The 1914 Swordsman's Badge

In 1913 the army chief of staff directed that a special course in swordsmanship be established at the recently formed Mounted Service School, Fort Riley. Lieutenant George S. Patton was assigned as the first Master of the Sword at the MSS and Patton drew up the requirements for a standard sword qualification course that the army published in December 1914.
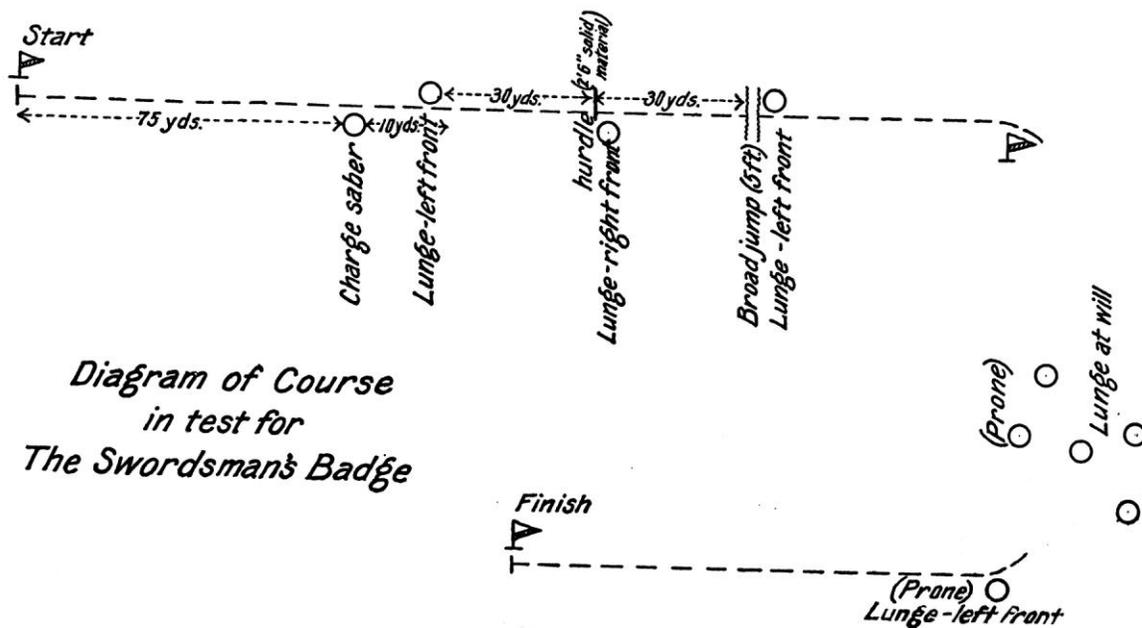
The two best swordsmen in each cavalry troop and the regimental staff's best noncommissioned officer earned a swordsman badge, based upon the 1914 test. One of these swordsman badges is shown below.

Troopers competed for a badge based upon three criteria. The first was that each troop commander held individual tryouts to pick the five best men, who then competed in the regimental test. Likewise, the two best members of the regimental noncommissioned staff earned a place in the regimental test.

Second, contestants covered the standard course of approximately 275 yards at a gallop, attacking target dummies. Lastly, each contestant started with 100 points and judges deducted points for excessive time, poor form, and for missing targets. The 1914 course layout is shown. The army designed a more complex course in 1922 and that lasted until shortly before World War II.

Diagram of Course in test for The Swordsman's Badge

More information on the original badge, its replacement, and the qualification courses are in *Marksmanship in the U. S. Army* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), pages 85-89.