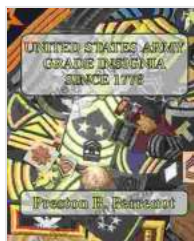


United States Army Grade Insignia Since 1776: A Historical Journey

The United States Army, with its rich history and unwavering dedication to safeguarding the nation, has undergone a remarkable evolution over the centuries. One aspect that has witnessed significant transformation is the system of grade insignia, the emblems worn by soldiers to denote their rank and authority.



United States Army Grade Insignia Since 1776

by James K. Wheaton

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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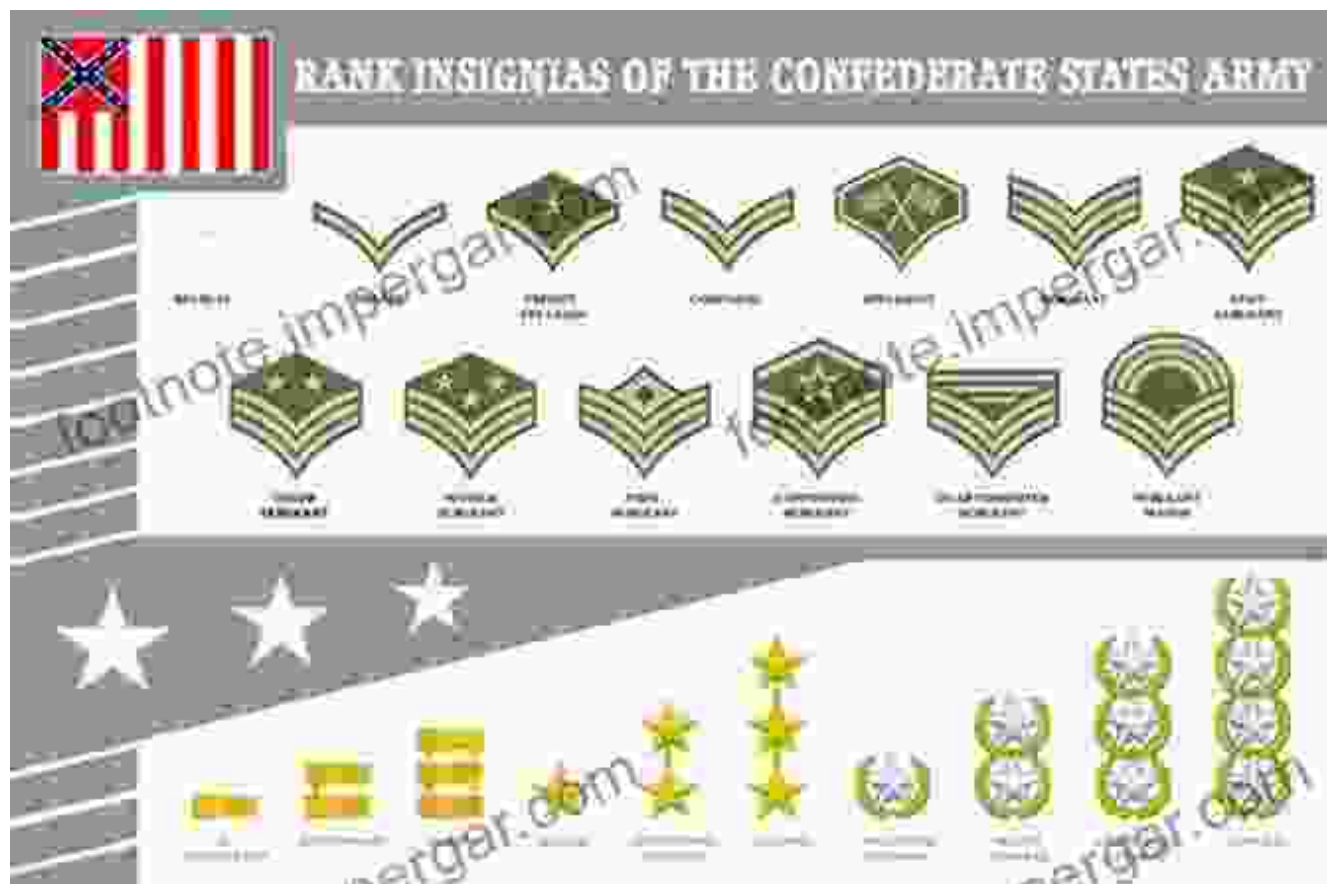


This comprehensive guide delves into the fascinating history of United States Army grade insignia, tracing its origins from the Revolutionary War era to the present day. Through detailed descriptions and captivating historical accounts, we uncover the symbolism, significance, and evolution of each rank and its accompanying insignia.

Colonial Origins: 1776-1784

The earliest forms of grade insignia emerged during the American Revolutionary War, when the Continental Army sought to establish a

system of ranks and distinctions among its officers.



- **General:** White gorget (neckband) and red sash.
- **Colonel:** Black gorget and red sash.
- **Lieutenant Colonel:** Black gorget and green sash.
- **Major:** Purple gorget and green sash.
- **Captain:** Pink gorget and white scarf.
- **Lieutenant:** Blue gorget and white scarf.
- **Ensign:** Green gorget and white scarf.

The Early Republic: 1784-1861

Following the war, the newly established United States Army adopted a more formal system of grade insignia, inspired by European military traditions.

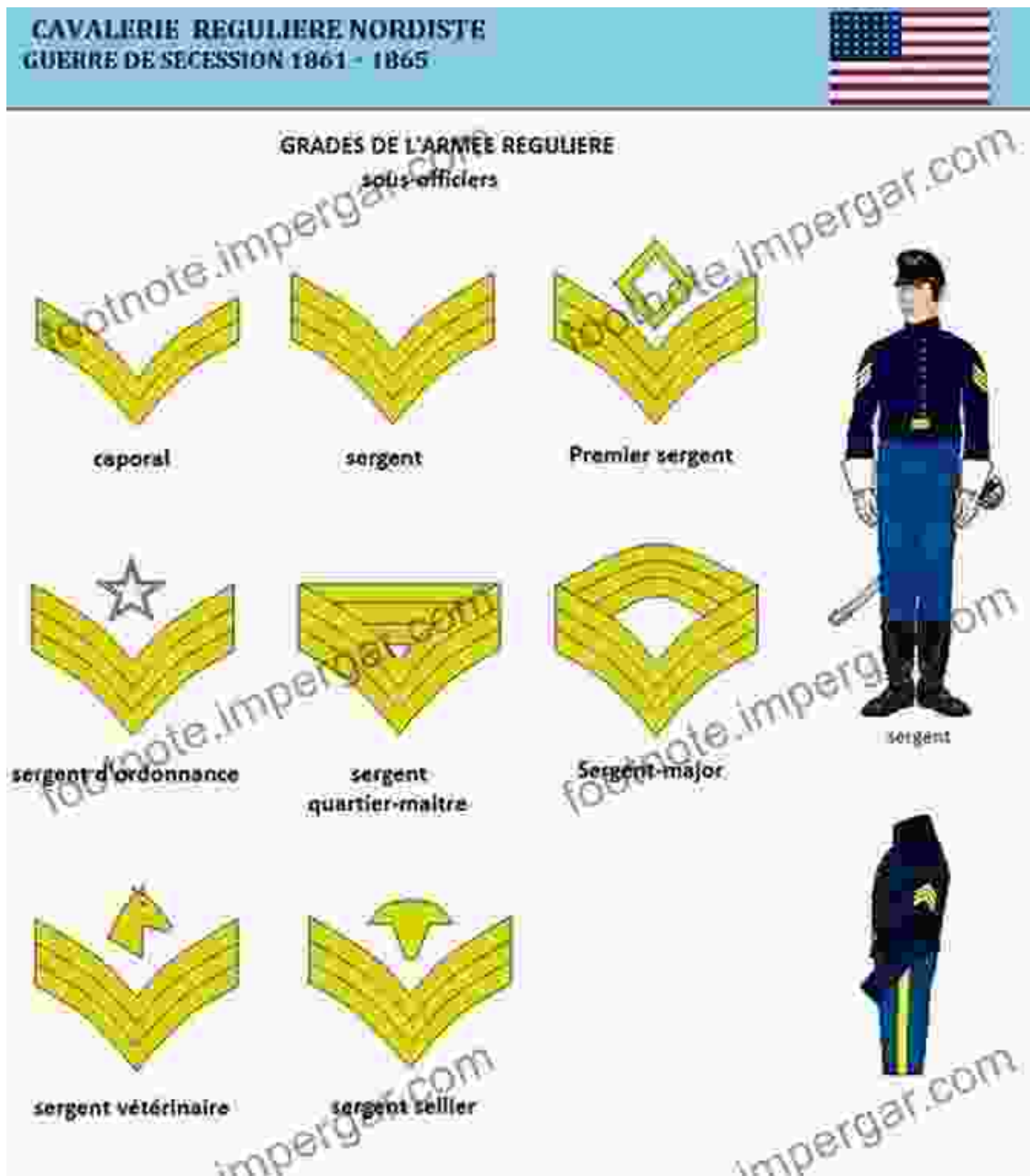


- **General:** Three stars on a dark blue shoulder strap.
- **Colonel:** Two stars on a dark blue shoulder strap.
- **Lieutenant Colonel:** One star on a dark blue shoulder strap.
- **Major:** Gold oak leaf on a dark blue shoulder strap.
- **Captain:** Two silver bars on a dark blue shoulder strap.
- **First Lieutenant:** One silver bar on a dark blue shoulder strap.

- **Second Lieutenant:** No insignia on shoulder straps.

The Civil War: 1861-1865

The Civil War marked a turning point in the history of Army grade insignia, as both the Union and Confederate armies introduced new and distinctive designs.



Union Army

- **General:** Three gold stars on a black shoulder strap.
- **Major General:** Two gold stars on a black shoulder strap.
- **Brigadier General:** One gold star on a black shoulder strap.
- **Colonel:** Gold eagle on a black shoulder strap.
- **Lieutenant Colonel:** Silver eagle on a black shoulder strap.
- **Major:** Gold oak leaf on a black shoulder strap.
- **Captain:** Two silver bars on a black shoulder strap.
- **First Lieutenant:** One silver bar on a black shoulder strap.
- **Second Lieutenant:** No insignia on shoulder straps.

Confederate Army

- **General:** Three gold stars on a gray shoulder strap.
- **Lieutenant General:** Two gold stars on a gray shoulder strap.
- **Major General:** One gold star on a gray shoulder strap.
- **Brigadier General:** Gold wreath on a gray shoulder strap.
- **Colonel:** Three gold bars on a gray shoulder strap.
- **Lieutenant Colonel:** Two gold bars on a gray shoulder strap.
- **Major:** One gold bar on a gray shoulder strap.
- **Captain:** Three silver bars on a gray shoulder strap.
- **First Lieutenant:** Two silver bars on a gray shoulder strap.

- **Second Lieutenant:** One silver bar on a gray shoulder strap.

The Late 19th Century: 1865-1903

After the Civil War, the Army streamlined its system of grade insignia, introducing standardized designs that remained largely unchanged for decades.



- **General:** Four gold stars on a dark blue shoulder strap.
- **Lieutenant General:** Three gold stars on a dark blue shoulder strap.
- **Major General:** Two gold stars on a dark blue shoulder strap.
- **Brigadier General:** One gold star on a dark blue shoulder strap.

- **Colonel:** Silver eagle on a dark blue shoulder strap.
- **Lieutenant Colonel:** Gold oak leaf on a dark blue shoulder strap.
- **Major:** Silver oak leaf on a dark blue shoulder strap.
- **Captain:** Two silver bars on a dark blue shoulder strap.
- **First Lieutenant:** One silver bar on a dark blue shoulder strap.
- **Second Lieutenant:** No insignia on shoulder straps.

The Early 20th Century: 1903-1942

The early 20th century witnessed several significant changes to Army grade insignia, including the of new ranks and the replacement of shoulder straps with collar insignia.



- **General:** Five gold stars on a black velvet collar.
- **Lieutenant General:** Four gold stars on a black velvet collar.
- **Major General:** Three gold stars on a black velvet collar.
- **Brigadier General:** Two gold stars on a black velvet collar.
- **Colonel:** Silver eagle on a black velvet collar.
- **Lieutenant Colonel:** Gold oak leaf on a black velvet collar.
- **Major:** Silver oak leaf on a black velvet collar.
- **Captain:** Three silver bars on a black velvet collar.

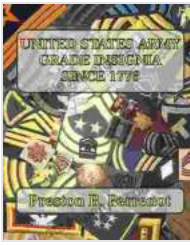
- **First Lieutenant:** Two silver bars on a black velvet collar.
- **Second Lieutenant:** One silver bar on a black velvet collar.
- **Chief Warrant Officer:** Gold warrant officer eagle on a black velvet collar.
- **Warrant Officer:** Silver warrant officer eagle on a black velvet collar.

World War II and Beyond: 1942-Present

During World War II, the Army introduced new insignia for warrant officers and commissioned officers, and standardized the use of shoulder boards for all ranks.



- **General:** Four gold stars on a black



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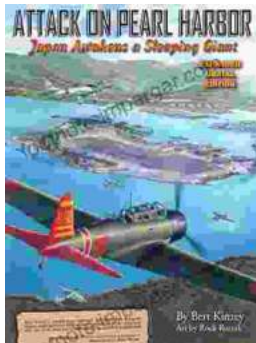
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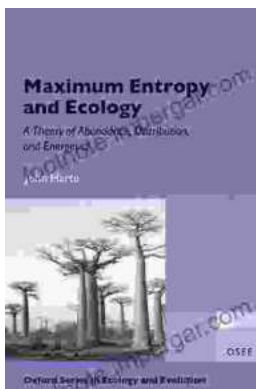
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