

Insignia for Officers' Saddlecloths, 20th Century (Chevracs)

Nineteenth century officers had insignia of various types on the lower rear corners of their saddle cloths. These were generally embroidered or of cloth, depending upon branch. By 1886 staff officers used embroidered insignia of the same design as worn on their forage caps. Regimental officers had their two inches high regimental number in their branch color. By the 1897 regulations the regimental numbers were in enameled leather.

Starting in early 1897 staff officers began to use the insignia design prescribed for the undress coat collar, 2-1/4 inches high, in the flank corners of their saddle cloths. Regulations called the saddle blankets or saddle cloths, "saddlecloths." At this time the bronze (subdued) collar insignia did not yet exist, so insignia that became obsolete

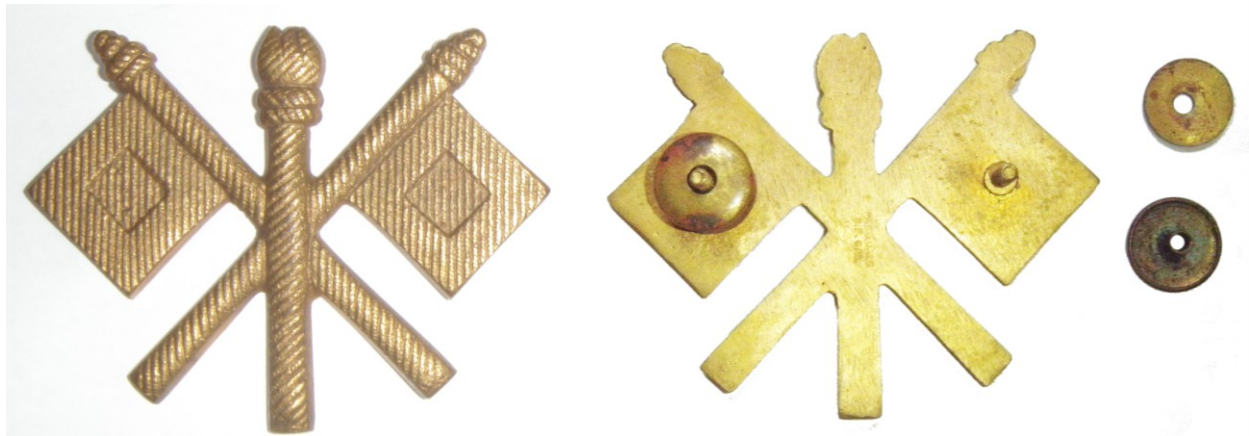
before 1902, will exist only in bright colors. One example of this is the Maltese cross used by the army's medical department between 1896 and 1902. Like the coat collar insignia, they came in both imitation embroidery and smooth metal styles. Commonly the insignia that went on saddlecloths are called chevracs. Two such insignia shown are very close to the 2-1/4 inches height.



The reverse of these insignia are shown above. Each has four loops that are 1/4 inch high, so it can be sewn to the saddle cloth. On the left is the imitation embroidered version and one of the loops is bent, which allows a clear view of one of the heavy wire loops.

Branches that did not change their general design in 1902 also came in metal that was made to look like the previous embroidered versions. An example for the Signal Corps is shown. Before 1902 Signal Corps insignia were all gilt. In 1902 that changed so the flags were gilt and silver. Since the insignia shown is all gilt, it is probably from before 1902.

This chevrac was affixed to a saddle cloth by two screws. Each screw had a washer and nut. As the regulations called for, the height is 2-1/4 inches. The insignia 3 inches wide.



As shown at the left, the intersection of the flags and torch the chevrac is impressed PASQUALE and S. F. CAL., the mark for the Pasquale Company.

Another imitation embroidered insignia is for the Ordnance Department. It is 2-1/4 inches high and has two heavy wire loops on the reverse, similar to the 1896-1902 medical cross.



In 1902 regulations changed some aspects of saddle cloth insignia. For the first time insignia for Aide-de-Camp appeared, as did chaplain insignia and artillery insignia. Officers assigned as aides were detailed as aides and for the first time they wore special collar insignia—essentially the design still worn: an eagle holding a vertically striped red and white shield with the star or stars at the top of the shield that represented the general's rank. Collar insignia of this design had just been introduced.

Chaplains wore as their collar insignia like those of staff officers except the added device was a Latin cross. For example chaplains of infantry wore on their collar, crossed rifles with a cross below the weapons intersection. For saddle blankets, chaplains wore only a two-inch high cross "of white metal."



The above aide insignia are each 2-1/4 inches high and the silver colored chaplain cross is two inches high. Each has four nearly circular loops for affixing the insignia to the saddle blanket.



In 1901 the army did away with artillery regiments and formed the Artillery Corps. This lasted only into 1902. The artillery insignia for this corps was a pair of crossed cannons with a scarlet center. In 1902 the Artillery Corps was changed to the coast artillery and field artillery. Artillery officers wore insignia for one of these two branches. Coast artillery officers' red center carried a vertical projectile and field artillery officers added a gilt wheel. Until 1905 the cannons were short and stubby, but the cannons were made longer in 1905. A field artillery dress

chevrac from between 1905 and 1907 is above.

For field service saddle blankets artillery insignia were in bronze. Post 1905 examples for the field artillery and the coast artillery are shown. Both are 2-1/4 inches high and 3-1/4 inches wide.



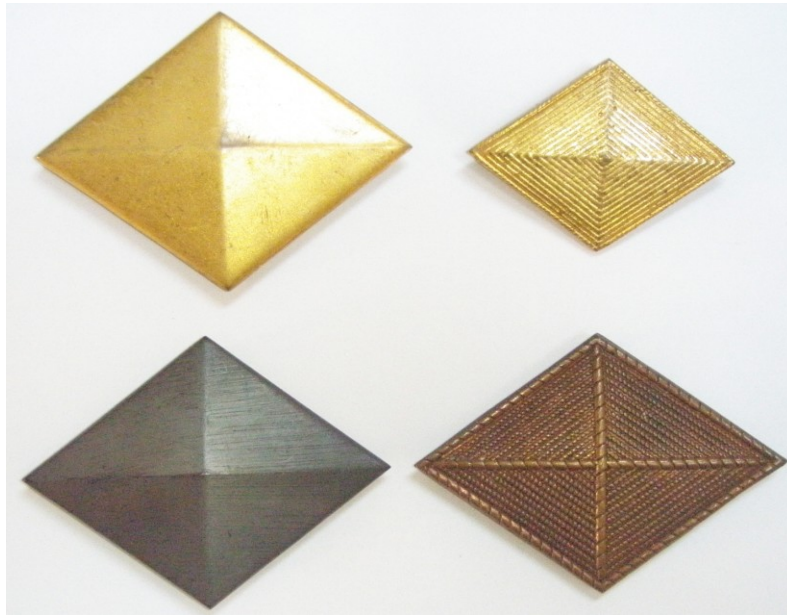
Congress authorized the General Staff Corps in 1903 and thereafter men detailed as GSC members wore the general's star with the eagle from the Great Seal superimposed. Shown are two GSC chevrons. The all gilt insignia is 2-1/4 inches high while the subdued version for service wear is 2-3/4 inches high. Fasteners on these two chevrons are very different: the bronze version has screwposts while the gilt piece has small loops for sewing the insignia to the blanket. Two photos showing these are presented.



The Commissary Department existed until 1912. In that year it, the Quartermaster



General's Department, and the Finance Department were combined to create the Quartermaster Corps. Today the service chevron for the Commissary Department is commonly found, probably because when the Quartermaster Corps was created a great many of these were surplus. Shown are chevrons for the Commissary Department. Both of the commissary insignia are 2 inches high. The Finance Department, which separated from the QMC and was brought back as the Finance Corps in 1920. Four versions of finance chevrons are illustrated.



The top left (gilt) finance insignia is 2-1/4 inches high and 3 inches wide. The smaller gilt imitation embroidery piece is 1-1/2 inches high and 2-3/16 inches wide. It is marked on the back showing it was made by the Meyers Company in the early 1920s. The lower left bronze chevrac is identical in size to the gilt version above while the large bronze imitation insignia is 2-1/6 inches high and 3 inches wide.

Officers of the Quartermaster General's Department (Quartermaster Corps after 1912) used chevrac that because of its design, provided the opportunity for many minor differences. Four examples are shown.



Another branch that provided many opportunities for variations is ordnance. Below are five variations. That on the top left has already been discussed as an early variety. The others show different flames and also a range of sizes. The top center insignia with wide flames is 2 inches high while the one on the right is 2.1 inches high. Those on the lower row are both 3 inches high.



The army medical department adopted the caduceus as an insignia in 1902. In April 1908 the Medical Reserve Corps was created. It went out of existence in June 1917. A 2-3/8 inches high chevron for that branch is in the center, the top row. To the right of it a veterinarian's bronze insignia, of the style prescribed in December 1917. The lower row has three different insignia used by doctors.



Several other standard chevrons of the general World War I period are shown.



The following insignia for saddle blankets are not commonly found. First is for a member of the Judge Advocate General's Department. The chevron is 2-1/4 inches high. Next is a chevron for an officer in the Interpreters Corps. Very few officers were assigned to this temporary branch during World War I and it was disbanded in 1920. The insignia is 2-1/4 inches high. Last is a chevron for a Jewish Chaplain. These chaplains did not receive an insignia until August 1918. After World War I there were no Jewish Chaplains on active duty—they were all in the reserves or National Guard. The piece shown is especially unusual since it has a small hole below the star of David. It is 2 inches high.



State officers also used chevrac devices. Most used branch insignia, but officers on state staffs used a range of insignia. One from the late 19th century for New York is shown, including the reverse that shows the lead-filled back with large loops. The photo of the reverse was taken at an angle so the depth of the loops may be seen.



After World War I infantry, cavalry, and artillery officers used chevrons that featured their branch insignia, rather than the pre World War I practice of using regimental numbers. A few of these are shown at the left.

Two chevrac collections follow; one of dress insignia and one for service wear.

