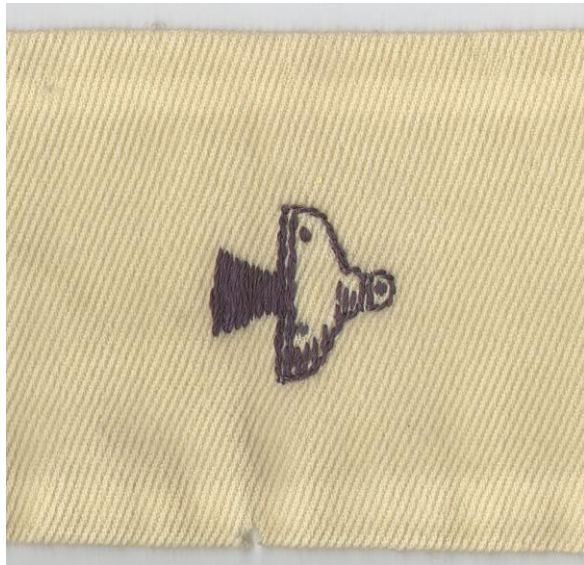


Telephone Operators

During the American Expeditionary Forces initial buildup, in November 1917, Signal Corps officials in France concluded they needed American women, fluent in French and English, for duty as telephone operators. Commonly called "Hello Girls," these women wore dark blue serge uniforms with special chevrons, Signal Corps collar insignia, and after their invention near the end of the war, shoulder patches. Ultimately the Army Chief of Staff reported 223 women served in France and some remained on duty with the Army of Occupation in Germany well into 1919, although internal reports puts the total at 221.

Initially operators wore white armbands since the army staff believed that non-combatants had to have such a distinguishing mark. These armbands were embroidered with one of three designs: a telephone transmitter for operators, a telephone transmitter within a wreath for supervisors, and the supervisor's insignia with five sparks above that for a chief operator.



A 1918 "Hello Girl" with her operator's white armband. At right, close-up of an armband's central insignia.

After arrival in France many operators began to wear gold embroidered chevrons on their dark blue uniforms to show their positions, rather than armbands, as the white

armbands soiled easily. Photographs show that at times when operators went out doors they continued to wear either their armbands embroidered with one of the rank insignia or embroidered with a colored Signal Corps insignia.







Above left, an actual chevron made in France. Above right: Miss Elizabeth Shover working at a telephone exchange in Paris, January 1919. She wears an operator's chevron with a bar added below, Catalog No. 605.

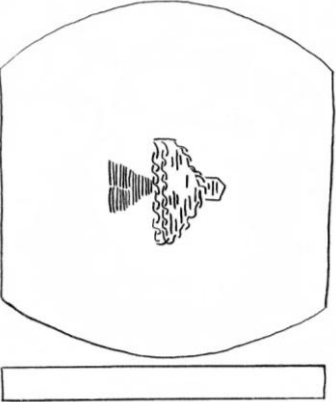
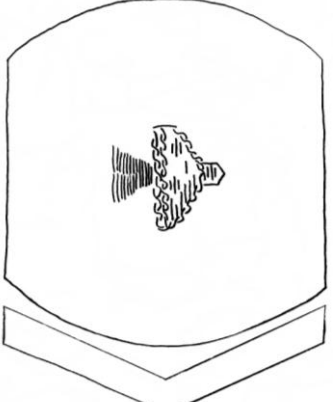
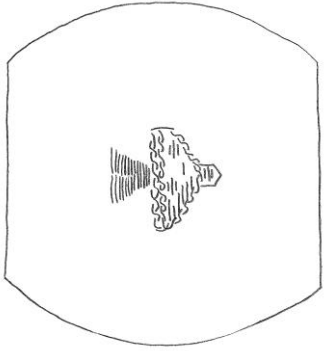
Over time more chevrons appeared in France, each distinguished by the addition of a bar or V. Two local chevrons included an operator's transmitter, one with a white cloth V below and the other with a horizontal bar below as shown above, worn by Elizabeth Shover. One was for a chief operator (sparks, transmitter, and wreath) plus a horizontal bar **(Right, worn by Miss Louise Barbour, Chief Operator for the District of Paris, wearing the prescribed insignia for a chief operator with the addition of a light colored bar below that is Catalog No. 603.)** Another was a supervisor's chevron (transmitter and wreath) with a bar below.



Some photos of women wearing the wreath and bar below identify the wearers as chief operators at a specific facility. Exact identification of all seven known styles of chevrons is inconclusive; however the chevrons and apparent titles are shown in the table below. At the war's armistice several women went to Germany as part of the Third Army and later the Army of Occupation.

Women Telephone Chevrons, World War I.

Rank	Design	Cat #.
Chief Operator		600s
Acting Chief Operator		603
Senior Supervisor*		604
Supervisor		601s

Operator in Charge		605
Toll Operator		606
Operator		602§
<p>* Paid as a supervisor. § Titles and rank insignia established by Signal Corps and the Army General Staff in Washington, DC.</p>		