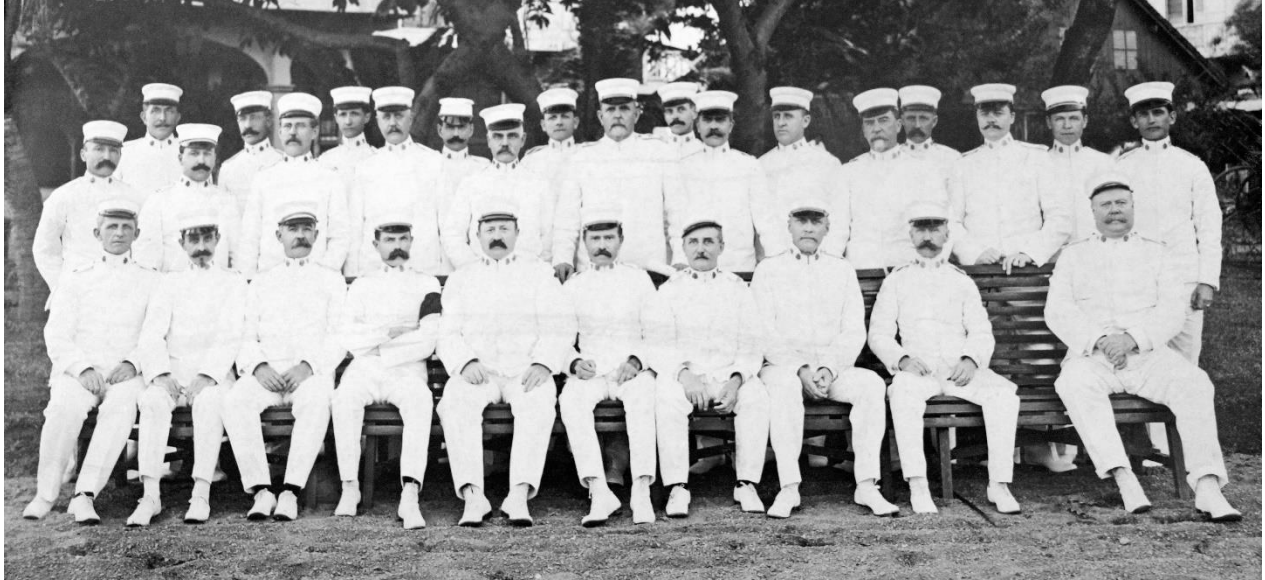


Officers' Turn of the Century White Uniforms

The well-known December 1902 War Department uniforms regulations (War Department General Orders 132, 1902) introduced several new uniforms. The uniform prescribed in paragraph 19 was a white coat for officers, with paragraph 25 simply stating the matching trousers would be plain (“without stripe, welt, or cord”).



These standing collar coats had shoulder loops that carried rank insignia. Branch insignia went on the collar and between early 1903 and early 1905, a metal version of the eagle from the Great Seal. On the last day of 1904 the army announced the letters U.S. would replace the eagles. This had to be accomplished between January and the end of June 1905. The use of these eagles helps date photo as being clearly before mid 1905, but since no officer wears the “U.S.” letters, the image was probably taken before the start of 1905.

An officer in the back row on the right wears a General Staff Corps insignia. The General Staff Corps was authorized in early 1903 and was to take effect in August 1903. The insignia not designed until early 1904. This clearly makes the photo taken in 1904 and probably after the spring of 1904, since insignia had to be made and then shipped to the wearer. Between the exclusive wear of collar eagles and the lack of any “U.S.” devices, and the General Staff insignia, the officers probably assembled in the second half of 1904.



The white cap worn in 1904-05 was generally described in paragraph 31 of the 1902 regulations. The cap was to be of white linen or cotton duck and was to conform to the pattern of the blue dress cap. Note this is not the same detailed design as the dress blue cap. The white cap’s description included, “the band between the two lower welts to be of white braid; the visor

and cap strap to be as prescribed for the dress cap” which means it was a “flat gold braid strap, three-eighths inch wide.” To track down the white cap’s design more requires a bit more reading. Regulations describing the dress cap and the full-dress cap both included an embroidered “cap badge...of the coat of arms of the United States.” These words are not included when describing the white cap. Thus, the officers’ white cap initially had no insignia on the front.

Some officers in the back row clearly show different amounts of flair of the cap top. The General Staff officer’s cap has more flair than relatively straight sides shown here. All the caps



have a narrow gold lace strap and a lack of any other ornamentation. This clearly meets the requirement to “Conform to the pattern (shape) of the dress cap” and for the gold strap worn above the bill to be 3/8 inch wide. The officers at the left are, left to right, an engineer, a doctor, and a member of the Quartermaster General’s Department. Others appear to be in the Pay and Ordnance Departments. No cavalry, infantry, or artillery officers appear. Clearly this was a large and

diverse group of staff officers in the Philippine Islands.

WD General Orders 15, February 1903, lays out the law creating the General Staff Corps. Details include that Congress limited the corps to four colonels, six lieutenant colonels, 12 majors, and 20 captains. Half of these men served with troops, outside of the War Department headquarters. These officers were assigned to troops and were to work for the commanders of “armies, corps, divisions, separate brigades, territorial divisions, and departments.” Given the limited number of officers available for troop duty, about 21, few were available for many lower level units. At this time, territorial divisions, such as the Division of the Philippines, were superior to departments, such as the Department of Mindanao. In 1904 the army had four divisions in the United States: Atlantic, Northern, Pacific, and Southwestern. In addition, there was a Division of the Philippines. It is likely the photo is of the staff assigned to the Division of the Philippines, where white uniforms were commonly worn year around.