

Veteran's Day

In light of the oncoming Veterans Day Holiday, the National Museum of the Army Reserve would like to highlight a portion of the museum's WWI collection. Veterans Day in the United States has its origins in the observance of Armistice Day and the end of WWI. The Great War, otherwise known as "The War to End All Wars", ended on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, 1918. The fighting for some continued right up to the 11th hour when a general cease fire was called ending the misery that had been WWI. President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed a year later, November 11th, 1919, as Armistice Day. In commemoration of the new observance Wilson stated:

"To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations."

On June 1st, 1954 the holiday was renamed Veterans Day to include soldiers from later conflicts. In the United Kingdom and its former possessions, the holiday has become known as Remembrance Day. Armistice Day is still observed in Belgium and France.



American Doughboys joyfully throw their "tin hats" in the air at the cessation of hostilities.

A major part of the Museum's collection is from WWI. This collection includes insignia, uniforms, equipment, photographs, documents and weapons.

Such as...



CCN 663810 Officer's quality, private purchase coat from the 81st Infantry Division worn by Private First Class, Asbury C. Harrelson of Shelby, North Carolina during WWI. Shelby served as both a truck driver and cook in the quartermaster corps as denoted by the insignia on his collar and right sleeve.



(The following information can be found in the *81st Infantry Wildcat Division History*)

According to tradition...

The first men of the 81st, looking for a name, took inspiration from Wildcat Creek, flowing through Camp Jackson. From the name they soon developed a distinguishing mark for their uniforms, an angry wildcat silhouetted against an olive, blue, red or other background according to the wearer's unit. When the Division arrived overseas with its Wildcat patch on its uniforms, official reaction was unfavorable: such insignia were not 'authorized' parts of the uniform, nor were other units similarly distinguished. General John J. Pershing, to whom final appeal was made, authorized the division to wear its shoulder patch and required that each division adopt a similar patch. The Wildcat patch, the first divisional patch in the Army, became the symbol of the fighting spirit of the 81st Division as it entered the battlefields of France, was treasured by the members of the Reserve Division between the wars, and proudly worn by the new Wildcats of the reactivated Division as a reminder of the victorious tradition of their predecessors and a sign of the spirit they would carry into their own battles.

...and...

The Story of Olive Drab...

Olive drab became the color of US Army uniforms with the creation of the model 1906 uniform manufactured in both winter-weight olive drab, wool and summer-weight khaki, cotton. Buttons on Army uniforms were made from blackened bronze throughout the First World War for purposes of concealment. The model 1912 uniform coat, of which this is an example, had simple patch pockets and a standing collar. This example is missing the branch of service collar discs and the top three buttons on the coat have been attached without any regard for their orientation, one is upside down and two are sideways.



CCN 816374 Model 1912 enlisted man's coat with 79th Infantry Division shoulder insignia



(The following information came from, *The Cross of Lorraine, A Combat History of the 79th Infantry Division*)

In the latter part of 1918, American divisions overseas were requested to submit designs for a distinctive, identifying insignia to be worn on the left shoulder of the uniform. Up until this point, the 79th's combat history was quite brief, and confined exclusively to the Lorraine sector of the Allied front in France. It was decided to adopt the blue and white Croix de Lorraine, a

symbol of triumph dating back to the 15th century and recognized throughout the civilized world. Thus, from the sector where it made military history by its assault and capture of Montfaucon during the Meuse-Argonne drive in the closing stages of World War I, the Division derived both a patch and a new name.

...and we can't forget the 89th Infantry Division...

The 89th Infantry Division was composed primarily of Mid-West, farm boys and organized in September and October of 1917. The states from which the division was drawn were Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, Arizona and New Mexico. The division went into action in August of 1918, fourteen months to the day after the first recruits reported for duty.

(The following description, comes from the book, *History of the 89th Division, 1917-1919.*)

It was during this period [1918] that the Division insignia was adopted. The device consists of the letter W enclosed in a circle. The official explanation of its meaning made at the time is that it designates the "Middle West" Division, as the central letter can in one aspect be read as an M and in another as a W. The official explanation also adds that in another aspect the letter can be read as a Greek Sigma, the symbol of summation; and that the circle implies the ability to exert force in any direction and to rest in any position. In other words, if the observer be rotated about his center, as in turning what the small boys call a cart wheel, he will, at successive periods of his revolutions be enabled to read M for Middle, W for West and, if he is a Greek scholar, Sigma for summation. Probably, however, the part about coming to rest in any position would not apply in the case supposed.



CCN 62635, 89th Infantry Division shoulder patch on a model 1917 coat. This example has a red center to denote the artillery branch of service.



CCN 62842, Model 1917 Helmet with 89th Infantry Division insignia. This helmet is based upon the British pattern of 1915 because the United States had no helmets when it deployed to France. These helmets were painted olive drab, covered with saw dust and painted again to render a non-glare finish.