected and began to send representatives to the Assembly of Pennsylvania, we find its members in accord with the call of Governor Thomas for a military force; and in 1744, Lancaster backed up the grant of funds for the Louisburg expedition, an enterprise which showed European soldiery the mettle of the American colonists when under arms. This is the year that Franklin gave us the first Pennsylvania flag, now part of the heraldry of the Pennsylvania National Guard. The construction of a battery on the Delaware, through a lottery, and the enlistment of four companies, are part of the story of southeastern Pennsylvania. And so is the record of the Lancaster county regiments, formed in 1747, for defence of the Susquehanna valley from the French and Indians,—the first record of enrollment for military service.

It is back to these times that we go for "Battalion" days,—the muster days, as they came to be called later. Famed in song and story, and sometimes marked by fun and frolic, these gatherings of the able-bodied men figured largely in the life of our county for nearly three generations.

It was to Lancaster county that Franklin turned in the preparation for Braddock's ill-starred expedition, and our people gave of their young and vigorous manhood, who had answered the summons for muster, and likewise of their horses and wagons. The men from our battalions went up to Fort Hunter and Fort Swatara, and to other places of defence and refuge erected in the Blue Ridge country, in the dark days following the defeat of Braddock; and Lancaster names are frequent on the roster of Clapham's Augusta regiment

which marched from Harris Ferry, to what is now Sunbury, to build Forts Halifax and Augusta. Our battalions, under their own officers, garrisoned the forts protecting the Susquehanna valley, and helped in the campaigns that settled for all time that the French tri-color should not fly along the wide-branching river we love so well.

Lancaster battalions mustered for Amherst, Forbes and Bouquet, and when the call for Independence echoed among our valleys as early as 1774 the Associators of Lancaster county were active and "Battalion" days were trebled in number. I am proud of the record of Lancaster county, with its two companies in Thompson's Rifle battalion of 1775, which sent men fully armed to George Washington at Cambridge, within sixty days of the enactment of Congress calling for Pennsylvania's riflemen. It is a record that shines throughout the struggle for freedom.

Probably, what we know best as "Battalion" days came into vogue after the Revolution. We find the statutes of Pennsylvania filled with acts regulating the militia,—the well-trained citizen-soldiers that Washington, with the advice of Steuben, urged for the young republic. An act of December 2, 1782, right after Yorktown, makes the Supreme Executive Council, the governing body of the State,—the sole authority to call out the militia; the following year there are laid down provisions for mustering and training,—the beginnings of our annual period of field training under National and State auspices.

It is interesting in these early laws, which the constitution of Pennsylvania enacted in the stir of the war of 1776, to note, that the backbone of the militia was to be the "free, able-bodied, white male citizens," between 18 and 45 years of age, and that when service was required, such as defence in 1785, of the Northwestern frontier,—then the lake and upper Ohio country,—it should be voluntary.

In the militia act of 1793, the year before the militia was called into service by Governor Mifflin because of the Whiskey Insurrection, I find Lancaster and York counties named to constitute a division. Mustering days are called for, and in the act of 1799, which, by the way, specifically refers to Steuben's system of training, Lancaster is listed with eight regiments whose numbers and commanders are set forth. This is reaffirmed in another militia reorganization of 1802, showing that the plan of citizen soldiers, mustered twice a year, was established.

These "Battalion" days were great events for the country-side. The able-bodied were summoned, upon pain of arraignment before court martial if they did not appear, for drill and training. Almost every town in the county had a company. Most of the soldiers owned their own firearms. A few were provided by the State, but the men in the ranks preferred their own as did their officers. The scheme of organization was not materially different from that of to-day. The men assembled in a public square or in a large field, at the appointed time, answered roll call, underwent inspection and performed simple company or battalion movements. All the women folk turned out. They drove for miles from the farms with their soldier men folk and manifested their pride in their appearance. Some of these days were picnic occasions.



I DO HEREBY CERTIFY,

THAT

Frederick Bausman
Is a member of a Volunteer Company, known by the name of the

JACKSON RIFLEMEN,

Has equipped himself and served in said Company Seven successive years, has fully complied with the provisions of the Forty-Seventh Section of the Military Law of Pennsylvania, passed the second day of April, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-two, has always conducted himself in a soldier-like manner, and is hereby honorably discharged.

*Given under my hand, at Lancaster, this first day
of August - in the year 1836*

George Baughman Capt.
f 1/3 f

HUGH MAXWELL, PRINTER, LANCASTER, PA.

CERTIFICATE AWARDED TO FREDERICK BAUSMAN ADMITTING HIM TO MEMBERSHIP IN THE JACKSON RIFLEMEN, A MILITARY COMPANY OF LANCASTER, PA., COMPOSED OF SOME OF THE FINEST MEN IN THE COMMUNITY. THE JACKSON RIFLEMEN PARTICIPATED IN "BATTALION DAYS" IN LANCASTER COUNTY.

After mustering, there were feasts; and now and then hilarity became pronounced. Muster day was a picturesque event in the life of our people after the Revolution and continued so down almost to the period of the war of the Rebellion.

The War of 1812 turned every town in Pennsylvania into a drilling place. Governor Simon Snyder's ringing call brought forth three times as many Pennsylvania applicants for military enlistment as the national government could care for. Men from Pennsylvania's "Battalion" days, fought at Lundy's Lane, and evoked from General Jacob Brown, the commander who hailed from our sister county of Bucks, high praise for their bravery and endurance. It is related that there was a rush of Lancaster countians from muster points to join the companies summoned to defend Baltimore in 1814.

Lessons of the war appear in the act of April 2, 1822, which again reorganized the militia. The original 18 to 45 year age is maintained as it was in acts of the preceding five years. This act of 1822 is interesting because it makes Lancaster county the location of the Fourth division,—one of sixteen apportioned to the State. It shows two brigades to a division, each brigade to have not less than 2,100 men, the brigades to consist of from three to five regiments, each with two battalions of equal size. Eight to twelve companies were to be listed in each regiment. May was fixed for field training, and an annual allotment of \$30 was made to each battery of artillery or troop of cavalry, and \$20 to each company of infantry or riflemen. Many other things we find in the tables to-day were in that act of 110 years ago.

Newspapers of the twenties, thirties and early forties are filled with calls for "Battalion" or muster days and State reports contain many references. General Simon Cameron, when adjutant general, noted numerous companies which apparently existed only for muster day. Military spirit, however, was general, and while the list of units was impressive, there was not much opportunity for service. The enthusiasm with which Pennsylvania men rushed from mustering grounds to enlist in the two regiments allotted to Pennsylvania in the Mexican War, tells its own story.

The foundation for the present National Guard is to be seen in the act of April 21, 1858, another reorganization of the militia. The shadow of a great war was on the State and the age limit appears as from 21 to 45.

There is provision for what is termed a "grand staff," a forerunner of a general State staff, and likewise for regular field encampments. With this act "Battalion" days of other years passed away. Regular drill became the order of the period. It is notable that the scheme of organization of the militia laid down in the late fifties was continued in the reorganization of 1864, a comprehensive act, based on actual war experience and paving the way for the reorganization of 1879, which following the riots of 1877 brought the National Guard into being as a disciplined force, creating a division tried by fire and second to none in the United States. I am happy to be its commander and to pay my tribute to its officers and men whose forebears proved their worth in other years and graduated from "Battalion" days.