

Cadet Uniforms

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Because the earliest cadets at West Point belonged to the Regiment of Artillerists and Engineers, they wore a short, blue, cutaway coat with scarlet lapel facings, brass buttons, a blue or white waistcoat, tight blue trousers, and a large, cocked hat with feather plume. By 1810, however, the uniform was less aristocratic—a short, straight-bottomed tailcoat with brass buttons, tight, gray trousers and a black top hat with cockade. Four years later, the familiar gray full dress coat appeared—because blue woolen cloth was too expensive. The gray uniform was formally adopted by Jonathan Swift in 1816. In 1818, Sylvanus Thayer instituted a system of chevrons that was formally adopted in 1830.

During most of the 19th Century, cadets had few uniform items. In 1819, fatigue jackets and trousers of wool or unbleached cotton were issued; in 1829, the caped, long overcoat was added. Finally, in 1849, a short riding

in 1898, a "Rough-Rider" field service uniform of gray cloth with a broad-brimmed, creased crown hat was issued. By 1899, the current full dress uniform received its last refinements.

During the 20th Century, many additional uniforms appeared, but some only remained for a short time. In 1915, high-collared, white dress uniforms replaced the white fatigue uniform. In the early 1920's, a caped raincoat was added. The gray field service uniform became gray coveralls in 1938 and Army green fatigues a few years later. Around 1940, khaki shirts and trousers were issued, and a pilot's uniform for air cadets at Stewart Field entered the inventory by 1942. The short overcoat, gray jacket, dark gray class shirt (later in a short sleeve version), and blazer also were adopted.

In 1975, the Academy appointed a committee to select uniforms for female cadets. After considering a number of distinctive alternatives, it was decided that the male and female uniforms would be the same, except that women were issued skirts, dress pumps with one-inch heels and a complete dress mess uniform with a long, black skirt and a short white jacket. An experimental full dress coat without tails for women was abandoned after two years.

In the past, tailors at West Point made all cadet uniforms; nowadays, the uniform factory manufactures only the more traditional cadet items—full dress coats, dress gray, all trousers, the long overcoat, and the white dress uniform coat. The cadet raincoat, battle dress uniform (fatigues), and all shirts are produced by outside contractors.

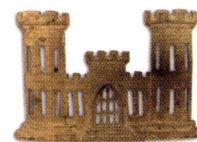
DRESS HATS AND INSIGNIA

The first distinctive hat worn with the full dress coat was made of leather, similar to those of regular army units, and appeared in 1814. It included a rectangular insignia with cropped corners and a scroll bearing the inscription, "Military Academy." An eagle, flags, muskets, a drum, the shield from the US

coat of arms and a book were under the scroll. Two years later, a round hat with a black cockade was substituted; the next year, Sylvanus Thayer requested a more durable bell-crowned leather hat with eight-inch feather plume be adopted. A new, diamond-shaped insignia was added, with "USMA," "Cadet," "W. Point," and a motto, "Paramus (Let us prepare)" inscribed thereon.

In 1839, a straight-sided beaver hat with

leather bands at top and bottom and an eight-inch worsted pompon was prescribed. It bore a two-piece insignia—an eagle over crossed cannon—similar to that of the



regular army artillery. Eventually, due to the efforts of Superintendent Delafield and others, the War Department substituted an Engineer castle for the crossed cannon, and this insignia endured until 1869. During 1853-99, cadets wore a hat similar to those of the regular army—with a crown that sloped to the front



and a rear that curved downward to its lower edge. In 1869, a silver sunburst with a quartered shield containing a castle for the

Engineers, crossed cannon for the Artillery, a bugle for the Infantry, and crossed sabers for the Cavalry replaced the eagle and castle insignia. In 1878, the sunburst was replaced by a scroll with "USMA" above an eagle grasping a quill pen and a saber in its talons. Worn on both the full dress hat and kepi, it was the only insignia ever worn on both formal and informal headgear.



In 1899, when the Academy made its final modifications to the full dress uniform, it also adopted the full dress hat of today with the newly adopted coat of arms. In 1923

the coat of arms was reversed in conformance with the rules of heraldry, but it was not until 1929 that all cadets were issued the new insignia.



Circa 1878

jacket, without tails and with only one column of brass buttons, completed the cadet ensemble. Then, in 1870, a short, white linen jacket with matching trousers was added. The blue kepi or a white, cork helmet were prescribed headgear. Adding belts, sash, gold chains and a helmet spike produced a parade uniform. In 1889, the high-collared dress gray jacket with black mohair piping appeared, and,