

## Citizens' Military Training Camps

Citizens' Military Training Camps grew out of the Plattsburg Movement that started a few years before World War I as a chance for young men to participate in a voluntary, non-enlistment training program organized by private citizens in Plattsburgh, New York. The camps took place during summers starting in 1913 and continuing into 1916.

After World War I a group of patriotic businessmen formed the Military Training Camps Association and lobbied the US Congress to formalize the program. The army first organized CMTC summer camps in 1920 and they continued until 1940. Most young men attend for one summer, but men who completed four summers could receive a reserve commission if they were recommended to be commissioned.



The first year was designated the basic year. Those who returned for a second summer were “red” students, those in their third year were “white” students, and fourth year men were “blue.” Collar ornaments were one inch disks with appropriately colored felt trim added for 2d, 3d, and 4th year students.

The army hosted several camps in each of the nine corps areas. Attendance peaked in the late 1920s and during the Great Depression the US Congress reduced funding which cut back on those who could attend. In the 2d, 3d, and 4th years students could select branch training such as for cavalry and artillery. Those students who qualified with weapons initially received US Army style badges. In 1928 the army started to make special sharpshooter and pistol shot first class bars for CMTC students, then in 1932 added a similar marksman bar that was 1/8 inch shorter than the other two, and finally added a gunner badge in 1936.

During the early 1920s students at many CMTC camps wore a large badge on their uniform, but photos show that by the late 1920s students were no longer wearing these badges. These come in several variations due to small design detail differences.



The most collectible CMTC devices are medals. Each camp gave medals for sports and training accomplishments it wanted and each camp selected and purchased their own awards. Within a few years some manufacturers were making “standard” medals that many camps used. Also some

groups such as the VFW, sponsored and supplied standard medals to many camps. Frequently a three colored ribbon went on medals given to basic students or to some athletic teams that might have students from more than one year. Many medals with solid red, white, or blue ribbons were given to students in the respective classes. Sample CMTC medals with the names of a few camps are shown:



Many of the medals have the same front but the reverses differ. This is particularly true of awards given by the Military Training Camps Association, show below as the last four medals in the top row. The lower row has similar medals that have minor difference on the front, whether in metal color or wording.





To the left are three medals given by the VFW to CMTC students. The left two are of the same design with the left most award reverse shown, since the obverse (center medal) does not identify it as for the CMTC. A standard VFW medal is shown on the right with a small engraved addition applied to the ribbon. Medals given by the Civitans are shown on the lower left, with both obverse and reverse showing. Next to those are some ribbons given as awards during the Great Depression when the cost of medals became too much for some camps.



Some student purchased belt buckles that came in a great many designs. Three examples are shown.

