

Badge Cincinnati Home Guard

The Cincinnati Home Guard has been a mystery to me for a number of years. Recently I purchased several books. These books have given me the greatest insight into this group. Although not all of my questions have been answered I know now more than ever. I will share with you some of the secrets of the Cincinnati Home Guard. I have used some of the same verbage as I found in the book. Some of the words are outdated as they are used in sentences. This may appear strange but I have not changed it so that the importance of the comments would remain in their original form.

The title of the book that the majority of my information comes from is “A Narration of the Organization and Activities of Company “O” Cincinnati Home Guards” written by Stanley S. Stewart, 1923. Mr. Stewart acknowledges the assistance of Captain Schwartz, Lieutenant Kurleman, Corporals Peet and Taylor, the Evanstonian Newspaper, and to Corporal Keuper, for loaning a typewriter by which the book was written. (CONSIDER THIS, WOULD THERE BE A HISTORY OF THE CINCINNATI HOME GUARD IF CORPORAL KEUPER HAD FAILED LOAN HIS TYPEWRITER????) Some of the phrases that I use in this article were used in the book. This is the grammar of the 1920’s.

Other major cities had Home Guard Units. I can only imagine that they were similar only in name.

With the declaration of World War I came a hurried preparation for active participation. All existing military forces were mobilized, the First Regiment of the Ohio National Guard went to Camp Sheridan, Cincinnati was left without protection and aid, save the police and fire departments. These departments were able to cope with any contingency under ordinary times, but the times were not ordinary.

Colonel Charles F. Hake, Jr., a man of extensive military training and sound judgment, had given for number of years considerable thought about a war in Europe. Colonel Hake’s plans were laid before the municipal authorities, and the Cincinnati Home Guards resulted. The press carried news of the organization; that it was to be an AUXILIARY TO THE CITY POLICE; that companies would be

organized in suburbs and vicinities around Cincinnati, and that volunteers were needed.

Early in 1917, the local papers announced that a mass meeting would be held in Evanston (a neighborhood of Cincinnati), for the purpose of organizing some kind of military in that suburb. The Evanston Company was organized and it unanimously decided to organize the Evanston Company and join the Cincinnati Home Guard. There was at first considerable opposition to affiliation with the Cincinnati Home Guards. This was an Evanston Company and should be for the protection of Evanston.

By August 1917, uniforms and Springfield rifles had been issued. When the company was organized there was an understanding that the term of service would end July 1, 1919. The question of disbanding had been considered a meeting in June, and it was decided that the organization should be continued, but every member was informed that he was free to withdraw and would be given an honorable discharge on July 1st, 1919 if he did not desire to remain with the company.

On October 12, 1917, the Home Guard was inspected, with the city police, at Redland Field. (Redland Field was the large ballpark in Cincinnati later named Crosley Field, home of the Cincinnati Reds Baseball Team).

There was considerable speculation as to what duties the Home Guard would be involved in. The first summons came in February 1918 when the entire regiment was called out on account of an ice jam and flood.

Company O was ordered to report to Fire Engine House No. 11, on Eastern Avenue, for duty at 7AM on February 2nd. The company also had orders to mobilize at the Second District Police Station on February 3rd. The duties were sundry and various. They consisted of directing wayfarers who dared brave the wintry blasts, issuing coal, moving furniture and people from houses in the flooded district to places of safety, carrying provisions to the needy and contributing in every way possible to the relief of the distressed.

During the latter part of the summer of 1918 there was considerable talk about unionizing the Cincinnati Police. With no notice to the city a

strike was called. The strike resulted in calling the Home Guard for service. Three thousand Home Guards reported for duty, at the various places assigned. The Home Guards assumed the duties of patrolmen, and the duties of traffic “cops” was taken over by the Boy Scouts. The efficiency of the scouts in this capacity was marvelous and attracted the attention and admiration of thousands.

The police returned to duty at 3PM on Monday September 16th and the Home Guard was excused from further service. The efficient service of the Guardsmen resulted in many contributions to a fund for the maintenance of the organization.

On Friday April 11, 1919, the members of the Company were ordered to report to the Evanston School Building at 8PM. When the men were assembled they were advised that the firemen of the city would go out on strike at 7AM the following day, and the duties of the firemen would have to be performed by the Home Guards. The strike was ended on April 20th. This same group of men that had stopped the rising waters of the Ohio ended the greatest firemen’s strike in the history of the Queen City.

When the Home Guard was disbanded, Badges were issued to each member of the Home Guard regiment. The badge consists of a ribbon, striped with 5 colors, red, green, white, yellow and blue to which is suspended a square bronze medal. The front of the medal bears the shield and seal of Cincinnati in a plain field, the sides of which are bordered by a representation of two Ionic columns supporting an entablature of the frieze of which the word Cincinnati is beautifully wrought, just over the shield is the word “Home” and underneath is the word “Guard”, below this at the bottom of the medal is 1917-1921. On the back is the following: “Presented to _____ in appreciation of his unselfish devotion to Cincinnati when duty called, 1917-1921.

Many cities throughout the country had organized Home Guards when it became evident that America could no longer avoid being drawn into the Great War. The Cincinnati Home Guard did not depend on city funds for support, although in its creation the city mandated that it should be subject to the orders of the mayor and chief of police, and shall obey the rules and regulations prescribed by the director of public

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PHOTOS OF HOME GUARD BADGE, SERVICE MEDAL AND A PHOTO OF A UNIFORMED HOME GUARD WITH BADGE AND RIFLE FOLLOW:



THE ISSUED BADGE OF THE CINCINNATI HOME GUARD. THESE BADGES WERE MADE BY THE WRIGHT COMPANY AND THE SAYRE COMPANY



THE MEDAL ISSUED TO THE HOME GUARD WHEN DISBANDED



FRONT VIEW OF MEDAL



REAR OF MEDAL WITH INSCRIPTION





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