

## Saddlecloth Insignia

Nineteenth century officers had various insignia on the lower rear corners of their saddle cloths. By the early 20th century, regulations used the single word, "saddlecloths," although earlier and later two words were common. In the 19th century soldiers placed a folded blanket between their horse and saddle. On occasions of dress a schabraque went over the saddle. This cloth had slits to accommodate straps for holsters, sabers, stirrups, and for other saddle parts. Shown is General Grant and his horse's embroidered eagle with two stars above, placed in the flank corner of his schabraque.



Regulations of the 19th century called for generals to wear their dark blue housing over the saddle, with the cloth trimmed with two rows of

gold lace and a gold embroidered eagle in the corner. The appropriate stars went above the eagle. Staff officers wore a similar cloth with a single gold lace edge but into the 1870s, no other device.

By 1885 staff officers used embroidered insignia of the same design as worn on their forage caps, including the wreath where appropriate, such as for the Signal Corps or the Corps of Engineers. Edges of these dark blue saddle cloths were trimmed in 1/2 inch black enamel and outside that, edged with one inch wide gold lace.

Prior to 1897 general officers and staff insignia were bullion embroidered. At the right is an embroidered, pre 1897 example for a Pay Department officer. As metal insignia came into use, many were made to look like



embroidery. A metal Subsistence Department insignia of this style is shown., along with one for the Signal Corps. These metal devices are often called chevrons.

Regimental officers used a two inches high regimental number in their branch color. These cloths were trimmed in 1-1/2 inch wide branch colors: white for infantry, scarlet for artillery, and yellow for cavalry.



By the Spanish American War regimental numbers for dress saddlecloths were in enameled leather as were the branch colored edges. Staff officers trim was one-inch wide gold. Corps of Engineers officers had one-inch wide scarlet enameled trim with 1/8 inch white edging.

With the introduction of the khaki service uniform came service saddle cloths, replacing the informal and widely used officers' saddle blankets. These 1902 field service saddle cloths were the color of the service uniform and were edged in russet leather.



As noted, 1902 saw the introduction of field service saddlecloths. On these, generals placed only bronze stars showing their rank, while dress cloths carried an eagle and silver stars. Staff officers and aides used oversized collar insignia in dull finished metal. Infantry and cavalry officers continued to use branch colored enameled numbers on their service-uniform colored cloths. Artillery officers, who during this time were not part of any regiment, used "the artillery device in bronze."

In 1912 the Quartermaster General's Department, the Pay Department, and the Subsistence Department were combined to make the Quartermaster Corps. Members of this new corps all started to wear the familiar eagle, wagon wheel, and crossed pen and sword. This left subsistence crescent insignia as surplus. Some Pay Department chevrons are also relatively common because of the QMC creation. After World War I congress separated the pay duties



from the QMC and created the Finance Department. As a result the diamond of the old Pay Department re-appeared as the Finance Department insignia. In 1902 regulations changed some saddlecloth insignia. For the first time insignia for Aides-de-Camp appeared, as did chaplain insignia and artillery insignia. Starting in 1902 and continuing for a dozen years, chaplains' collar insignia were like those of staff officers except the added device was a Latin cross. For example chaplains of infantry wore on their collar, crossed rifles with a cross below the weapons intersection. For saddlecloths however, chaplains wore only a two-inch high cross "of white metal." At this time they did not have a bronze version for field service but always used the silver cross.

Artillery reorganized in 1901, in 1902, and again in 1907. With each change new insignia appeared. Artillery regiments were dissolved in 1901 and all units were company sized. Larger artillery units were tailored for each mission using coast artillery companies and field artillery batteries. Artillery officers no longer had regimental numbers for their saddlecloths, but wore the crossed cannons appropriate to the time and their assignment. A dress example with the field artillery wheel, used between 1902 and 1905, is shown. In 1905 cannons became thinner and longer. A Coast Artillery field service chevron is below. While the field



artillery eliminated the wheel at the cannons intersection in 1907, the coast artillery retained their projectile.



After World War I insignia on saddle cloths generally remained the same, but there were some adjustments. Officers of infantry, cavalry, field artillery and coast artillery assigned to regiments still used regimental numbers of enameled leather in the branch color for dress occasions, or of russet leather for field duty. An officer assigned to machine gun squadron added "MG" below their squadron number.

Those who were on the Detached Officers List (DOL) for these branches used branch insignia. Examples are an infantry officer assigned to teach ROTC or a field artillery



officer on Corps Area staff. The only exceptions were officers detailed to the Militia Bureau, who wore that insignia.

One interesting chevrac shown is for the World War I temporary branch, Corps of Interpreters. Other unusual branches are known, including those for the Air Corps and for Infantry (Tanks).

After World War I regulations called for saddle cloth insignia to be approximately twice the size as those for the coat. This vague wording resulted in insignia of various sizes. Five chevrons for the ordnance—some from before World War I and some afterwards--are striking.

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