

Information Sheet

R **Schrantz, Ward Loren, 1890-1958.**
361 **Memoirs, ca. 1909-1946.**
 Eleven folders.

MICROFILM

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These are memoirs of military service by a resident of Carthage, Jasper County, Missouri, who served in the Missouri National Guard and the U.S. Army before World War I. He was a captain of a machine gun battalion in Europe, 1917-1919, a reserve officer, 1920-1942, and a U.S. Army troopship commander during World War II.

Ward Schrantz wrote in his memoirs that, kindly or otherwise, nature had bestowed upon him an innate interest in military subjects. His interest was also stimulated by stories he heard told by Civil War and Spanish-American War veterans in his home town of Carthage, Missouri. Schrantz enlisted in Co. A, 2nd Missouri National Guard, at Carthage in 1909. It was the beginning of a career which lasted, with a few exceptions, until his mandatory retirement in 1950.

Schrantz left the National Guard in 1912 and enlisted in the U.S. Army. He received recruit training at Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis before assignment to the 22nd U.S. Infantry at Fort Bliss, Texas. He spent the next two years in garrisons at Galveston and Texas City, Texas, watching over the troubled border with Mexico. There was plenty of tension, but no action, and Schrantz purchased his discharge from the army in 1914. He returned to Missouri to accept a position with the *Carthage Press*. He also reenlisted in the 2nd Missouri National Guard, with rank as sergeant. Schrantz was in Texas again in 1916, this time with the 2nd Missouri, which had been federalized by congressional declaration in connection with disturbances on the border with Mexico. The Missouri outfit spent six months in Texas before demobilization in January 1917.

Schrantz was elected captain of Co. A, 2nd Missouri National Guard, in April 1917, a few months before its federalization for European service in World War I. The guard trained at Camp Doniphan, Oklahoma, where it was reorganized as Co. A of the new 128th Machine Gun Battalion, part of the 35th U.S. Infantry Division. Schrantz left for Europe in April 1918 as a member of an advance party of the army. His unit joined him in May, receiving orientation and training with British forces before moving into the lines. Schrantz and his gunners received their first experience in the trenches in the Vosges Mountains sector of the Alsace region. In reserve during the St. Mihiel offensive, the unit first came under fire in the Argonne Forest, where it sustained several casualties and suffered two deaths. Schrantz was cited for gallantry in the campaign. The battalion was posted in a quiet sector of the front until the armistice. Schrantz was promoted to major of the 130th Machine Gun Battalion in April 1919, but commanded only briefly before returning for discharge at Camp Funston, Kansas, in May 1919.

Schrantz returned to his former occupation with the *Carthage Press*. He was unconnected with any military organization from May to October 1919, the longest period of separation with some component of the army from 1909 to his retirement. It was also his last period of separation. He applied for and was granted the rank of major in the Officers Reserve Corps in October 1919. During the 1920s and 1930s, Schrantz was assigned to various reserve units, including the 54th and 408th Infantry regiments, and the 54th, 89th, and 102nd Infantry divisions, and administered Citizens' Military Training Camp programs at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, Fort Crook, Nebraska, and Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He also attended General Staff School and War College courses at Washington, D.C., and was involved in mobilization exercises at Omaha, Nebraska, and Fort Lewis, Washington. During his time in the reserve, Schrantz received promotions to lieutenant colonel and colonel.

At the onset of World War II, Schrantz hoped to obtain active command of an infantry regiment. However, his age and reserve status ruled out such a position under War Department policies. When called to active service in August 1942, he was assigned to the Army Port Authority at

Boston. Instead of the stateside service which he feared, Schrantz was assigned as an Army troopship commander. He was sent to New Orleans and the troopship *Evangeline* in September 1942.

Troopship commanders were placed aboard every transport vessel. They were in absolute command of loading and unloading of passengers and, in fact, everything which did not pertain to actual operation of the ship. While prosaic, the duty was not without danger during the worst of the German submarine operations in the Atlantic. Schrantz's first voyage was to the army training bases in Cuba and Panama. Then followed voyages between Algeria and New York City. By February 1943, Schrantz had covered 12,490 nautical miles and had carried 2,777 passengers, figures which were to be greatly surpassed in his next assignment.

Troopships had been reclassified according to capacity during Schrantz's voyages to North Africa. As a full colonel, Schrantz drew an assignment to the Motor Ship *John Ericsson*, the former Swedish-American liner *Kungsholm*, which had been bought by the government and renamed for the inventor of the *Monitor* of American Civil War fame. The ship had berth space for 5,501 passengers. Between 1943 and the war's end Schrantz made twenty-five round-trip voyages on the *John Ericsson* from New York to Oran, Casablanca, and Mers-EI-Kebir, North Africa; Capetown, South Africa; Glasgow, Scotland; Liverpool and London, England; Naples, Italy, and Palermo, Sicily; and Cherbourg, LeHavre and Marseilles, France. Schrantz's charges included American, Australian, British, and Puerto Rican troops, army nurses and Red Cross personnel, survivors of ships which had been torpedoed, and German and Italian prisoners-of-war. Schrantz also made one voyage as deputy transport commander aboard the *Queen Mary*. Despite constant danger from enemy submarines and aircraft, Schrantz never lost a ship and lost only two passengers, due to shipboard accidents.

Upon his retirement in 1950, Schrantz returned to Carthage and took a position with the *Carthage Press*, where he wrote features and editorials, and served as resident historian. In this latter capacity, Schrantz wrote hundreds of articles dealing with the history of Carthage, Jasper County, and southwestern Missouri. At the time of his death in 1958, Schrantz was one of the most respected citizens of Carthage and Jasper County's premier local historian.

Schrantz's memoirs concern nearly his entire military career with the exception of the last years before his retirement. The memoirs are not entirely complete, but as a whole provide a composite narrative of his career from 1909 to 1945. The material concerning his service in the Missouri National Guard and the U.S. Army through World War I may be found in Folders 1-4, while Folder 5 covers his duty as a reserve officer. Folders 6-10 detail his World War II service as a troopship commander. Photographs, clippings, and miscellaneous materials are tipped-in throughout the memoirs. Of particular note are photographs of the 22nd U.S. Infantry in Texas, 1912-1914, and Missouri National Guardsmen at Camp Clark near Neosho, and on the Mexican border in 1916.

The memoirs are undated. The material on Schrantz's early military career may have been produced during the 1920s and 1930s, during which period he researched and published *Jasper County, Missouri, In The Civil War* (1923). Schrantz's treatise, "The Negro In War, Prior To World War II," which concludes the collection, may also have been produced in this period, when he had access to the Library of the War College in Washington, D.C. A generally favorable exposition of the martial history of the race, "The Negro In War" emphasizes events during the American Civil War and World War I.

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1 May 1989

Marvin L. Van Gilder

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Shelf List

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Folder 01: Memoir, 1909-1918 (199 pages).

Folder 02: "Recollections of a Peacetime Regular," 1912 (10 pages).

Folder 03: "Memoirs of a Machine Gun Captain," 1917-1919 (54 pages).

Folder 04: World War I scrapbook, 1917-1919 (114 pages).

Folder 05: "Post-World War I Reorganization Period," 1919-1942 (63 pages).

Folder 06: Memoir, part 1, 1 August 1942 -- 13 February 1943 (pages 1-156).

Folder 07: Memoir, part 2, 19 February 1943--ca. 12 June 1943 (pages 157-300).

Folder 08: Memoir, part 3, June 1943 -- 18 October 1943 (pages 301-444).

Folder 09: Memoir, part 4, 27 October 1943 -- 22 February 1944 (pages 445-566).

Folder 10: "Voyages of the SS John Ericsson," 1942-1946 (144 pages).

Folder 11: "The Negro in War, Prior to World War II," n.d. (251 pages).

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