Postal card stamp commemorates 350th year for National Guard

Anchorage Postmaster Robert Opinsky, representing the postmaster general of the United States, recently presented Maj. Gen. John Schaeffer of the National Guard with an enlarged replica of the new National Guard postal card stamp.

A multi-colored 14-cent postal card commemorating the 350th anniversary of the National Guard was issued on Dec. 12 in Boston, Mass.

Schaeffer accepted the enlarged replica on behalf of members of the Alaska Army and Air National Guard.

He acknowledged both their individual sacrifices as well as the support extended by their families.

Graphic artist Bradbury Thompson of Riverside, Conn., based his design for the postal card on a painting by Don Troiani entitled "The First Muster."

For three and a half centuries, the National Guard has responded to such diverse emergency situations as floods, tornadoes, riots and war. Today's National Guard is the result of Article II of the Bill of Rights, which calls for a well-regulated militia.

However, the organization's roots can be traced much earlier to Oct. 7, 1636, when the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony ordered the organization of the colony's militia companies into three groups, the North, South and East regiments. That division greatly increased the efficiency and responsiveness of the militia.

The early colonists had adopted the English militia system, which obligated all males between the ages of 16 and 60 to possess arms and participate in the defense of the community.

The early colonial militia drilled once a week and provided guard details each evening to sound the alarm in case of attack.

In the three and a half centuries since the first units were formed, the National Guard has provided valuable military assistance in every major American conflict. In peacetime, specially trained and equipped National Guard units around the country remain prepared and available for mobilization in the event of war or national emergency.