

Parallel Tracking: The Virginia National Guard Historical Property Collection: A Case Study in Collections Management

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*Everything in war is very simple.
But the simplest thing is difficult.*
–Von Clausewitz, *On War*¹

The U.S. Army has a long and illustrious history. This history is collected, interpreted, and disseminated in many ways: through occasional papers, monographs, journal articles, official histories, and museum exhibits. The Army has a wide network of professional



A Virginia National Guard uniform (left) and a U.S. Army uniform (right), both of the same pattern. One may be state property and one federal property, depending on provenance.

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¹ Von Clausewitz, Carl, *On War*, ed. and tran. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 119.

historians and curators who collect documents, interviews, and artifacts that are part of this rich history. While most of these collections reside within the federal government, many are a part of the National Guards of the individual states. This article explains the organizational and procedural relationships that exist in the collection and preservation of the material history of the Army and the responsibilities of National Guard curators to both state and federal agencies.

Federal and state National Guard historical materials have been collected and preserved in a dual system for the past several decades. This often overlapping arrangement has created special and often complex responsibilities for the National Guard curator. As an example, two uniforms, pictured here, and preserved within the Virginia National Guard Historical Collection, illustrate the issues involved. One may be federal historical property and cataloged into the U.S. Army Center of Military History database: the Army Historical Collection Accountability System (AHCAS). The other uniform may be cataloged into the State Historical Collection's Past Perfect Museum database. Aside from the different nametapes, can you tell which is which? Does it make a difference if one uniform is federal property and the other is state property? If it does make a difference, why is that important? What does that mean for how each artifact is handled?

This paper broadly discusses the unique challenges of collections management within the National Guard, using the Virginia National Guard Historical Collection (VANGHC) as a case study. The Adjutant General (TAG) of Virginia has ordered initiatives that will use the artifactual and documentary history of the Virginia National Guard (VANG) to educate the public and VANG troops. This work will improve the preservation and use of the collections. But the work reveals the complicated manner in which the historical collections must be managed. From July 2014 through October 2016, I served as the curator for the VANGHC, and was assisted by my curatorial volunteer and present coauthor, Dennis P. Mroczkowski. Based on our experience with the managerial complexities of the VANG collections, we reflected on what a curator must master to effectively work with a historical collection within the parallel state and federal systems.

My experience as a military curator and command historian showed me that to be successful, curators and historians must be willing to branch out into disciplines that would not have originally been considered in their career path. Work in a museum or in a historical collection requires the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) of four disciplines: knowledge of history and the ability to perform historical research; knowledge of the material culture of the specific collection; knowledge and training in museum studies and collections management; and knowledge of basic archi-

val principles.² A museum director or curator may be in charge of a collection that includes artifacts, paintings and artworks, documents, photographs, rare books, and reference materials. In addition to the four KSAs, when working within a National Guard museum, such as the VANGHC, I had to be conversant with not only state regulations for the management of historical property and documents, but also with federal regulations. The basic working knowledge of the four disciplines above gave me a solid foundation to begin working in the VANGHC and grappling with the federal and state systems of accountability for historical property.

We hope that the explanation of curatorial work detailed herein can assist National Guard museums to achieve better accounting and accountability of their artifacts, photographs, and documents, and thus protect the history that those materials represent. Without proper accountability there is a greater likelihood that artifacts may be improperly removed from collections. Accountability also helps identify artifacts that need conservation. With more efficient accountability and security, the focus can then turn to improved educational programs, outreach on social media, and eventual certification by both the Museum Division of the U.S. Army's Center of Military History and the American Alliance of Museums. Our approach in this paper is threefold: to briefly outline the history of the National Guard and its relationship with the U.S. Army, to trace the development of the U.S. Army Museum system, and finally, to explain how the National Guard and Army museum systems interact with each other, with the role of the curator as the nexus wherein the two systems overlap to produce an effective national museum system.

From Organized Militia to National Guard

Under the Constitution, defense of the nation is one of the few specified tasks of the federal government,³ which soon established a regular Army and Navy. Early in the nation's history, the government maintained both as small establishments, and it was expected that the states would be responsible for organizing and training of the militia. To ensure that the states understood their obligations and tasks, Congress passed the Militia Acts of 1792. Through these acts, the states would provide the bulk of the fighting forces in the case of invasion or insurrection "whenever the laws of the United States shall be opposed or the execution thereof obstructed, in any state, by combinations too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings."⁴

² The Center of Military History has recognized the interdependence of these disciplines by creating Career Map 61. More information, including the series and career tracks that can be chosen, will be found at the Center of Military History's website: www.history.army.mil/cp61/#tracks.

³ U.S. Constitution, Article 1, Sect. 8.

⁴ Militia Act, May 2, 1792, Article 1, Sect. 2.

The organized militia⁵ developed into the National Guard and became a component of the U.S. Army via the Act to Increase the Efficiency of the Militia of 1903.⁶ Among the provisions of the 1903 act, the National Guards of the various states were to be provided, by the national government, with “standard service magazine arms . . . and other such necessary accoutrements, and equipments as are required for the Army of the United States, for arming all of the organized militia, in said States, Territories, and District of Columbia.”⁷ These arms and equipments would always remain federal property, even when used by the states. Therefore, beginning in 1903, the need for separate accountability systems between state and federal properties became necessary. Today each National Guard headquarters has a United States Property and Fiscal Officer (USPFO) to account for all federal property in its (the National Guard’s) possession. From that point forward the *organized* militia (National Guard) has had a dual responsibility to both the state and the federal governments.

But the National Guard is still quite distinctly tied to the state and operates under the governor and adjutant general. It is important to understand this division, because this separation of state and federal functions is crucial to being an effective collections manager within the dual museum systems of the United States Army and the National Guard Bureau.

Development and Missions of the United States Army Museum System

The 13th Congress, in February 1814, passed Bill No. 46, “recommending that the Secretary of War gather symbols of combat from the young nation’s military struggles, ‘To provide for the collection, preservation, and public exhibition of such flags, standards, and colors as shall have been or may hereafter be taken by the land and naval forces of the United States.’”⁸ So, while no national Army museum was established at that time, the first Army museum opened to the public in 1854 at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. Its collections, however, were founded in 1835.⁹

⁵ The terms militia, organized militia, and National Guard were used interchangeably by the late 19th century. Prior to the 19th century, the term “militia” referred to all free, white, able-bodied men available for local defense duties. But after the Civil War, the organized militia consisted of men who equipped themselves, trained, and were recognized and supported by the states, and began to be referred to as the National Guard.

⁶ Also known as the Dick Act, named for the bill’s sponsor, Representative Charles Dick of Ohio.

⁷ Act to Increase the Efficiency of the Militia of 1903, Sect. 13.

⁸ See www.armyhistorical.org/the-1814-society. After 200 years, the Army, in cooperation with the Army Historical Foundation and the Association of the United States Army, has begun construction of the National U.S. Army Museum at Fort Belvoir, VA. Ground breaking for the National Army Museum occurred on September 14, 2016.

⁹ See www.westpoint.army.mil.

Over time, Army museums were established by local commanders of posts, units, branches, and corps. Commanders intended to illustrate the history and accomplishments of these various organizations. Initially the museums' narrow focus was to educate and motivate the soldiers about the history of their units. But by the 1950s and 1960s, Army museums widened their audience to include the general public. Eventually these individual efforts grew into the 60 museums that today comprise the Army Museum System (AMS),¹⁰ which is supervised via the Museum Division of the Center of Military History (CMH), Washington, DC. Each of these museums has its individual focus, but together they relate nearly the entire history of the U.S. Army. All of the artifacts in their collections, whether received from donation, purchase, transfer, or any other source of acquisition, become federal property. In the early days of the AMS, there were no established regulations for historical property and no standards for collections management and conservation, exhibits, or any other museum function.

By the late 1960s and into the 1970s, many of the Army museum curators recognized the need to establish standard professional practices within the Army Museum System. Several of them cooperated in drafting what would become Army Regulation 870-20: *Army Museums, Historical Artifacts, and Art (AR 870-20)*. These curators created a structure by which Army museums would be run and the collections systematically grown and cared for in accordance with current museum practices. But these curators were also writing a regulation that would function within the U.S. Army and the Army's requirements for property accountability.

In the early days of the Army museums, each museum used its own accountability system, with its own ledgers, books, registers, and catalog numbering systems. By the 1970s, however, the Army regulation developed and mandated the use of the historical property catalogue card, DA Form 2609, popularly known as the "2609 card" as a standard cataloging card. The 2609 card had to be filled out for every item coming into an Army museum's collection,

HISTORICAL PROPERTY CATALOGUE CARD		
Form of accession and all other records on the collection system are those of the Chief of Military History		
ACCESSION NUMBER	NAME OR TITLE OF ITEM	
ACQUISITION DATE	DATE	
ORGAN OF ACQUISITION	DATE OF ACQUISITION	ITEM ACQUIRED BY
NAME AND ADDRESS OF DONOR (State full name)	FUNCTION OF DONATION	
COLOR	NUMBER	CLASS
WEIGHT	HEIGHT	LENGTH OR DIAMETER
PROVINCE OR COUNTRY OF MANUFACTURE	MARKET OR BRAND	COLOR OR IDENTIFICATION OF MANUFACTURER
GENERAL DESCRIPTION		
ORIGINAL LOCATION	MARKET VALUE	APPROXIMATE WEIGHT
REMARKS AND COMMENTS		
DA FORM 2609, OCT 62		

A DA 2609 card used for inventory management

¹⁰ Beginning in mid-2017, the Army Museum System was changed to the Army Museum Enterprise. But, for the purposes of this paper, describing the growth of Army museums, it is best to continue to use the old name.

with a duplicate copy sent to the Center of Military History. However, compliance in the use of the 2609 card varied throughout the Army Museum System. Also, the attention to detail and the information captured on the 2609 cards was greatly dependent upon the professional abilities of the curators and staff of each museum.

By the mid-1970s, in order to strengthen the commitment to professional museum standards, Army curators instituted their own internal method of peer inspection of Army museums. This was called the “certification inspection” by which a museum was judged by other Army curators and a museum professional outside the Army. The inspection was to evaluate all aspects of the museum’s operations, to include cataloging, conservation, exhibits, educational programs, security, and facilities management. One of the most important elements of the inspection was, and still is, collections management and accountability, which is regarded as the heart of all museum operations. Today, the Army has a centralized collections management database, called the Army Historical Collection Accountability System (AHCAS), by which all artifacts accessioned into an Army museum are recorded at the individual field museum and at the Center of Military History. AHCAS now allows for curators throughout the Army Museum System to have visibility of the over half-million artifacts, ranging from buttons to steam locomotives to tanks, held within the collections of the various Army museums.

National Guard Bureau Museums

National Guard museums developed along similar lines: individual adjutants general established either a museum or a museum activity¹¹ to tell the story of that state’s National Guard units and their militia predecessors, and to gather a central collection of artifacts, separate from those held in the individual unit armories and readiness centers.¹² If a National Guard museum or museum activity is not officially recognized by the Center of Military History, it cannot receive or hold federal historical property or receive a share of federal funding for support of the museum or museum activity.

¹¹ A museum activity can perform all or some of the functions normally associated with a museum. But, for the purposes of the Army and National Guard, a museum activity has not passed the Center of Military History certification process, and is therefore not recognized as an Army Museum. NGR 870-20, Sect. 2-2, “Establishing a museum, museum activity or historical collection” (Ref, AR 870-20, Sect. 3-5).

¹² Historical collections held at the unit armories/readiness centers are often separate from the main state National Guard historical collection because these artifacts were donated or collected by private individuals or organizations to support the unit(s) based at an armory/readiness center.

The regulation governing the National Guard Bureau (NGB) museum system is NGR 870-20, an abbreviated version of the AR 870-20.¹³ The NGB has its own museum regulation because it is concerned with the proper curation of military historical properties held by the various National Guards. Also, NGB museums are state organizations, which cannot come under the federal system, and therefore their historical collections cannot be cataloged into AHCAS. Thus, the NGB has a separate accountability system that it is trying to standardize by using Past Perfect at all National Guard museums, museum activities, and historical collections.

The USPFO in each state where there is a National Guard museum has oversight of the federal historical property contained within that state's historical collection. The federal property has to be cataloged into both AHCAS and Past Perfect to keep it accurately visible on both sides. The National Guard curator is responsible for cataloging the federal historical property into the state historical collection database. But this can be complicated by the necessity to have a federal artifact accountable officer (AAO) appointed. The National Guard curator is not the federal AAO. That duty may be assumed by the USPFO and then can be delegated to an artifact responsible officer (ARO), who is usually a senior noncommissioned officer. The National Guard curator may be appointed as ARO to combine both positions in one person, *if* the historical collection is recognized as a museum activity by the CMH.¹⁴ The appointment of an AAO and ARO is a requirement set out in AR 870-20 for all Army historical property, whether it resides in a museum or some other activity.¹⁵

While it may appear that this should be one coherent system, these are actually two systems, each with many component parts, all channeling to the state National Guard curator. Responsibility falls to the National Guard curator to monitor state *and* federal property, and to carefully check the provenance of all artifacts being donated to the state to determine if the donation will become a state or a federal artifact. There are some artifacts that are fairly straightforward, as for example, flags, guidons, streamers, weaponry and some specialized equipment, especially items of the post–World War II era that are obviously federal property because they were used by National Guard units when called to federal active duty. But

¹³ To read AR 870-20, go to the CMH's website: <http://www.history.army.mil/html/bookshelves/collect/cmh-ars.html>, and for NGR 870-20, www.ngbpd.c.ngb.army.mil/pubs/870ngr870_20.pdf.

¹⁴ NGR 870-20, Ch. 2, Sect. 2-3b, "Each Adjutant General who has . . . a museum activity or historical collection will designate, in writing, the museum director or curator to serve as the ARO. The ARO will be the hand receipt holder for all Federal historical property in their State."

¹⁵ AR 870-20, Ch. 1, Sect. 4.

there are items that can be determined to be personal property, which can eventually become state historical property upon donation. These would include uniforms and accoutrements, certain war trophies or souvenirs, individual awards and medals, insignia, photographs, books, and documents.

Virginia National Guard

As mentioned above, the current Adjutant General of Virginia wants to make the history of the Virginia National Guard more accessible to the general public. The plan first required the hiring of a professional curator. In the Virginia National Guard, the Guard's historical property curator is placed under the Virginia Department of Military Affairs (VDMA). But on the local level, the state curator falls under the Cultural Resources Office headquartered at Fort Pickett, Virginia. The Cultural Resources Office, in turn, is placed within the Environmental Program because the program has oversight of the armories, historic buildings, and other historical assets throughout Virginia, as well as all archaeological sites and excavations that are on military property. Therefore, it is logical that the state curator, responsible for state historical military material culture should work within that office.

Within the VDMA there are other civil servants whose positions share an interest in the historical collections. First among these colleagues is the VANG command historian, who works directly for the Adjutant General. The command historian writes monographs, conducts oral history interviews, tracks unit lineages, answers internal and public inquiries, collects the documentary history of the VANG, and when necessary, calls upon the National Guard curator for information regarding a particular type of artifact, determining whether it is held within the collection, and if so, what information is available about it. Another colleague is the Virginia National Guard archaeologist, whose collection generally includes objects of pre-historic and historical civilian and military culture. However, because he works on military posts, some of the artifacts found are military and belong within the VANG historical collection. The Commonwealth of Virginia is one of those states that maintains a state Guard, the Virginia Defense Force (VDF). This volunteer military organization has its own historian who collects the material culture of the VDF and ensures that these artifacts are placed within the VANG historical collection. Outside of the VDMA, but located in other state bureaus and private organizations, are curators and historians from the War Memorial of Virginia in Richmond, the MacArthur Memorial in Norfolk, the War Memorial Museum in Newport News, and private veterans' organizations. This broad network can bring items to the collection, own artifacts that relate to the material culture of the

VANG, and borrow artifacts from the VANGHC in telling the story of the National Guard in their museums.

Many museums within the Army or the National Guard systems have as a form of outside support a private, nonprofit organization or foundation. These organizations are usually incorporated with the state and have 501-(c)3 (tax exempt) status. In practice, such organizations should exist solely to provide financial and moral support to the museum and its staff for the growth, exhibition, and conservation of the collections. They are entities that can provide ready funds to a museum when federal or state funds are not available. Such organizations, for example, will frequently run the museum gift shop, host fund-raising events, maintain a donation box, and provide the funds for summer interns. The board members of these museum foundations frequently are retired or active members of the unit or branch that the museum represents. These officers can therefore provide an additional channel for the museum director or curator to unofficially approach the chain of command. Such organizations should not collect historic items (artifacts, documents, photos, and other materials) in their own right. To do so represents a severe conflict of interest between the foundation and the museum it is supposed to support.¹⁶ But the foundation may purchase artifacts at the request of the museum director or curator, and then immediately donate the purchased item to the historical collections. The VANGHC has such a foundation, the Virginia National Guard Historical Society (VANGHS).¹⁷

Curatorial Duties

Upon reporting for duty in July 2014 as the state historical collection curator, I immediately recognized the necessity to inventory the state and federal historical collections in their entirety. A complete inventory had not been done since at least 1995. The inventory was particularly crucial because the collections had been moved from different armories in Richmond to Fort Pickett, where the collection moved several more times between various buildings and warehouses. The inventory was also useful as a way to become familiar with the collection and its contents. In the inventory process, I completed condition assessments on each artifact, noting the information in the catalog, and with the aid of Dennis Mroczkowski, also corrected

¹⁶ AR 870-20, Ch. 3, par. 11-c-2, "Private organizations may not collect historical artifacts or works of art in competition with the Army museum they are supporting."

¹⁷ Further references to "Private Organizations" and the ethics rules governing the relationship between the foundation and the museum can be found in AR 870-20, Ch. 3, and par. 3-11, "Private Organizations"; and "Joint Ethics Regulation (JER)" DOD 5500-7-R, Ch. 3, par. 3-1 (AR 210-22), "Restrictions on POs Approved to Operate on Army Installations."

the nomenclature and in some cases, identification of an artifact. The inventory took six months to complete, while corrections to the database are ongoing.

The next step was the rehousing of the artifacts. The artifacts were stored in 150 boxes. The boxes contained anywhere from 1 to 20 artifacts. The artifacts were often crammed in, sometimes with heavier pieces placed on top or stored in such a way as to cause damage to the items.¹⁸ The rehousing process took 14 months to complete, and the collection's "foot-print" grew from 150 boxes to more than 350. Approximately 10 percent of the original boxes were discarded due to their poor condition, or were used to house those artifacts found to have mold; these are now sealed and housed separately until they can be properly cleaned and conserved.

Textile box crammed with unit insignia and other artifacts (bottom) and textile box with rehoused unit insignia (right).



¹⁸ Prior to 2014 there was no professional curator assigned to the VANGHC. The collections were under the care of the command historian and a contract archaeologist. These two individuals took as great care of the state historical collection as they could with little funding, interest, or assistance. They increased the size and scope of the collections, maintained accurate accession information, and managed to keep the collections intact through many changes of location.

Also, the VANG historical collection needed to be maintained in a building that would provide proper environmental controls and adequate space for the collections to be stored and to grow. Until recently, the historical collections were kept in crowded conditions in the old wooden Fort Pickett headquarters building dating to World War II. The storage area was approximately 500 square feet. The building was insect- and rodent-infested every spring and autumn with ladybugs, camelback crickets, wolf spiders, mice, and other pests. It had insufficient heat and air conditioning, and a very small set of storage rooms in which it was nearly impossible to move the larger artifact boxes through the aisles. The collections were crowded into boxes, which in turn were piled deeply on open shelving. The Adjutant General of Virginia directed his staff at Fort Pickett to identify a building on post that could be used to house the collections. In spring 2016 the collections were moved to a recently constructed, single-story metal- frame building with environmental controls, adequate lighting (with UV protection), and separate storage rooms for each collection: archaeological, state historical, and federal historical. The new storage area has approximately 3,000 square feet. The building also has room for conferences, classes, small exhibits, and work and office space. This move at the end of March 2016 was a major part of the Adjutant General's plan to ensure the preservation of Virginia's military history, and so constituted a major step toward educating soldiers and the general public.

Another point in the Adjutant General's overall plan to bring the history of the Virginia National Guard to the troops and general public was to develop a relationship with the Virginia War Memorial (VAWM), located in Richmond. To accomplish this, in my role as the National Guard curator, I have cooperated with the VAWM curator in the creation of exhibits. We have developed three exhibits over the past two years: "The VANG: Then and Now" exhibited uniforms from World War I and Operation Enduring Freedom; the second highlighted the VANG's involvement in the Mexican Border Campaign of 1916; and a current exhibit highlights the role of the VANG in WWI. These exhibits all detail portions of the VANG's history, both its state activity and federal active duty. Therefore, the artifacts selected may come from both historical collections. This cooperative effort incorporated the work of the command historian, who wrote the exhibit text; the VAWM curator, who provided the exhibit space, prepared the graphics, and mounted the artifacts; and myself, the National Guard curator, who in consultation with the others, selected the appropriate artifacts for display.

Another essential part of my work was oversight and accountability for VANG artifacts held in the armories and readiness centers located throughout Virginia. Thus far, there had been no systematic visitation process and no complete inven-

tory of the artifacts, which include state and federal historical property.¹⁹ The federal AAO (the USPFO at Fort Pickett) directed the ARO to conduct inventories of federal historical properties at all of the armories. The completed inventories accounted for all *federal* historic property listed in AHCAS and held at VANG military installations. The ARO shared the updated inventory information with me so that the VANG historical collection database reflects the current status of all known federal historic properties. As I visited armories, I reported any potential federal historic artifacts to the ARO, who in turn can assist in determining whether the artifact is indeed federal or should remain listed as state property.

During the armory visits, I noted three most pressing and recurring issues: first, there is no curatorial awareness of the state artifacts, photos, and documents held at the readiness centers because none of the items are listed in the armory's property book, and the artifacts are not listed in the VANG Past Perfect database. Second, since there is no accountability for these artifacts, many have disappeared over the decades and have not been recovered. Third, the issue of ownership is confused at many armories. To whom do the artifacts actually belong: the armory, the unit that drills there, a private veteran's organization, or a private individual? The simple answer is that unless specifically identified by the USPFO as federal property, all other historic property held within a state armory is state property. The historical items are by nature state property and cannot be transferred to a private individual or organization, as per Virginia Code:

Any officer receiving public property for military use shall be responsible for the articles so received by him; and he shall not transfer such property, or any portion thereof, to another, either as a loan or permanently, without the authority of the Adjutant General, or his duly authorized representative.²⁰

Therefore, the artifacts must be added to the VANG historical property database.

But the simple answer is not the easy answer or the answer that currently pertains in day-to-day practice. In some cases, artifacts have been purchased privately by individuals or organizations who have assumed responsibility for the collections within an armory. Such items, if private ownership can be proven, will remain with their purchasers. Other items may have been donated to such individuals or to organi-

¹⁹ The lack of visitation is due to three factors: 1) there was no VANG curator until July 2014; 2) the VANG curator position is part-time; and 3) the armories are scattered throughout Virginia and require extensive travel to visit.

²⁰ VA Code, Sect. 44-104 (2014).

zations; but if the donation was made under the belief or understanding that the artifacts were to go to the armory's collections, they are the property of the state.

The majority of the VANG armories have a one-room exhibit space, generally a sort of trophy room, used to display artifacts relating to the history of the units that drill at that particular armory. In conjunction with the trophy room, armories will often also have framed photographs and documents lining the corridor walls to display the history of the units. But there are issues at several of the armories. First, the exhibit space may be maintained as a private space by a 501-(c)3 charitable organization or veteran's organization, meaning that it is not open at all times to the soldiers or visitors. Usually the volunteer in charge (normally a retired member of the VANG) is the sole key holder to the space, but they can have unregulated access to the armory and the collections at times. Third, the exhibit space is inside a building that receives state and federal support funds. Lighting, heat and air conditioning, and security are all provided as part of the armory's operating budget, but costs are not charged to the private organization operating the exhibit space. Fourth, the private organization may use its connections to the VANG to do fund-raising either to make purchases of historic items or to have conservation work performed. These are very worthy goals, but donations to a private organization are not donations to the state, and donors may not be aware of this distinction. Also, if the private organization represents itself as an instrumentality of the state, either by appearing in National Guard uniform or using National Guard equipment or emblems when fund-raising, then the historic artifacts donated are legally state property. Finally, historic property has, in one case, been removed from an armory by a private organization to another location offsite and several miles distant. While the purpose of the move of the artifacts is to display them in a larger building, the move has mixed state historic artifacts, personal items on loan, and items owned directly by the organization's foundation.

Obviously, the "property question" looms large and will require a light touch, much diplomacy, many meetings, and direct support from the Adjutant General, whose duty it is to "have charge and care of all state military property and all United States military property issued to the Commonwealth of Virginia, and shall cause to be kept an accurate and careful account of all receipts and issues of the same."²¹ Also, it will be necessary to repeatedly assure private organizations and individuals that the identification of VANG artifacts and the accessioning of them into the state historic property database is to safeguard them for future generations of soldiers and the public, not to remove them from the armories.

²¹ VA Code, Sect. 44-19, Title 44: Military and Emergency Laws, Adjutant General to have charge of military property.

With future generations in mind, there are currently three main efforts for the historical collections. First, the VANG is building a new Joint Forces Headquarters (JFHQ) in Richmond. The JFHQ will house a series of exhibits outlining the history of the Virginia militia and VANG for soldiers and official visitors. There will also be outside exhibit space to display macro artifacts, expected to include a Huey helicopter, a tank, and other, more modern vehicles used by the VANG in current deployments. Second, the curator of the historical collection will continue to cooperate with the VAWM to provide artifacts for exhibits at that location. These exhibits will be open to the general public and, being located in Richmond, will be able to draw large audiences. The whole context of Virginia military history and the roles played by the Virginia militia and VANG will be displayed there. Third, at the curation facility at Fort Pickett there is space for small, focused exhibits from both the historical and archaeological collections. These are open on a limited basis to the soldiers, staff, and visitors to the installation.

While the curator can perform basic preservation, cleaning, and minor repairs to the historical collection, the curation facility is not equipped to conduct detailed and in-depth conservation work. Such work has to be contracted out. Perhaps the most important item in the collection is the 1847 national flag carried by the 1st



The 1847 United States national flag carried by the 1st Regiment Virginia Volunteers during the Mexican War

Virginia Regiment in the Mexican American War, for which conservation funding was allotted in a recent budget. With these initiatives the VANGHC is on the way to becoming one of the better historical collections in the National Guard system, with the ultimate goal of establishing a VANG museum.

A National Guard museum cannot reach the top tier of museums with only state funding; there will be never enough money at that level. So, access to federal funding becomes critical, and this will only be achieved through recognition by the CMH. This is a long and detailed process that involves all the types of activities that we have discussed in this paper, and it requires the cooperation of the NGB Historian's Office. The first step is a memo written by the curator, which I sent up the chain of command to my supervisor, the colonel with oversight of the Curation Facility, and the judge advocate general's office for review and approval. Once approved, the memo was sent back to me, and I forwarded it to the Adjutant General for signature. The memo provides the location of the collection facility, the professional staff, and states that the facility meets the environmental and security requirements outlined in AR 870-20. Once the memo is signed, it is forwarded to the NGB History Office for review and signature by the chief historian. The signature of the chief historian is recognition that the museum activity meets the basic requirements of AR 870-20 and NGR 870-20 and constitutes the recommendation to the CMH for final approval and recognition. That approval and recognition makes available federal funding to the state museum activity for specific projects.²² This is the road that can lead to a National Guard historical collection becoming a recognized museum activity and ultimately a museum that is a valued part of its state's military establishment²³ and a respected entity in the family of professional museums.

Conclusion

The National Guards of the states and their militia predecessors have played a significant role in the history of the United States, and the National Guard continues to do so. However, because of the unique dual role of the National Guard, an entity that operates within both the federal and state levels, museum work demands familiarity with both of those sets of regulations and bureaucratic orga-

²² Examples of federally funded projects are the purchase of the Past Perfect databases for the NGB museums, the maintenance of macro artifacts on outside exhibit, conservation of artifacts, purchase of exhibit furniture and equipment, and the creation of education programs for the soldiers.

²³ There are some National Guard museums that are already reaching high standards, such as the museums in Louisiana, California, Illinois, and Texas. But all of the National Guard museums and museum activities, and historical collections are striving to attain the professional standards set out in the regulations.

nizations. In addition, National Guard curators and professional museum staff must understand and be conversant in the disciplines of collections management, archival work, and historical writing and research. While the dual-track system can be frustrating and cumbersome, we think that with the system's emphasis on accountability and visibility, it is ultimately beneficial to the historical collections. The requirement to track both the federal and state collections ensures that the state curator knows the collection holdings—their locations, descriptions, and storage conditions—intimately. This knowledge is the ultimate benefit since it can protect the artifacts and help educate the soldiers and public in our nation's military history.

Working at a National Guard museum is always interesting, gratifying, and challenging. Even with the budget woes experienced by all government institutions, and the challenges of working alone (plus a volunteer), the work is personally rewarding and deeply satisfying. Tolerating the cold, heat, occasional bugs and mold, and wading through the endless paperwork are all worth the extra effort in order to have the privilege of recording, preserving, and exhibiting such an important part of our national history and material patrimony.

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