

## A World War II Alabama State Guard Uniform

In 1942 Alabama authorized a State Guard with up to 70 companies. Each company was authorized three officers and 45 enlisted men, plus headquarters and support elements to total 3,400. Members were mainly recruited from the state's American Legion posts of overage World War I veterans. Because of shortages of weapons and uniforms, only 25 companies went into state service, with a total strength of 90 officers and 1,372 enlisted men. Members were expected to attend one weekly two-hour evening drill without pay. The purpose of the state guard was to be activated for emergencies such as flood or tornadoes. Before the war the National Guard had performed such duties, but it had been called to active duty.

Alabama created heavy khaki uniforms for the members of the State Guard. The uniform included a bill cap, trousers, and a shirt with dark blue trim. Other than the metal cap and collar insignia and the shoulder patch, there is nothing that marks the uniform for what it is, since buttons are plain.

The shirt has pocket flaps, shoulder loops, and cuffs trimmed in heavy dark blue cotton. Buttons associated with the dark blue trimmed areas are themselves dark blue, while the shirt-front buttons are medium brown. Each cuff is fastened with two blue buttons, one above the other.

Shown below is the shoulder and collar area. On the right collar tip is a screw-back two-piece one-inch disk with the abbreviation ALA. On the wearer's left collar tip is a disk



bearing crossed rifles, 13 above, and ASG below.

Men wore a dark blue web belt with the trousers. The side belt loops are unusually wide. The buckle and tip are brass as typical of the time. Shown is the upper part of the trousers that went with the shirt.



Alabama State Guard headgear is the most interesting piece. The cap is built on a light frame of woven cane, much like a chair seat, and has a black leather bill that now has some crazing, and a khaki covering. The decorative strap that goes above the bill top is thin black patent leather fixed at each end with a large, shiny, black-headed brad. The two flat brass brad prongs simply go through a strap end and the cane frame, and were then bent over.



Also shown are some details of the cap's construction. Plain khaki cloth covers the frame that makes the lower sides, while the top is made from a single large folded piece of cloth. This was typical construction used for taxi drivers' caps during World War II. There is no stiffener for the cloth top to hold the edges and cap top tight, although the front with the insignia has a rectangular two-layer khaki cloth internal stiffener. On the front, supported by the cloth stiffener, is a 1-1/2 inch two-piece bright brass disk bearing the central design for the Alabama State Seal.





Top of cap (above) and the front of the cap with insignia (right).