

US Army Aides' Insignia

In the United States Army, aides-de-camp have, since 1778, been junior officers assigned to assist general officers. In the nineteenth century aides had a variety of insignia to distinguish them, which since 1832 included aiguillettes. In 1902 Howard Chandler Christy, an artist who had gained national attention with his Spanish-American War combat drawings, designed a collar insignia for aides that has generally remained unchanged: an eagle with wings reversed, holding a shield that shows the rank of the general the aide serves. Initially gilt and enameled versions of these went on the 1895 high collar, mohair trimmed dress coat and black metal versions, called "bronze," when on the service coat. A pair of the early dress insignia for an aide to a brigadier general are shown (right).



These early aide insignia are thick and have significant depth, which is caused by the bowed shield and the sculpting of the eagle that has a prominent breast and upper wing bones. At this time usually the only usual general officer ranks were brigadier and major general, but some of the Army Chiefs of Staff, such as the first three (Samuel Young, Adna Chaffee, and John Bates) and occasionally a few other select officers were promoted to Lieutenant General. An example of the latter was Arthur MacArthur who was promoted to lieutenant general in September 1906 and who retired in

June 1909. During World War I the rank of general was revived and the four star rank again came into use by John Pershing and the Chief of Staff, Tasker Bliss. By the end of 1918 two lieutenant generals had also been appointed, Hunter Liggett and Robert Bullard. During World War I dress uniforms were discarded and olive drab was worn on all occasions, which necessitated the use of bronze aide insignia.



Two versions of the bronze insignia for aides to a lieutenant general are shown. One (left) has the center star slightly larger than the other two. This follows the pattern of the rank insignia since the December 1917 Uniform Specifications call for a

lieutenant general to wear one large star, 1-1/4 inches in diameter and two smaller stars to be 15/16 inch in diameter. The other insignia (right) for a service coat has the stars the same size and each star is shown just by a raised edge, while the version with the slightly larger star has solid stars.



The AEF Quartermaster had many insignia made in France for U. S. troops, including collar ornaments. A French-made aide insignia for a U. S. Army lieutenant general is shown at the right. This French design with the eagle's head point upward and the overall insignia less convex than the U. S. versions, also exists for one and two star aides. This is just one example of the many dies used to make aide insignia. Four examples of aide insignia, in this case for aide to a brigadier general, are displayed. The eagles, the shield details, and the style of star all vary.



Another difference in aide insignia can be in the insignia size. On shirt collars officers often wore small insignia. The insignia below are

three small shirt sized insignia for an aide to a one star general and for size comparison, a coat collar insignia.



In this same early twentieth century period, before WW I and the 1920s, aide insignia appeared for various states. These were often worn by a National Guard aide to a governor. In general these come in two designs: with state names or initials and with a state

symbol. Four of the state abbreviation versions for the service coat are shown below, followed by a variety of dress insignia of this type. The dress versions last into the 1930s and in a few cases, even later.





The above four state aide insignia with state names or abbreviations show a range of design detail variations. Other states had aide insignia that depicted a design associated with the state. Some, such as Delaware, used just the chief to show the state; in this case three plows that form a major part of the state seal, while other state aides used the entire shield, as did Maryland and Connecticut.



Like the bronze World War I period shirt-size insignia, some state insignia also came in a small version. One example for Georgia is shown at the right.



The army did not have any official drawing to show details of many insignia until 1936, so even into the early days of World War II aides' insignia were those from older dies. Many such insignia exist. They come in a range of sizes and with many different details. Shown at the left are two pairs of similar insignia, coat size on the top row and below those, a smaller pair for the shirt that are larger than most intended for the shirt collar.

A common design used in the 1930s and during World War II had the eagle's wings covering the upper corners of the shield, but when the die sinker made the die, the wings were made more recessed than the shield. This makes the shield appear as it has corners clipped off and then the eagle wings are resting in these notches. Two illustrations show some examples. The first is a four-star aide insignia and the other

compares two for a lieutenant general's aide: one for a coat and the other for a shirt.



On the left is a large picture that shows the details of a "clipped wing" design. To the right is a smaller photo that shows the comparative size. In actuality the larger three star aide and the four star aide are both 1-1/4 inches high. The four-star aide is pin back and both of the three-star aide insignia are clutch back. Another older four star aide insignia is shown at the right. This has the eagle wings partly covering the shield corners but the die work depicts the coverage more realistically.



Another interesting pair of aide insignia are pin-back versions made in the Philippines. These (below left) are marked **Crispulo**



Zamora, have white stars, and are 1-9/16 inches high. Some other oversea made insignia are those made in Great Britain during World War II that are marked **GAUNT LONDON** and **MADE IN ENGLAND**. Versions of this design exist in various grades up to full general. Shown at the right is an example for a major general's aide. These were made in pairs with the eagles facing right and left. They also exist in bronze color (below) but it is unclear if these were made between 1918 and 1923, or if they were made later for Marine Corps aides. Gaunt did export many insignia into the United States between the world wars. The reverse of the above dress Gaunt insignia is at the immediate left, showing the rivets that hold the two stars in place and the back markings.



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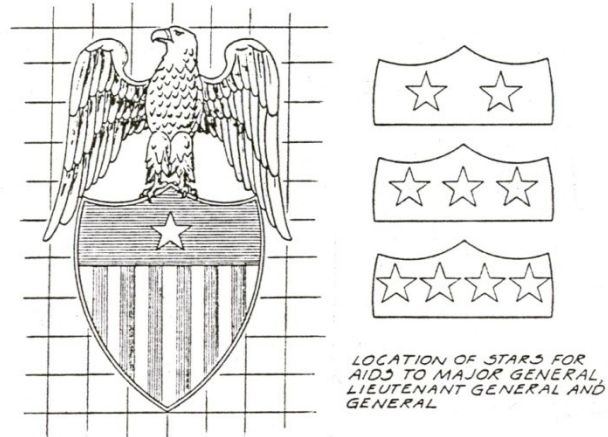


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In 1936 the Office of the Quartermaster General created official drawings of many insignia worn by the army. An aide's insignia had red and white stripes with a blue chief, as before, but the eagle was more stylized. Shown at the right is the official drawing dated June 15, 1936, for aides' insignia. Each square on the drawing represents 1/8 inch, making an insignia 1-1/4 inches high. A note on the drawing states these insignia were to be made with the eagle facing forward in pairs when worn on the blue mess uniform sleeve. Since there was no mention of other uniforms, the intention was clearly to have them not made in pairs for the lapel coat. From 1936 to the present the general design of the eagle and shield has remained unchanged.



In early January 1945 the War Department published the design for the new grade of general of the army, whose rank insignia included five stars in a circular design. The insignia for aides for these generals reflected the five-stars in circle, placing them on a blue shield, as shown at right.



Perhaps because congress authorized the rank of general of the army in December 1944 and the rank insignia was not announced until the next month, a few traditional aide insignia exist with five stars. One example is shown at the left and it uses the pre 1936 eagle.

The next authorized aide insignia, created in 1946, was for the aide to the president of the United States, which had a small eagle holding a shield with no stars in the chief, but the traditional design was placed in a gold-colored circle that had 48 small blue stars. Bailey, Banks, and Biddle made and marked these interesting insignia. This unusual insignia lasted until 1953 when



Dwight Eisenhower had the insignia changed to a more traditional design with a solid blue shield carrying 13 white stars. The army announced the change in May 1953. In 1969 army regulations listed for the first time an insignia for a vice president's aide. This insignia was a white shield with 13 blue stars in a circle, the reverse colors of the presidential aide.



Before looking at other new aide insignia created during the Korean War period, it is worth examining some variations of some designs already discussed.

In the Regular Army some officers wore embroidered aide insignia. While those worn on work or “fatigue” or field uniforms were embroidered in either color or subdued, depending upon the time period, some were made in full color for wear on coat lapels. Two examples are shown at the right. Some of these were made overseas.



Another foreign made insignia was a metal aide insignia produced in West Germany. These



were made for all four of the standard general officers ranks. These are easily distinguished since essentially they one inch high, smaller than insignia made in the United States. A photo of one such aide is shown at the far left. Included in the photo to the right of the West German made insignia is a standard U. S. made device, 1-1/4 inches high, for comparison.

Besides aide insignia with state designations of the pre 1936 style, previously discussed, some state insignia exist in the post 1936 style. One of these for the Governor of Indiana is shown at the right. The letters on the chest are for the Indiana National Guard and on the chief is **C in C**, standing for the state’s Commander in Chief.



In April 1953 the Department of the Army issued Special Regulations No. 600-60-1, which covered insignia. While it included the first design for aide to the president that was replaced the following month, the April 8th regulations listed two new aide insignia. The first was for aides to the Secretary of Defense, a blue shield that had three arrows in the center and four stars, one in each corner, as shown at the left. The other insignia was that for aides to the Secretary of the Army: a red shield with four white stars (one in each corner) and in the center a gilt eagle from the Great Seal of the United States. In February 1963 this same design was used by the aide to the Under Secretary of the Army, except that the shield was white and the stars red. For these aides to the army secretaries, the eagle came imbedded in the shield (center and right in the above photo) and also applied over the enameled shield (left in the above picture).



In the early 1970s the U. S. Army modified the aides’ insignia by changing the white enameled stars and stripes to brushed aluminum. The new design, required by January 1, 1972, is shown to the left. In October 1963 the aide to the Army Chief of Staff received his own insignia, with the central design based upon the General Staff Corps insignia. The shield was diagonally divided red and white in the same manner as the Chief

of Staff's flag. By the mid-1987 the Vice Chief of Staff's aide received a similar insignia, except the shield was divided red and white in an X pattern with the side quarters in red and the top and bottom quarters in white. These are shown at the left.



In 1977 the army aide to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff received a distinctive insignia that had the shield divided diagonally blue and white with the DOD eagle in the center. While aides' insignia come in several versions, shown below are two of these, the center one with the proper upper shield portion and two lower stars in blue while the other on the left has a dark

blue that is nearly black. When the aide's insignia to the vice chief of staff was approved, the army also created an insignia for the aide to the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that has the bend of light blue and the upper and lower corners in white, as shown on the far right.



In addition to cloth subdued insignia for aides for the field uniforms, they could also wear the design in subdued metal. An example for the aide to the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is shown.

