

THE "RUPTURED" DUCK"

A Working Bibliography of MHI Sources

The WWII honorable discharge button, known unofficially as the "ruptured duck," can be traced to an earlier military service badge. In 1925 the War Dept adopted a "badge for service" and liberally authorized its wear by WWI veterans who had served honorably. The badge, formally designed by sculptor Anthony De Francisci, was intended for wear as a lapel button on civilian clothing. It was not issued by the Army, but was available for private purchase. An illustration and short article appear on p. 12 of 1 Jul 1925 issue of U.S. Army Recruiting News. Prohibition of its wearing appears in General Orders No. 13, dated 9 Jun 1925

In 1943 the War Dept indicated that a new badge or lapel button would be issued free of charge to all persons honorably discharged after the beginning of WWII, i.e., 8 Sep 1939. The new button, a slightly altered version of the previous DeFrancisci-designed button, was issued by 1944. It soon became a lapel decoration for the World War II Victory Medal, and thus served as the war's service badge. Honorable service after 1946 earned a new service button that differed from the previous designs; it bore no eagle but, instead, a minuteman. See (chronologically listed):

U.S. War Dept/Dept of Army. General Order 13, dated 9 Jun 1925. pp. 4-6. MilPub-GO.

U.S. Army Recruiting News (1 Jul 1925): cover & p. 12. Per.

_____. Report of the Secretary of War, 1926. Wash, DC: GPO, 1927. p. 250. UA2.A5.

_____. Personnel, The Prescribed Uniform: Army Regulation 600-35, dated Dec 1926. pp. 29-30. MilPub-AR.
And Mar 1944, pp. 33-34 & 67.

_____. Circular 187, dated Aug 1943. pp. 2-3. MilPub-Circ.

_____. Circular 79, dated Feb 1944. pp. 1-2. MilPub-Circ.

New York Times (27 Aug 1945): p. 18. Microfilm.

Douglass, Richard. "The Button Man." Yank (30 Nov 1945): p. 10. Per.

_____. Personnel, Service Medals: AR 600-65, dated Dec 1946. pp. 25, 35 & Change 1. MilPub-AR.

Military Awards: AR 672-5-1, dated Jun 1974. Chap 6, p. 5. MilPub-AR.

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Previous searches have failed to uncover the origins of the term "ruptured duck." Like many fragments of folklore, the expression's precise origin remains obscure. Whoever first looked at the eagle's left wing protruding "through" the service button's circle and saw a hernial duck will probably remain forever and deservedly anonymous.