

Pennsylvania Cap Insignia

The National Guard of Pennsylvania (NGP) initially prescribed screw-back metal cap insignia that included enameled keystones of various colors on February 10, 1898. These insignia include a great many branches, but they were not issued or worn until after the NGP reorganization of late 1898 and 1899. They went on the enlisted men's caps with straight sides that the US Army adopted in 1896, which replaced the earlier Civil War style forage cap. Photos show guardsmen also wore these enameled cap insignia on their campaign hats.

Keystones came in several colors and showed the geographical layout of NGP units, as well the unit's brigade or other organizational information.

Red—1st Brigade, from Philadelphia area.

White—2d Brigade, from mid-west to western part of state.

Blue—3d Brigade, south and north central part of state.

Red and white—4th Brigade, established in 1910, comprised of units from central and southcentral part of state.

White and blue—Used 1910-1915 for the 14th separate regiment, from the Pittsburgh area.

Concentric blue, white, red—Division Headquarters.



One noticeable difference between two insignia could be the size of the numbers and letters. An example above is between the infantry and cavalry. While the Regular Army changed the number and letter size from large to small in December 1904, Pennsylvania used both sizes during the entire time of these insignia. Correspondence indicates some orders to manufacturers called for large sizes and other orders called for smaller sizes numbers and letters without regard to time. Evidently clerks used older orders as examples for several years. The size of the letters and numbers on new orders to insignia makers depended on which example the clerk used.

The crossed cannons with a red keystone, was for Battery A, 1st Brigade, NGP. Mustered into service as a light battery for the Spanish American War, the unit served in Puerto Rico. Initially batteries were under the various brigades, so they used solid color keystones, until 1910. That year the NGP reorganized its artillery. All artillery then came under division control, which resulted in red, white, and blue keystone in crossed cannons. These come with battery letters A through F.



Brigades typically included a few cavalry troops, a band, perhaps an engineer company or artillery battery, and a medical detachment. Hospital Corps members wore their silver cross with the appropriate brigade keystone in the center between 1898 and 1900. Medical personnel received new insignia in 1900 that showed their regiment number above a colored keystone bearing a caduceus. Senior NCOs assigned to brigades and

higher headquarters wore wreaths with NGP in the center, rather than cap devices that showed their specialty. These were worn by sergeants major, quartermaster sergeants, color sergeants and chief musicians of various headquarters. A gold keystone showed assignment to the NGP general headquarters, which was basically the governor and his staff.

One Pennsylvania infantry regiment that did not wear the enameled keystone at the intersection of crossed rifles was the Washington Infantry, which was from around Washington, in south central Pennsylvania.

The Washington Infantry device and the enameled keystones were preceded by a leather keystone that officers and men wore on the top of their forage cap. These enameled leather keystones started in 1879 when Pennsylvania's Circular Number 6 first called for them. An example for the Company D, 12th Pennsylvania Infantry, is at the lower left.



The establishing 1879 circular described keystones of various colors of enameled leather. For the General Headquarters, keystones were: “A small keystone red, set in a larger one white, and they on one still larger blue.” Division headquarters had “the top portion of red, upper half white, lower half blue.” Red was for units in the First Brigade, white for the Second Brigade, and blue for Third Brigade. The Fourth Brigades’ keystones were diagonally divided—the upper diagonal half blue and the lower half white. The Fifth Brigade had a small blue keystone inside a larger white keystone. Appropriate company letters and regimental numbers, or other designations, were shown with brass figures.