

"Today is National Guard Day in Carroll County"

Carroll County Times Article for 22 September 1996

By Jay A. Graybeal

Gov. Glendening recently named September as National Guard Month and units throughout the state are holding special activities. Today our local guard unit, Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 110th Field Artillery, will hold an open house at the Henry C. Evans Armory on Englar Rd. in Westminster. The event will be an opportunity for the public to visit the armory, meet the guardsmen and learn about opportunities in the Maryland National Guard. There will also be several displays of historical military vehicles and other items; local veterans will be on hand to talk with visitors. The armory will be open from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and there will be a special program at 12:30.

Carroll Countians have served in the Maryland National Guard for nearly a century. The early history of our local unit was written during the County Centennial in 1937:

"March 20, 1899 was an important day in our neighboring community of Frizzellburg, for it was on that day that the Carroll County Military Company was organized. It was not until January 8, 1901, that it received its designation as Company H of the First Infantry, Maryland Militia.

On the farm of David J. Roop, near by, were the greenhouses of the Sunny Side Floral Company, owned by H. Scott Roop. As was customary in small communities, the general store was the place of meeting for the men of near and far, but not so in Frizzellburg. Now it so happened that John F. Auer had been placed in charge of this enterprise, and his employer expected much of him in the way of production and the propagation of plants and flowers which is quite customary in greenhouses. Auer had lately been employed as landscape manager at the State Hospital in Sykesville, but with him came another knowledge which was greater than that of growing things beautiful. He had previously been a member of the Bond Guards in Catonsville, Md.; of the Baltimore Light Infantry, later known as the 4th Infantry, Maryland Militia.

Now the thing that strikes as being odd, is the fact that men would find their way to the greenhouses of a florist, and there spend their off hours swapping stories and discussing the important topics of the day, when they could have gathered at the place of more importance, the general store. Nevertheless, they were real men, despite the fact they preferred the odor of carnations and heliotrope.

John Auer, with his military experience, was successful in persuading this group of young men in organizing a military company. At the first public meeting called on March 20, 1899, sixty-five names appeared on the application role.

Considerable interest in the new company was shown by all members, and they immediately began their drills and the "practice of military tactics." The lack of a suitable building forced them to drill in the street of the town or in a nearby meadow. Funds were badly needed for the various items so essential to a military company, that they soon decided upon having their first "grand annual picnic." This was held on August 19 of that year, and from accounts attracted about 1500 people. A feature of the occasion was a parade and drill by the company and the Westminster Drum Corps, both afternoon and night. An orchestra from Westminster "enlivened the event." \$104.06 were the gross earnings.

Drills continued and in the course of a few weeks they had mastered many of the close order movements. Due to the lack of a regulation uniform they drilled for some months in white trousers and an ordinary dark coat. The officers were more fortunate, they having secured the official militia uniform. However, a little later (November), when funds were available, blue flannel trousers, a regulation hat and rifle were secured.

On December 12 of the same year there appeared the following article in the American Sentinel::

"The Carroll County Military Company of Frizellburg, marched to this city [Westminster] on Friday afternoon, paraded the streets and gave exhibition drills at several points. For the short period in which the company has been organized its members went through the evolutions in a very creditable manner. The company was under the command of Captain Auer. The citizens of Westminster were so well pleased with the parade that numerous donations were made to the supper and bazaar now being held by the company at its armory in Frizellburg."

During this time there were some changes in the personnel, a number of men withdrawing and others taking their place. Drills continued, and efforts on the part of the officers to have the company recognized as a unit of the Maryland Militia was put forth. Claude Tilden Smith of Westminster, had been urged to join with the company and through his efforts recognition was promised by the Adjutant General."

Photo caption: Second Lieutenant Claude Tilden Smith, Co. H, 1st Maryland Infantry in c. 1900. Lt. Smith was instrumental in having the Carroll County Military Company recognized by the Maryland National Guard. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Eugene Ensor, 1960.