

U.S. Artillery Insignia, Turn of the Century

The US Army artillery insignia are interesting since regiments came and went, and in some cases, artillery units were officially known as both batteries and companies at the same time. The differences in titles showed the functions of the unit—batteries were for the field artillery and companies were for the coast artillery. For a short time after the Spanish-American War artillery regiments had 14 batteries, including both “N” and “O.”

By 1847 the four artillery regiments had 12 batteries each, two of which were usually light artillery. The Fifth Regiment, formed by direction of President Lincoln on May 4, 1861, and confirmed by an act of July 12, 1861, continued with the original four regiments, until 1901. The army also organized the 6th and 7th Artillery in 1898.



Starting in 1892 artillery, infantry, and cavalry officers wore silver colored, block regimental numbers (left) on the collars of their new mohair-trimmed sack coats. Their forage caps carried crossed bullion cannons with the regimental number at the intersection (an original is below). Many of these have been remade in recent years and are being sold to collectors as originals. In 1895 officers' service

uniforms changed. Caps had crowns parallel to the cap bottom rather than the rakish angle previously worn and officers replaced their branch insignia with an embroidered eagle. Simultaneously the trim on dark blue sack coats disappeared and branch insignia replace regimental numbers on collars.

Many officers wore bullion collar insignia on the 1895 coat while others had metal versions (3d regiment, left). While these insignia could also have been worn on the 1898 style khaki coats, officers in the Philippines often wore the shoulder straps embroidered with the gilt eagle on first type khaki coat with branch trim. The two examples with gold embroidered eagles show at the right are two general styles made in the Philippines: those with the button end rounded and those with parallel sides and the button end finished at 45°.



Enlisted men wore a five-button campaign coat without any insignia other than chevrons, if appropriate. Prior to 1895 enlisted men wore forage caps with pin-back, lead-filled, brass branch insignia on the front. The army brought in a new shaped cap in 1895 that had sides equal length all of the way around, which many people today describe as being like that of a railroad conductor's cap. With the new enlisted cap the army started to make cap insignia with a screw-post. The specially shaped nut was accompanied by a thin, slightly dished washer. The cap insignia reverse had two small needle points to keep the device from rotating. An

example of one of the 1899-1901 cap insignia, along with a pre 1896 insignia and the reverse of 1896 are shown next.



On the enlisted coats NCOs and specialists wore red wool with black chain stitching chevrons on service uniforms and NCOs wore gilt lace on a red wool background on dress uniforms.



The ease with which the United States invaded the Caribbean islands and the Philippines caused consternation. The conclusion was that the coastal artillery needed to have better defenses including

variable sized organizations since each major harbor needed units tailored to its size. The concept of the field artillery was that a battery could be attached to infantry or cavalry battalions to provide direct fire support as dictated by the tactical situation. The upshot was a totally new artillery organization. With the organizational change came new insignia. Soon Congress also significantly increased the artillery to provide for greater coastal defense.

Under an act of Congress approved February 2, 1901, all artillery units became part of the Artillery Corps. It consisted of 30 field artillery batteries and 126 coast artillery companies. For officers the 1901 Artillery Corps insignia, announced in July 1901, was crossed cannons with a plain red oval at the intersection. The 1890s artillery insignia had a black oval at the intersection with the regimental number. Since the 1901 corps had no regiments an



insignia with plain center was an obvious solution and red, the artillery color, made the device slightly different from the earlier version. Three 1901 Artillery Corps collar insignia for the 1895 officer's sack coat are shown in the last being metal but in imitation embroidery.



One biographical shoulder knot for an Artillery Corps officer's dress uniforms is depicted on the next page.



Enlisted artillerymen in the 1901 Artillery Corps wore screw-back cap devices for crossed cannons as before 1901, but with the company or battery number below. An example is below. The noncommissioned staff of artillery districts, which had replaced regiments as the higher headquarters for the companies, wore plain cannons with no number or letter. Collar insignia were identical in design but had pin-backs.



In 1902 Congress again reorganized the artillery. It ended the Artillery Corps formed the year before and created a Coast Artillery Corps. The numbered companies were part of the new CAC and enlisted insignia did not change, but officers' did. CAC officers added a projectile to the red oval at the cannons' center. To distinguish officers assigned to the field artillery, they added a wheel to the central oval.



Cannons that were part of insignia up to this point had been medium length cannons with reinforcing bands. In late 1904 the Quartermaster General's Department redesigned the artillery insignia to show longer field guns. This impacted enlisted and officer insignia. Some of the new enlisted pieces, first

made in 1905, are shown above. For enlisted men, this style of thinner cannons continued as insignia for several years. On the cap and collar CAC (the left insignia) enlisted men in companies wore thin crossed cannons with their company number below. Starting in 1907 NCOs on district staffs, equal to regimental staffs, began to wear crossed cannons in a wreath as cap devices. Field artillery enlisted soldiers wore the regimental number above and the battery letter below, as in the above right example.



The officers' insignia made similar changes by using the new, longer field cannons. Examples are in **Figures 28** through **30**. The CAC version continued through the world

wars (with some subsequent minor design changes) but in January 1907, Congress struck again, recreating artillery regiments, but this time, making all of them field artillery regiments exclusively. The new six field artillery regiments had two battalions of three batteries each. General Orders of April 1907 called for officers to wear crossed field guns with



the regimental number in the upper angle. With some minor design modifications, the basic crossed cannons are the insignia still worn today.

The enlisted men of field artillery wore similar crossed field guns. Battery members wore regimental numbers above and battery letters below, while the regimental non commissioned staff (regimental sergeant major; regimental supply sergeant, regimental commissary sergeant, two color sergeants, and two battalion sergeant majors) wore the insignia with regimental number only. In the field artillery enlisted personnel wore the same design of insignia on the cap as on the collar. The only difference between the cap and collar insignia is the fastening device: screw-post for the cap and pin-back for the collar.



In 1910 the War Department started to issue one-inch diameter bronze disks as collar insignia for enlisted wear on service uniforms. For the CAC the disks had cannons crossed high on the disk to allow room for the company number below (left). Field artillery soldiers had cannons crossed a little lower and these carried the



regimental number above and battery letter below (right).

During this time the artillery had both cloth insignia for the sleeve to show proficiency, and some badges worn on the chest that also showed skill with weapons. The sleeve devices the army initially called gunner insignia. These cloth sleeve insignia soon grew to include a wide range of ratings besides gunner insignia. A catalogue of these insignia is rather extensive and are not be covered here. The various gunner badges and specialist badges, by contrast, lasted only a short time. They are under Marksmanship Awards/Artillery qualification badges, 1893-1913.