



**Not on photo: Red Discharge Chevron worn on top right sleeve.**

**Photo: Corporal Lee Reuter, Company L, 132nd Infantry.  
May 1919 Chicago.**

**War Service - Overseas - Chevrons: Worn on left sleeve (bottom)**

**Gold & Light Blue & Silver**

**Gold War Service Chevron:**



War Department **General Orders No. 6**, dated **January 12, 1918** authorized the officers and enlisted men of America's Army, Navy and Marine Corps to wear a War Service Chevron or what collectors today call an "Overseas Stripe". **The 'V' shaped chevron was initially issued in one color ... gold.** Its purpose was to signify that the wearer had served in the "Zone of Advance", overseas in France during the Great War. **One gold War Service Chevron was awarded for each six month period that a soldier, sailor or Marine served in the Zone of Advance.**

### **Light Blue War Service Chevron:**



In May of 1918, War Department General Orders No. 53 also established a light blue War Service Chevron for any soldier who had **served for less than six months overseas in the Theater of Operations.** **The new blue chevron, essentially made every, soldier, sailor and Marine who had or was currently serving in England, France, Belgium and later Luxembourg, Italy, Russia and Germany eligible to wear one light blue chevron by simply arriving overseas to the Theater of Operation.**

At the same time the War Department also revised the date on which a service man's overseas service began. It was shifted back by approximately two weeks. Instead of beginning the day the man landed overseas, the clock that started counting each man's first six months overseas now began ticking as soon as the troop transport ship entered international waters, which was some three miles off the eastern coast of the United States. Therefore, after May of 1918 a soldier's overseas service started on the day that he departed from America, not the day he landed in Europe.

### **Silver War Service Chevron:**



Soldiers, sailors and Marines who **did not serve overseas in Europe, but who were posted to one of America's territories, possessions and protectorates** were eligible to wear only silver War Service Chevrons, as America's territories and possessions were **not a part of the Theater of Operations which was ultimately comprised of the United Kingdom, France, Flanders, Italy, Luxembourg, Austria, Hungary, Germany and Russia.**

**Honorable WWI Service Discharge Chevron:** Worn on left sleeve (top)  
Red

<https://www.usmilitariaforum.com/forums/index.php?/topic/211468-the-ww-i-discharge-chevron/>

**DISCHARGE CHEVRON**



Each discharged soldier was issued with three discharge chevrons. Officers had to purchase their own.

**Upon being discharged from service, the uniform could be worn for a maximum of three months without the red discharge chevron.** If the uniform was worn after the three month period had expired, the person wearing it could be charged with the offense of impersonating a soldier.

If the uniform was never worn again the discharge chevron did not have to be sewn on.

As soon as a soldier received his discharge papers he became a civilian, and he was no longer obligated to salute a superior officer.

*These and other facts pertaining to the uniform and discharge chevron were explained in a post war pamphlet handed out to Doughboys before they mustered out of the Army. It partially read as follows:*

### **The Uniform**

If it is your desire to go home in uniform, it is your privilege to do so, under full grant of an act of Congress. You may wear your issue uniform as long as it hangs together if you wish. It is yours. But do not let a minute pass, after being discharged, until you have sewn on, or had sewn on a red chevron, point up, midway between the elbow and the shoulder on the left sleeve.

The wearing of any gold, silver, or metal device indicating service is forbidden. Only regulation service chevrons and collar insignia are authorized by law and regulations. Wound and service chevrons for service in any of the Allied Armies are included in that authorization. Can all camouflage.

Remember in wearing the uniform, that all of its privileges are yours, with

none of the restraints. You are a civilian. There is no law or regulation or tradition requiring you to salute an officer. But so long as the O. D. or the Navy blue or the Marine green covers your body, it should be your pride as one with a military training, and as a soldier who participated in the Great War, to be courteous.

*Source: Where Do We Go from Here: This is the Real Dope, 1919, William Brown Meloney, page 21, 22:*

### **The Red Chevron**

The red chevron is the sign that you have been honorably discharged; that you have passed from the military to civil jurisdiction. It will save you being fussed by P.G.'s and M.P.'s, but it conveys no right to you to fuss them. The red chevron is prescribed to be worn by discharged officers and enlisted men as a recognition of duties performed in the service of their country. It also must be worn by discharged officers who accept commissions in the officers reserve corps, until called to active duty.

Moreover it is unlawful under the National Defense Act, for the uniform to be worn by either discharged officers or enlisted men, without this distinctive mark, and an offender renders himself liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, to a punishment not exceeding \$300, or by imprisonment not exceeding 6 months, or by both such fine and imprisonment.

A free issue of three red chevrons, one for the blouse, one for the overcoat, and one for the O. D. shirt will be made to all enlisted personnel. Discharged officers will find a supply on sale by the Quartermaster at all demobilization camps.

*Source: Where Do We Go from Here: This is the Real Dope, 1919, William Brown Meloney, page 26:*

*For the Doughboys still serving in France the following appeared in the Stars and Stripes newspaper:*

### **Red Chevron for Discharge**

The circular points out that after an officer or enlisted man has been discharged, he is not subject to military regulations, although there are civil laws which prevent abuse of the uniform. **The red chevron has been**

**adopted to distinguish discharged men from those still in the service.**

In conclusion, the circular says that the impersonating of officers and the wearing the uniform by those not entitled to them should be prosecuted under an act passed by congress on June 3, 1916, providing as a maximum punishment upon conviction, a fine of \$300, six months imprisonment or both. It is pointed out that the observance of the usual military courtesies, such as the salute, can not be forced upon such discharged officers and enlisted men in uniform who do not wish to be governed by them.

Stars and Stripes Newspaper, March 28, 1919, page 7

Source: <https://www.usmilitariaforum.com/forums/index.php?/topic/202900-world-war-i-war-service-chevrons/>

## **Placement of the War Service Chevrons on the U.S. Army Enlisted Men's Service Coat**

Regardless of the color (gold, light blue or silver), enlisted men's War Service **Chevrons were to be sewn point down** on the lower right hand sleeve of the service coat, four inches from the bottom of the left sleeve. Each additional chevron was to be one-quarter-inch above the neighboring chevron. **The exception being, Navy and Marine personnel who served on board a ship during the war.** Sailors and fleet Marines were authorized to wear one gold War Service Chevron with the point up, not point down for each six month period that was served at sea. It was possible for Navy and Marine personnel to wear a combination of points up and points down service chevrons if they saw service both on a ship and with the AEF in France during the war.

## **Authorization to wear War Service Chevrons:**

War Department **General Orders No. 6, dated January 12, 1918** authorized the officers and enlisted men of America's Army, Navy and Marine Corps to wear a War Service Chevron or what collectors today call an "Overseas Stripe". The 'V' shaped chevron was initially issued in one color ... gold. Its purpose was to signify that the wearer had served in the "Zone of Advance", overseas in France during the Great War. One gold War Service Chevron was awarded for each six month period that a soldier, sailor or Marine served in the Zone of Advance.

The Zone of Advance was considered by the AEF, to be where a line soldier could expect to be either under direct fire from the enemy in an opposing trench line or within range of the opponent's large caliber artillery and gas shells. Typically, this area included the front line trenches and the twelve or so miles of territory directly behind them. Any soldier, sailor, or Marine who served anywhere between the French port cities and the beginning of the Zone of Advance did not qualify for a gold War Service Chevron unless part of that six month period was served in a forward position. Since no insignia was prescribed for the troops who served in the area to the rear of the Zone of Advance, it would be safe to assume that the insignia was initially intended to be worn only by the members of the AEF who had seen combat.

In January, when the War Service Chevron was adopted, the War Department determined that a soldier's overseas service began on the day that he first set foot on foreign soil, be it Ireland, Scotland, England or France. In most instances, that was 12 to 20 days after the troopship had sailed from a U.S. Port of Embarkation. The average voyage across the Atlantic Ocean during the war was 14 days.

Aside from General Orders No. 6, which most AEF soldiers probably never saw, the Doughboys received news of the six week old War Service Chevron in the Stars and Stripes newspaper. The third issue of that AEF broadsheet had this to say about the recently adopted gold chevrons:

*The war service chevron of gold and standard material and design is to be worn on the lower half of the left sleeve of all uniform coats except fatigue coats by each officer and enlisted man who has served for six months in the Zone of the Advance in the war, and an additional chevron will be worn for each six months of similar service thereafter. Officers and enlisted men of the Aviation Service on combat flying duty in Europe will be credited with the war service chevron with the time they may be on that duty.*

*Stars and Stripes Newspaper, Volume 1, Issue No. 3, February 22, 1918, page 01*

The Army "issued" service chevrons were either machine embroidered or sewn onto a roll of olive drab woolen material. Each roll contained approximately one hundred chevrons, which were cut from the roll as needed. Service chevrons were also individually hand made by

seamstresses and tailors, both during and after the war, and on both sides of the Atlantic. Therefore, it is possible for the size, width, the angle of the chevron's arms, the type and color of the backing cloth and the material used for the actual chevron, and how they are placed on the sleeve, as well as their method of construction to vary dramatically.

**On a soldier's 6 month, 12 month, 18 month, 24 month, etc. anniversary, a company clerk would submit paperwork to the authorities at Division Headquarters. After the appropriate documents made their way through the Army's paper mill, his records would be updated and word would filter back down the chain of command until it reached the platoon Supply Sergeant who would then issue the appropriate quantity and color of chevrons along with a copy of the orders that authorized them to the soldier in question.**

**The type of chevron issued, i.e. tape, bullion, etc. depended entirely on what the supply sergeant had on hand at the time that the chevrons were issued.** It was not unusual to see two or more different styles of chevrons sewn onto the same enlisted man's uniform. However, this seems to be the exception rather than the rule. Any enlisted man or officer could also upgrade or replace the issued chevrons with higher quality custom made or commercially manufactured chevrons. Once in possession of either the issued chevrons or chevrons acquired outside of the military supply chain, it was up to the individual Doughboys to sew the chevrons onto the service coat and overcoat ... hopefully, in the prescribed manner.

**In May of 1918, General Orders No. 53 issued by the War Department modified the conditions under which an Army 'Doughboy', Marine 'Leatherneck' or Navy 'Blue Jacket' serving in the AEF could qualify for a War Service Chevron.** The orders stipulated that a man no longer had to serve exclusively in the Zone of Advance in order to earn the coveted gold chevron. It further authorized that all AEF personnel who previously did not qualify for a War Service Chevron, because they served behind the Zone of Advance, would retroactively be awarded one gold service chevron for each six months of service they had already served or would serve in the future in what was now being called the "Theater of Operations".

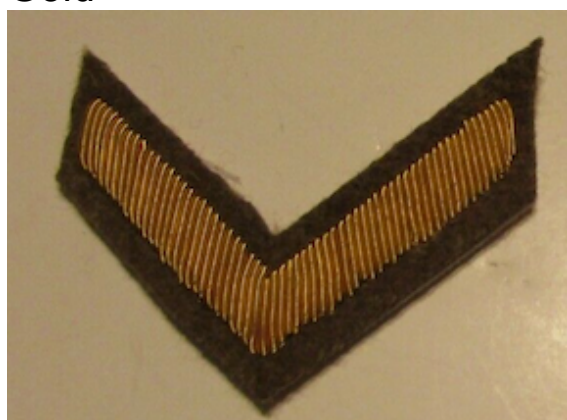
The orders mandated that henceforth, all AEF personnel would be eligible



for a service chevron for every six months of service accrued in the Theater of Operations, which was defined as anywhere AEF troops happened to be posted in Europe. The Theater of Operations literally extended from the most forward front line trench all the way back to the gangplanks used to exit the transport ships at the French ports of arrival, and then across the English Channel to the United Kingdom. It also included all operations that were, or would later take place in Flanders (Belgium), Luxembourg, Italy, Russia and Germany. In other words, the orders now made it possible for every officer and enlisted man to receive a gold chevron whether he took part in combat or not, and regardless of what his overseas duties were or where that overseas service took place as long as it was in Europe.

This meant that if a man served six months in the 301st Stevedore Battalion unloading cargo at the port of Brest, or was a lumberjack with the 20th Engineer Regiment logging and cutting timber at the AEF sawmill near Gien, miles from the front, or if he was a combat Marine in the 6th Machine Gun Battalion, preparing to enter the deadly killing ground that would be known as Bois de Belleau, he would be entitled to wear one gold chevron on his lower left sleeve after May of 1918, simply because he had served somewhere in the "Theater of Operations".

**War Wound Chevron:** Worn on right sleeve (bottom)  
Gold



**Victory and Victory-Wounded Discharge Buttons**

<https://www.usmilitariaforum.com/forums/index.php?/topic/239123-us-army-navy-marine-corps-ww-i-wound-chevrons/page/4/&tab=comments#comment-1908128>



Victory - Wounded

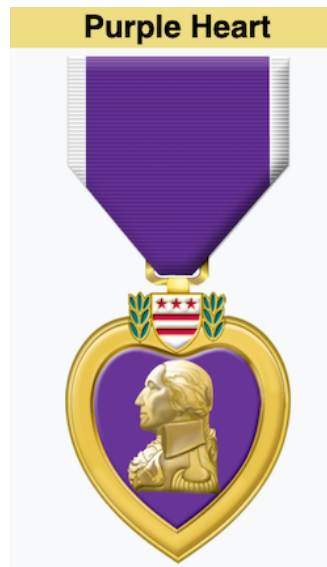


Victory

Along with his discharge papers, **every soldier who served in the AEF was presented with a Victory Button** to be worn on the lapel of his civilian apparel. **A bronze discharge button was issued to each man who served in the AEF, while a silver discharge button (left) was issued to every Doughboy who had been wounded in while serving with the AEF.**

**Note: When applying for a silver Victory Button, the soldier's discharge certificate was needed because it indicated on the reverse whether or not if he had been wounded.**

# Purple Heart Medal



A War Department circular, dated **February 22, 1932**, trumpeted that the fact that the **Badge of Military Merit**, or the 'Purple Heart', as the award was now named, was to be awarded to any member of the U.S. Army, who while serving under competent authority after **April 5, 1917**, had been wounded in combat. At the time the decoration was established, only the AEF soldiers who had survived their wounds were entitled to apply for and receive the new Purple Heart Medal. The next of kin of any soldier who had been killed in action or who had died as a result of the wounds they received during the World War were not permitted to apply for a Purple Heart.

The medal was also only awarded to Army personnel with the exception of the Marine Corps and U.S. Navy personnel who were attached to the AEF. Eligibility for the Purple Heart was also made retroactive all the way back to the American Civil War. Surviving Army veterans, who met the criteria, had to apply to the War Department in order to receive a Purple Heart engraved with their name on the reverse and a serial number on the medal's rim.

It wasn't until President Harry S. Truman signed **Executive Order No. 10409 on November 12, 1952**, that members of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard were **retroactively extended eligibility for the Purple Heart**. On **April 25, 1962**, **Executive Order No. 11016**, signed by President John F. Kennedy, further allowed the **Purple Heart to be posthumously awarded** to the soldiers and sailors of all branches of the

military who had been killed in action or who had died as a result of wounds received after April 5, 1917.

**Collar Insignia:** NG indicates National Guard; 132 indicates 132nd Infantry Regiment



Source: [https://history.army.mil/html/bookshelves/resmat/wwi/historical\\_resources/default/sec04/PDF/regulationsforun1917uniform.pdf](https://history.army.mil/html/bookshelves/resmat/wwi/historical_resources/default/sec04/PDF/regulationsforun1917uniform.pdf)  
[Regulations for the uniform of the United States Army, 1917](https://history.army.mil/html/bookshelves/resmat/wwi/historical_resources/default/sec04/PDF/regulationsforun1917uniform.pdf)