

Army Shooting Prizes, 1903-1922

General Summary:

In 1903 the army replaced the large rifle and pistol prizes it had used since 1880, with a set of smaller prizes. These come with planchets of various diameters, ranging from two inches in diameter to one and a half inches, and an inscribed brooch (suspension bar). Two rings from the brooch hold the planchet that has an enameled target at the center, and crossed weapons, although one prize has a single machine gun behind the target. A wreath goes around the outer planchet face.

The prize brooches were impressed with a variety of wording. In addition, the army made the brooches in two general designs: those with rounded arrowhead ends (left) and those with



swallow-tail ends (right). The crossed weapons are revolvers or long arms, although the long arms come in three versions shown



below: a carbine without a sling, a rifle with bayonet and without a sling, and a rifle with a sling. All versions come in three metals: gold, silver, and bronze.

In addition the army issued gold team prizes during this time. The team prizes generally resemble the prizes mentioned in the top two paragraphs but the weapons are limited to crossed rifles with slings and crossed .45 automatic pistols. The suspension brooches have angled ends; the left end impressed **ARMY** and the right **TEAM**. The center of the brooch has the branch team, in the case shown at the right, for the infantry.



Details, Long Arm prizes, 1903-1906:

Between 1903 and 1906 most rifle prize brooches had arrowhead ends. In a few cases, 1906 prize brooches had the swallowtail ends that came into general use in 1907, and for gold army prizes they continued into 1908. The naming on these brooches were **ARMY**, **DEPARTMENT**, or **DIVISION**. Those inscribed **ARMY** were given at the single army championship, the highest match. The army issued **DEPARTMENT** brooches in 1903 and 1904, then switched to **DIVISION** as the command structure changed.

The long-arm planchets, unlike those used after 1906 and those given for pistol matches, also had on the upper portion of the face, either **INFANTRY** or **CAVALRY**. Below the square target are the letters **•U•S•**. Cavalry competitions were fired by those troops armed with carbines, while infantry competitions were fired by soldiers who had rifles. Due to the shorter barrels and the lack of slings, it was harder for carbine firers to obtain scores similar to riflemen.

Army prizes were larger than the others. Shown at the right is a silver cavalry prize. Note the carbines have no slings while the infantry prizes (below) have rifles with bayonets and slings. The prize at the right is one inch in diameter.





Typical rifle prizes used between 1903 and 1906. Some army level prizes used this style of brooch into 1908 due to stocks on hand.

Details, Pistol prizes:

Planchets for pistol prizes had brooches that looked like a ribbon folded on each end cut in a swallow-tail pattern. A pistol planchet had rectangular white and black target rather than the square used on rifle and carbine versions. Crossed revolvers were above the target and below a short laurel wreath that ran only from just below the 3 o'clock to the 9 o'clock position. Like long arm prizes, these also came in gold, silver, and bronze, and were 1 or 1-1/8 inches in diameter. Examples are shown below. The gold AEG prize is 1-1/8 inches in diameter. The silver division and bronze Cuban prizes are 1 inch in diameter.



Brooches were impressed with a range of titles. A summary of pistol prize brooch inscriptions is:

Inscription	Years Used	Notes
•A•E•F•	1919	Stands for American Expeditionary Forces
•A•F•G•	1920-21	Stands for American Forces in Germany
ARMY	1903-9	
ATLANTIC	1908-9	
CUBAN	1908	
DEPARTMENT	1903-4	In 1904, used in Philippines only
DIVISION	1904-1906	Used by all divisions through 1906
	1907-9, 1911	Used only in Philippines
EASTERN	1913	
HAWAIIAN	1913, 1920-27	Perhaps used 1928 and later until stocks exhausted
NORTHERN	1907-9	
PACIFIC	1907-9	
PHILIPPINES	1913, 1915-16	
	1920-22	Perhaps used later until stocks exhausted
SOUTHERN	1913	
SOUTHWESTERN	1907-9	
WESTERN	1913	
8TH CORPS AREA	1921	
No matches: 1910, 1912, 1914, 1916-1918		
The only 1911 & 1915 competitions were in the Philippines.		
The only 1919 competitions were by the AEF in France.		

Details, Rifle prizes, 1907 and later:

For a few 1906 prizes and all of the 1907 and later long arm prizes, the army made modifications by modifying the planchets. The words **INFANTRY** and **CAVALRY** were eliminated and the weapons changed to crossed 1903 Springfield rifles without bayonets. In addition the letters **•U•S•** moved to above the black and white enameled target. This change signaled that all soldiers now fired the 1903 Springfield rifle since the army had eliminated the carbine.



Gold, silver, and bronze rifle prizes as generally introduced in 1907 are shown.

A few 1906 prizes had the “1907 style” of planchet. Likewise a few 1907 and 1908 planchets had brooches with the older design with ends that resembled rounded arrowheads. One example of the latter, 1-1/4 inches in diameter, and awarded in 1908, is shown at the right.



Details, Special 1919 prizes:

In May 1919 the American Expeditionary Forces in France held the U. S. Army’s largest marksmanship match. The army awarded rifle and pistol prizes of the type given before World War I, with the brooch embossed •A•E•F•. In addition the AEF held three new matches, two of which were not held again as part of division, department, corps area, and army matches. The third match, for the automatic rifle, was held only after institution of the 1922 type of prizes. As a result, the three special prizes given by the AEF in 1919 were unique.

The automatic rifle contest resulted in one gold, two silver, and five bronze prizes. The planchet was the standard rifle prize but the brooch was block engraved **AUTO RIFLE**, as shown right. The other two bronze special prizes were given to all members of the winning platoons. The musketry match was fired by platoons in a tactical setting, wearing combat clothing and equipment, minus packs. Planchets for this contest were similar to the 1903 long arm designs in that **PLATOON** appeared above the target and •U•S• below. The weapons shown were crossed 1903 Springfield rifles with slings.



The last event was fired by machine gun platoons. **PLATOON** and •U•S• appeared on the planchet but a single water-cooled machine gun was above and slightly behind the enameled target. Each man in the one single winning platoon received one of these bronze prize. Examples of the two platoon prizes are shown below;



Details, Army Team prizes:

Between 1906 and 1924 the army provided gold prizes to members of army teams that represented the major branches. Initially members of the infantry and the cavalry teams received these medals. In 1920 members of the artillery team began to receive similar prizes and in 1924 coast artillery team members received prizes with **COAST ARTILLERY** on the brooch. Between 1920 and 1923 coast artillery team members received artillery prizes. A set of these is shown below. The 1924 coast artillery planchet was struck from a different die than the earlier prizes for the other branches.



State prizes similar to federal prizes:

After the U. S. Army adopted prizes that had the crossed rifles and central target design, some states followed suit. The most commonly found are those from Illinois. Members of the regimental team received bronze medals with a bar added for each year they represented the regiment. Four bronze regimental examples are shown.



Reverse, 6th Infantry, above, left

The state gave a silver prize for a soldier on the state team. An example is at the right.

New Hampshire also used similar prizes. Their plachets carried Springfield rifles with slings a separately applied target while the team year was impressed above the target. This is engraved on the reverse with the sergeant's name and unit.



Information on similar state prizes is sought.