

## Service Stripes, 1872-1916

The army started to adopt a variety of cloth marks on the sleeves of enlisted men who had served various enlistment periods at the end of the Revolutionary War. Various schemes came and went. Obtaining original service chevrons before 1872 is a challenge and are not described in this discussion.

Some of those service stripes prescribed in 1872 and later are still available to collectors. The color schemes used during these 44 years frequently changed, which causes confusion today. The meaning of many stripes with dozens of color schemes often is not apparent. Worn on the lower sleeve and sewn to the coat at an approximate 30 degrees angle, these service stripes told people the history of the soldier.

*The following Five Tables are for pre 1902 service stripes  
A Latter Tables is for 1902 -1916*

One color service stripes (table below) were worn to show each completed enlistment.

<b>One Color Service Stripes, 1872-1884, 1/2 inch wide</b>		
Color	Branch	Authorized Dates
Light Blue	Infantry	1872-1884
Red	Artillery	1872-1884
	Engineers	1872-1883
Light Yellow	Cavalry	1872-1884
Crimson	Ordnance	1872-1884
Green	Hospital Corps	1872-1884
Orange	Signal Corps	1872-1884
White	Engineers	1883-1884
Gray	Commissary Sergeant	1873-1884

Two-color service stripes, 1/2 inch wide (next table) were for service in Indian campaigns and the Spanish American War, except for the first listed stripe, which was just for an enlistment in the Hospital Corps.

<b>Two Color Service Stripes, 1879-1902, 1/2 inch wide</b>			
Center Color	Outer Color	Branch	Authorized Dates
Green	White (Chain Stitching)	Hospital Corps	1896-1902
Dark Blue	White (Chain Stitching)	Infantry (overcoat)	1879-1883
Light Blue	Red	Infantry	1879-1883
Red	White	Artillery	1879-1883
Light Yellow	Red	Cavalry	1879-1883
Crimson	Red	Ordnance	1879-1883
Green	Red	Hospital Corps	1879-1883
Orange	Red	Signal Corps	1879-1883
Gray	Red	Commissary Sgt	1879-1883

Two-color service stripes, 3/4 inch wide (next table) were for service in Indian campaigns prior to 1884, for all except the Hospital Corps and for Infantry overcoats. Hospital Corps (green

center stripe) were for war service in other branches and were used between 1896 and 1902 when Hospital Corps soldiers did not have dress uniforms.

<b>Two Color Service Stripes, 1879-1902, 3/4 inch wide</b>			
<b>Center Color</b>	<b>Outer Color</b>	<b>Branch</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Light Blue	Red	Infantry	1872-1883
Red	White	Artillery	1872-1883
Light Yellow	Red	Cavalry	1872-1883
Crimson	Red	Ordnance	1872-1883
Orange	Red	Signal Corps	1872-1883
Gray	Red	Commissary Sgt	1873-1883
Green	Orange	Hospital Corps War Service	1896-1902
Green	White	Hospital Corps Infantry War Service	1896-1902
Green	Yellow	Hospital Corps Cavalry War Service	1896-1902
Green	Crimson	Hospital Corps Ordnance War Service	1896-1902
Green	Gray	Hospital Corps Commissary War Service	1896-1902
Green	Buff	Hospital Corps Post QM Sgt War Service	1896-1902
Green	Red	Hospital Corps Artillery War Service	1896-1902
Green	Black	Hospital Corps Signal Corps War Service	1896-1902
Dark Blue	White chain stitching	Infantry War Service (overcoat)	1876-1883

Three color service stripes were used briefly by Corps of Engineer soldiers as shown in the following table. In all cases the center white was chain stitched.

<b>Three Color Service Stripes, 1872-1902</b>					
<b>Inner</b>	<b>Center</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Width (inch)</b>
Red	White	Red	Engr War Service	1872-1884	3/4
Green	White	Red	Hospital Corps with Engr War Svc	1896-1902	3/4
Red	White	Red	Engr Indian Campaign Svc	1872-1883	1/2

In 1884 the army introduced gold lace chevrons for dress uniforms. Similarly, gold lace service stripes were sewn to various colors of wool backgrounds. The following table lists the prescribed dates for these service stripes.

<b>Gold Lace Service Stripes</b>			
<b>Background Cloth</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Dark Blue	Peacetime Service	1884-1902	Coast Arty wore until 1911.
White	Infantry War Service	1884-1902	
Red	Artillery War Service	1884-1902	Coast Arty wore until 1911.
Lt. Yellow	Cavalry War Service	1884-1887	
Medium Yellow	Cavalry War Service	1887-1902	
Gray	Post Commissary War Svc	1884-1902	
Crimson	Ordnance War Service	1884-1902	
Green	Hospital Corps War Service	1884-1896	
Buff	Post QM Sgt War Service	1884-1902	

Orange	Signal Corps War Service	1884-1889	
Black	Signal Corps War Service	1889-1902	
Red with White Stitching	Engineer War Service	1884-1902	
White with Red Stitching	Indian Scout War Service	1890-1902	

*The following Table is for 1902 -1916*

Generally, 1902 Regulations called for service stripes representing peacetime service to be branch colored and 10 inches long. A significant 1902 change was the introduction of dark blue wool backgrounds to service stripes. Two examples are shown at the right. The top one has a red stripe showing artillery peacetime service, with a background that makes the entire stripe 3/4 inch wide. The lower stripe has medical colors (maroon with white trim), plus the dark blue background. Stripes that are branch colored and are on a dark blue wool show peacetime service.



Stripes that are branch colored and are on a dark blue wool show peacetime service.

Regulations of 1902 called for a white strip down the service stripe center to show wartime service. Campaign medals came into soldiers' lives in 1905 with the creation of a range of new awards. As a result the War Department decided that soldiers wartime service would be shown by campaign ribbons only and such soldiers were directed not to wear the "service in war" service stripes. Soldiers who were in the army during a war but did not qualify for a medal could wear service in war chevrons with white center.



Examples for artillery and medical soldiers are shown above. The navy blue background is gone but importantly, they have branch colors with a wide white center.

Starting in the 1890s an increasing number of soldiers made the army their home as treatment of men improved, coupled with the consolidation of units to centralized posts and campaigns against Native Americans declined. Old Soldiers sleeves became encumbered with service stripes. In response, during mid 1910 the army decided to make service stripes only 3/8 inch wide and also to eliminate the stripes' background cloth. Due to stocks on hand of the wider and thicker 1902 pattern, few of these narrower 1910 insignia were made. At this same time wear of the blue uniform reduced significantly. In 1916 the army suspended issue of blue uniforms. With this, issue of the 1902 and 1910 styles stripes ended.

<b>Colors Used on Service and Service in War Chevrons, 1902-1916</b>		
<b>Color</b>	<b>Branch</b>	<b>Authorized Dates</b>
Yellow	Cavalry	1902-1916
Red	Artillery	1902-1916
Light Blue	Infantry	1902-1903
White	Infantry	1903-1916
Scarlet piped with White	Engineers	1902-1916
Black piped with Scarlet	Ordnance	1902-1916
Buff	Post Quartermaster Sergeant	1902-1912
	Army Service Detachment, USMA	1902-1909
	Quartermaster Corps	1912-1916
Gray	Post Commissary Sergeant	1902-1912
Green piped with White	Army Service Detachment, USMA	1909-1916
Maroon piped with White	Hospital Corps	1902-1916
Orange piped with White	Signal Corps	1902-1916
Green	Army School Detachments	1909-1916
Red piped with Yellow	Navy Service	1913-1916
Yellow piped with Red	USMC Service	1913-1916

NOTE: A white center stripe indicates War Service