

U.S. Army Military History Institute
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Uniforms-Insignia

CHEVRONS

A Working Bibliography of MHI Sources

Army and Navy Journal (3 Jan 1903): p. 419. Per.

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Emerson, William K. "The Army's Last Set of Confusing Chevrons." Mil Collector & Historian (Winter 2004): pp. 219-33. Per.
1920s version, produced but not issued.

_____. Chevrons: Illustrated History and Catalog of U.S. Army Insignia. Wash, DC: Smithsonian Inst, 1983. 298 p. UC533E43.

Finley, J.D. "Chevrons." Quartermaster Rev (Mar/Apr 1942): pp. 38 & 92-94. Per.

Joyce, Dan. "Service Chevrons, Campaign Stars, and the A.E.F." Military Collector & Historian (Summer 2008): pp. 146-47. Per.

Langellier, J. Phillip. "Stripes: Enlisted Soldiers' Rank Identification." Voice of First Army (Jan 1983): p. 12. Per.

Oliver, Raymond. Why is the Colonel Called "Kernal"? The Origins of the Ranks and Rank Insignia Now Used by the United States Armed Forces. Booklet, privately printed, 1982. pp. 2-4. UA23054.

Todd, Frederick P. American Military Equipage, 1851-1872. Vol. I. Providence, RI: Company of Military Historians, 1974. pp. 102-04. UC483T64v1.

_____. Cadet Gray: A Pictorial History of Life at West Point as Seen Through Its Uniforms. NY: Sterling, 1955. pp. 30-31. U410P1T6.

_____[M.I. Ludington] Uniform of the Army of United States from 1774 to 1889. n.p., n.d. 71 p., 44 plates. UC483U45Oversize.

U.S. War Dept. Annual Report of the Quartermaster-General to the Secretary of War for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1903. Wash, DC: GPO, 1903. pp. 5-6. UC20A3.

_____. Regulations for the Uniform of the United States Army. Wash, DC: GPO, 1902. 48 p. UC483A1.

See especially pp. 1 & 32-34.

Research Note compiled in 1983:

The reason why the U.S. Army uniform regulations of 1902 reversed the chevrons - from point down to point up - eluded our search. Although Emerson (Chevrons, cited below, pp. 112) mentions that the upward-pointing chevrons were more attractive, nothing else uncovered substantiates that possible motive. Records of the uniform board, if extant, should be in the custody of the National Archives and may provide the rationale for the reversal. Explanations may be available from these sources:

National Museum of American History
Department of Military History
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, DC 20560

Institute of Heraldry
Cameron Station
Alexandria, VA 22314

Company of Military Historians
North Main Street
Westbrook, CT 06498

Incidentally, the history of grade chevrons indicates a cycle of reversals without explanations. The British Army adopted chevrons in 1802 with downward-facing points that have remained so ever since. Not long afterwards cadets at West Point began to wear grade chevrons, most of which pointed up but some down. In 1821, the U.S. Army authorized chevrons for company grade officers (which lasted until 1832) and for sergeants--all pointing heavenward. By 1851, however, the uniform regulations prescribed chevrons that pointed down, in which position they so remained until the 1902 regulations turned them around effective 1 Jul 1903.