

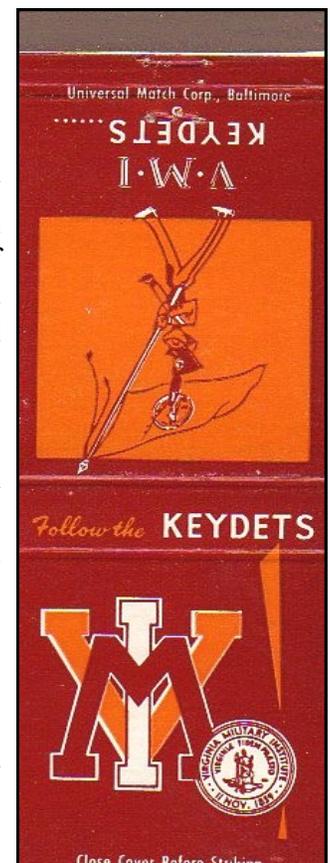
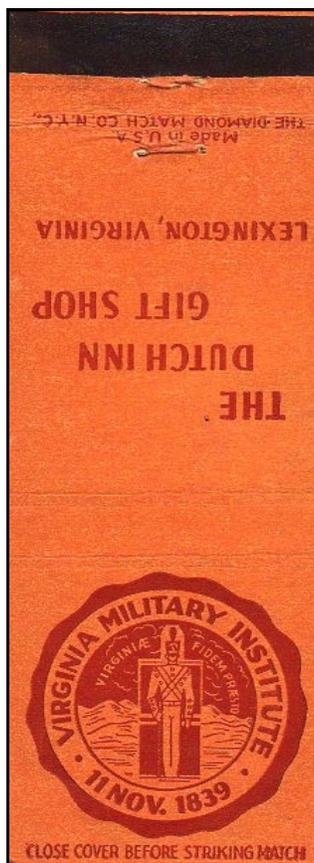
Virginia Military Institute

By Mike Prero

On November 11, 1839, the Virginia Military Institute was founded on the site of the Lexington state arsenal, and the first Cadets relieved personnel on duty. The Corps was imbued with the discipline and the spirit for which it is famous. The first cadet to march a sentinel post was Private John Strange. With few exceptions, there have been sentinels posted at VMI every hour of every day of the school year.

The Institute played a valuable part in the training of the Southern armies and participated as a unit in actual battles. VMI cadets were called into active military service on 14 different occasions during the American Civil War and many cadets, under the leadership of General Stonewall Jackson, were sent to Camp Lee, at Richmond, to train recruits. VMI alumni were regarded among the best officers of the South and several distinguished themselves in the Union forces as well. Fifteen graduates rose to the rank of general in the Confederate Army, and one rose to this rank in the Union Army. Just before the Battle of Chancellorsville Stonewall Jackson said, "The Institute will be heard from today."

On 15 May, 1864, the VMI Corps of Cadets fought as an independent unit at the Battle of New Market. VMI is the only military college or academy in the United States to hold this distinction. The cadets who fought that day ranged in age from 14 to 22, though through the years,



claims have been made of cadets as young as 12 fighting.

On 12 June, 1864, Union forces under the command of General David Hunter shelled and burned the Institute as part of the Valley Campaigns of 1864. The destruction was almost complete, and VMI had to temporarily hold classes at the Alms House in Richmond, Virginia. In April 1865, Richmond was evacuated due to the impending fall of Petersburg and the VMI Corps of Cadets was disbanded. One of the reasons that Confederate General Jubal Early burned the town of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, was in retaliation for the shelling of VMI.

VMI produced some of America's most significant commanders in World War II. The most important of these was George C. Marshall, the top U.S. Army general during the war. Marshall was the Army's first five-star general and the only career military officer ever to win the Nobel Peace Prize. The Deputy Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army during the war was also a VMI graduate, as were the Second U.S. Army commander, 15th U.S. Army commander, the commander of Allied Air Forces of the Southwest Pacific, and various Corps and Division commanders in the Army and Marine Corps. China's General Sun Li-jen, known as the "Rommel of the East", was also a graduate of the VMI. Over the years, VMI has produced nine 4-star generals.

During the war, VMI participated in the War Department's Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) from 1943 to 1946. The program provided training in engineering and related subjects to enlisted men at colleges across the United States. Over 2,100 ASTP members studied at VMI during the war.

VMI was the last US military college to admit women. In August 1997, VMI enrolled its first female cadets. The first co-ed class consisted of thirty women, and matriculated as part of the class of 2001.

In 2009, VMI ranked third, after the United States Naval Academy and the United States Military Academy, in the *US News and World Report* rankings of the 27 top public liberal arts colleges in the United States. VMI has also produced 11 Rhodes Scholars since 1921, with the two most recent having been selected in 2003 and 2008.

VMI has produced alumni who went on to be generals, leading politicians, Medal of Honor recipients, profession sports stars, etc. World War II's General George Patton had studied at VMI, although he eventually graduated from West Point (both had father and grandfather were VMI graduates). [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia_Military_Institute]

