

Some Shoulder Ornamentation, 1903-1940



The army prescribed new uniforms in 1902 and with these regulations came officers' shoulder knots of the design still used today. These were originally described as "Of gold-wire cord ¼ inch in diameter, formed of three cords in four plaits and rounded top, finished with small gilt regulation button; about 5-1/2 inches long...." These shoulder knots initially went on full dress coats for company and field grade officers, and on evening coats. The knots shown, which were made by the Pasquale Company of San Francisco, are typical of the early 20th century shoulder knots. The threaded screwpost has holes at the base so it could be sewn to the coat and held in place.

Mess uniform design details varied by regiment and staff corps and departments until 1911, although the general cuts were

similar. In that year the army adopted standard mess uniform jackets. On these officers wore the same shoulder knots.

Insignia on shoulder knots varied over time and by grade, although with many uniforms of these uniforms generals wore epaulettes rather than shoulder knots. Regulations of 1902 called for field grade officers to add in the knot center, a gold coat of arms of the United States, but this provision disappeared in 1904 and for several years officers wore the knot plain. In February 1913, paragraph 45 of *Specifications for the Uniform of the United States Army*, added rank insignia on the knots "in the same relative position" as on service coat shoulder loops. Two examples on the right help date these knots.



While company and field grade officers used shoulder knots, generals often wore epaulettes rather than shoulder knots. An early 20th brigadier general's uniform with such an epaulette from the Robb Kay collection is shown.