

UNIFORMS OF THE COAST ARTILLERY, 1895-1945

Greg Hagge and Mark Berhow



Major J. Carroll Edgar, commanding officer, 1st Battalion Maryland Coast Artillery, 1917.
Typical officer uniform circa 1910-1927. (Maryland Dept., Enoch Pratt Free Library)

In 1895 the uniform regulations of 1881 were in effect with various amendments. The artillery uniforms were the standard pattern of the 1880-90s. The dress uniform was the thigh length frock coat in dark blue with sky blue trousers and the spiked helmet. The daily duty wear was the 1885 pattern, five-button sack coat with the same trousers and the new 1895 pattern service cap. The spiked helmet of foot troops (field artillery was mounted and used a plumed helmet with red cords) and the black leather belt were the same as used by the infantry. The only difference between infantry uniforms and artillery was the red trim and cannons on the eagle helmet plate. In addition to the frock coat, officers had a dress coat similar to the navy style. It was a waist length form fitting jacket with mohair trim and a standing collar. Although very plain, it was sharp looking, with artillery insignia on the collar and shoulder straps to indicate rank.

When troops started to arrive at the newly opened coast artillery posts in the mid to late 1890s, this was the uniform of the day. When artillery was reorganized into independent companies, the new company number was applied to the shield of the helmet plate.

In 1902 a new uniform regulation was adopted. This is the uniform regulation most commonly associated with the Coast Artillery Corps. The new enlisted men's dress jacket was still dark blue with red trim, but the style was updated to the cut of the current men's clothing fashion. The jacket had shoulder straps and a standing collar. The short skirt was vented at the sides (later dropped) and sported new pattern buttons (smooth faced with the new national eagle motif) and all new gilded insignia. The trousers were still

sky blue and retained the late 1890s flared cuff. Black high top shoes completed the outfit, and brown leather belt and accessories were worn for dress occasions. The full dress ensemble was also adorned with a snazzy red breast cord with two big “waffles.” From head to toe, the new uniforms were very colorful and impressive to look at. The Coast Artillery Corps was supposed to use up the remaining stocks of the old pattern five-button sack coat. This may have made some economic sense, but the troops had other ideas. About 1905 a new version of the sack coat began to appear in mass around the army. This up-dated version of the sack coat had six buttons, but was otherwise about the same as the old pattern. Interestingly this sack coat seems to have been a privately-purchased item, not a regulation issue coat.

The 1902 officer’s uniforms were also updated in detail but largely remained similar to the 1881 style. The big change in the new regulations was in the field uniforms for all ranks. Some experimenting had been done with khaki uniforms in the late 1890s. In 1902 both the officers and enlisted men had new pattern four pocket jackets with a narrow stand and fall collar. Both coat and trousers were olive drab wool with brown leather accessories. Field equipment of brown leather and tan colored woven web began to be adopted. Eventually web material replaced much of the leather equipment. The coast artilleryman was equipped as infantry for field service. The 1889 pattern gray field or garrison hat remained in use with the olive drab bell crown cap for the service uniform. This bell crown cap became a symbol of the modern Army.

In 1906 the service coat was modified by changing to gusseted balloon pockets, and in 1910 the coat was slightly redesigned returning to patch pockets and adding a standing collar. With small modifications this coat was used through 1927.

In 1912 the uniform regulations were revised. Among other details the buttons and headgear were redesigned.

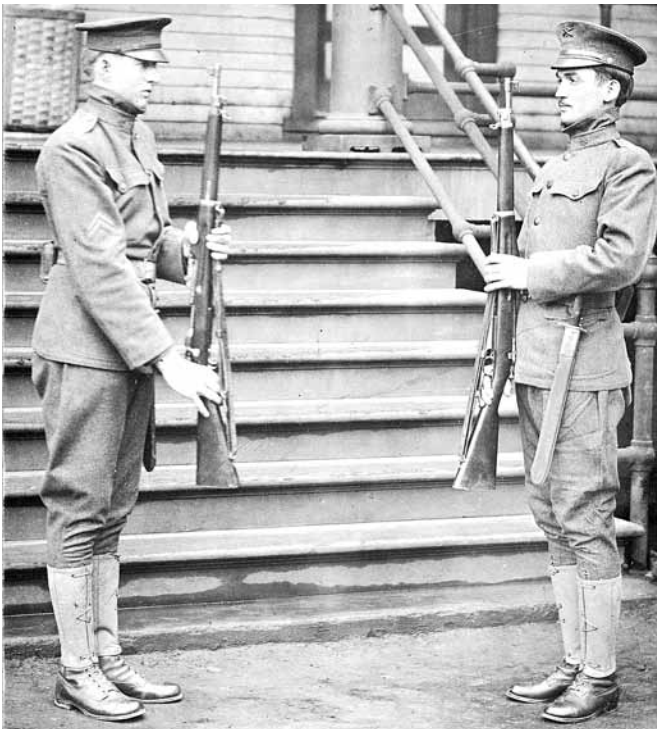
The bell crown cap gave way to a round flat topped style. The stiffening was removed except in the front. This gave the cap a distinct slant to the rear.



Soldier in the 1902/05 dress uniform with red breast cord.



Men of the 63rd Co at Fort Worden, 1910s. Most are wearing the service uniform, c. 1913. Note the old 1902 crush cap and the new 1912 version, left and center. Note that some of the coats have the 1906 pattern gusseted pockets, as well as patch pockets. Two variations on the denim pullover top and trouser are shown..



Two men of the 63rd Company, Fort Worden, on guard duty in their service uniforms with accoutrements, c. 1914. It was considered stylish to turn up the shirt collar under the coat. The M1905 bayonet and scabbard show well here.



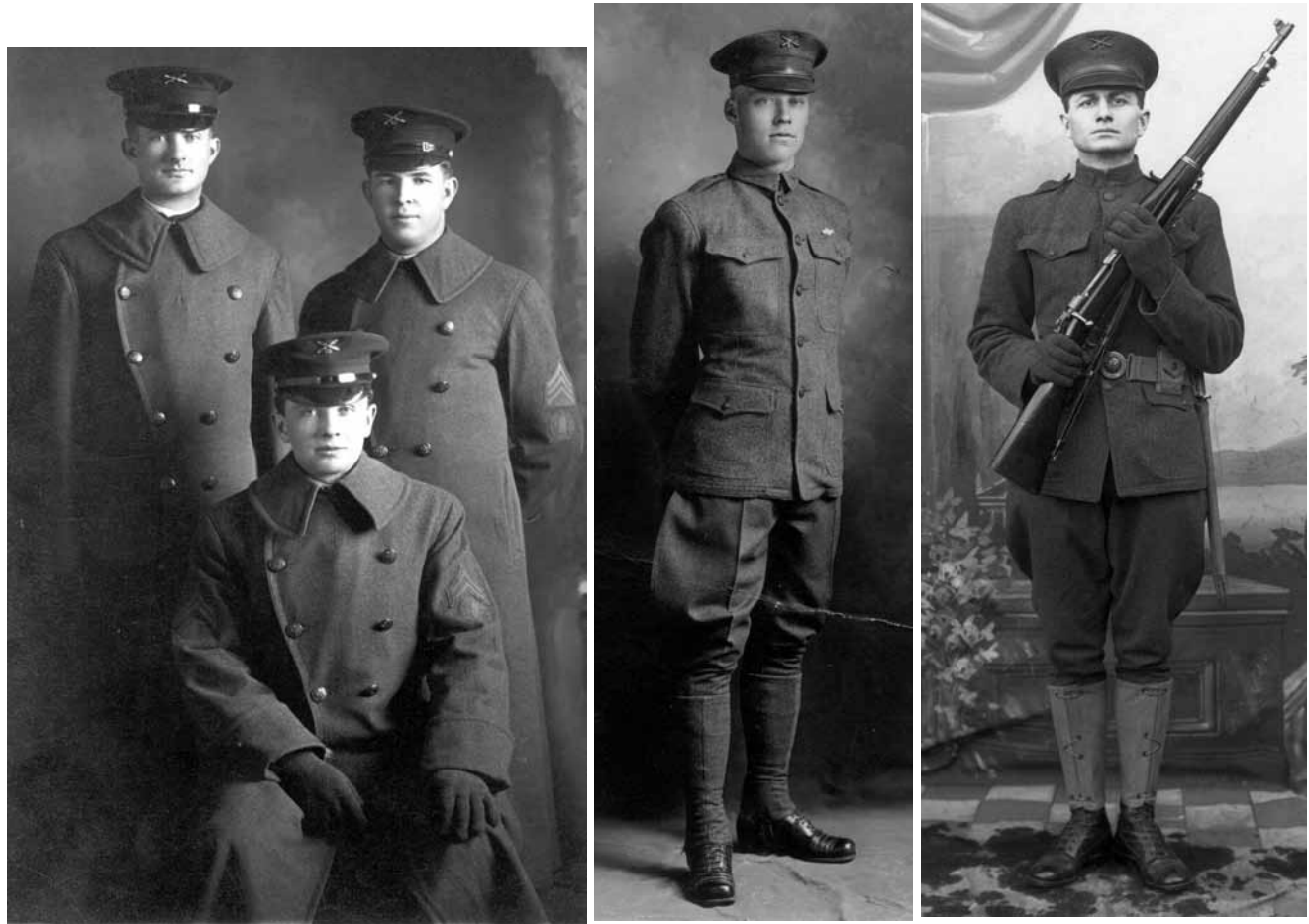
Two men of the 63rd Company, c. 1914. This is the dress blue uniform worn daily. The breast cords and belt would convert this to full dress. The man on the left has the M1902 cap, on the right is the M1912 cap.



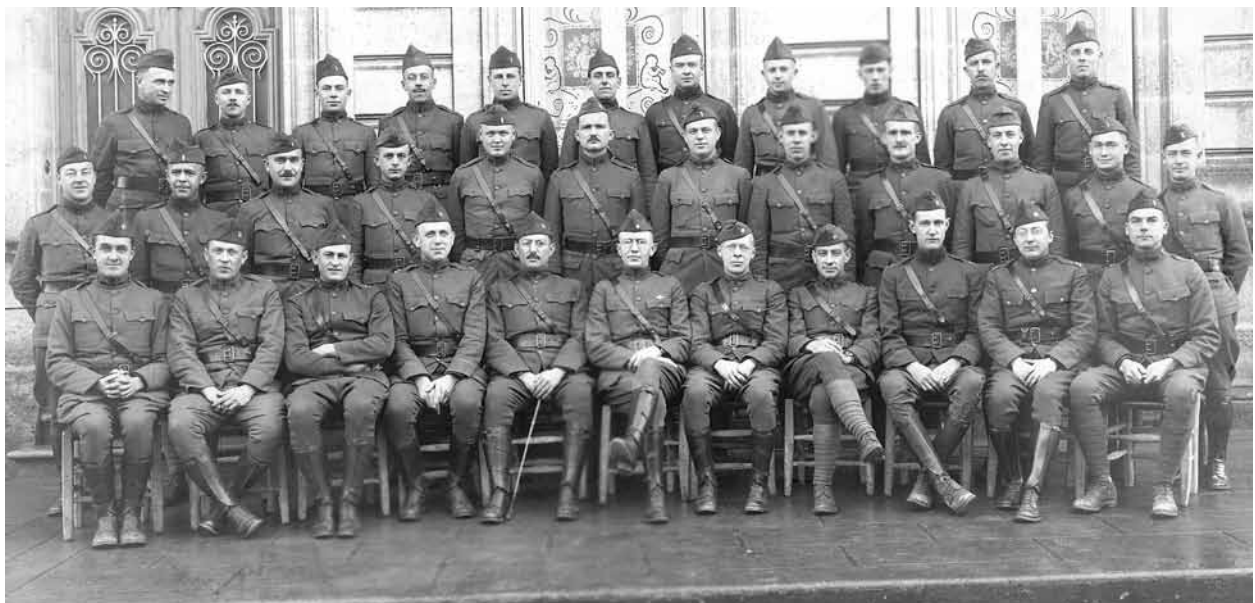
This form of the service cap would remain in use for over 80 years. The field or garrison hat changed style and color to what we know as the "Smoky the Bear" hat in olive drab. This hat also has remained in use to the present era for drill instructors. General use of the garrison hat ceased in 1942. The uniform buttons changed to a rimed type with a ruled background, retaining the national eagle motif. Field equipment continued to evolve, changing from khaki to an unusual olive green hue.

The year 1917 had a significant change in Army uniforms—the old "blue" uniformed army passed into history. The blue dress uniform was dropped that year, never to return as a standard "required uniform" for enlisted men. Officers were also no longer required to have the dress blues or official formal occasion uniforms. The dress blue uniform remained as a privately purchased item. If the commanding officer asked his men to attend a party in dress blues, they had better be wearing them! Enlisted men on special duty at embassies or the War Department staff also were required to acquire dress blues.

(left) A corporal of the 63rd Company c. 1915. Note the "Type I" discs on his collar and the "first class gunner" insignia on the left sleeve.



Enlisted men portraits circa 1910-1917 (Bolling Smith Collection)



Officers of the 49th CAC in France, January 1919. With a change of headgear to the full brimmed campaign hat, or the billed service "saucer" cap, this would be the look of the 1920s. Note the officer at center is wearing the "Marksman-A" shooting badge.



Col. Edward J. Cullen, CAC, Lt. Col. J.H. Pirie, CAC, and Maj. O. Krupp, CAC, of the Development Division, CATC, Ft. Monroe, VA, during the firings at Battery Kingman in June and July 1919. NARA Still Pictures, 111-SC-WWI, SC Photo 60773.



Soldiers at Fort Columbia, WA in the mid-1910s. The men are in service uniforms. (WSPR)



Men of the 63rd Co, Btry Kinzie, Fort Worden, c. 1910. All are wearing the denim coveralls.

Drill and Work Detail Clothing

The occupational work of the Coast Artillery was a messy business. The nickname of “cosmoline soldiers” was well founded. For the enlisted men manning and maintaining the big guns it was a constant routine of drill and cleaning the equipment. The uniform of the day for drill was the field service olive drab wool uniform as described above. To preserve this clothing—and protect it from the worst of the oil and grime—denim work coveralls were provided. These would be worn over the service uniform while performing duties at the emplacements. These denim work clothes are what is seen in use in nearly every photograph of troops serving the guns. The first variety was rust brown denim bib overalls with a pull over top and a round topped full brim “Daisy May” hat. The pullover top, or jacket, could have any number of pockets and a wide variety of placket configurations including a full button front. Later patterns were made in blue denim, which seems to have completely replaced the brown by about 1918. The blue work clothing remained in use for “fatigue” through about 1943 for all branches of the army. After WW I, there seems to have been a Quartermaster (QM) specification for the purchase of the denim work clothing. Before c. 1917 the brown and blue work clothing seems to have been an “off the shelf” purchase, not having a QM tag. Known examples and the wide variety in details tend to support this observation.



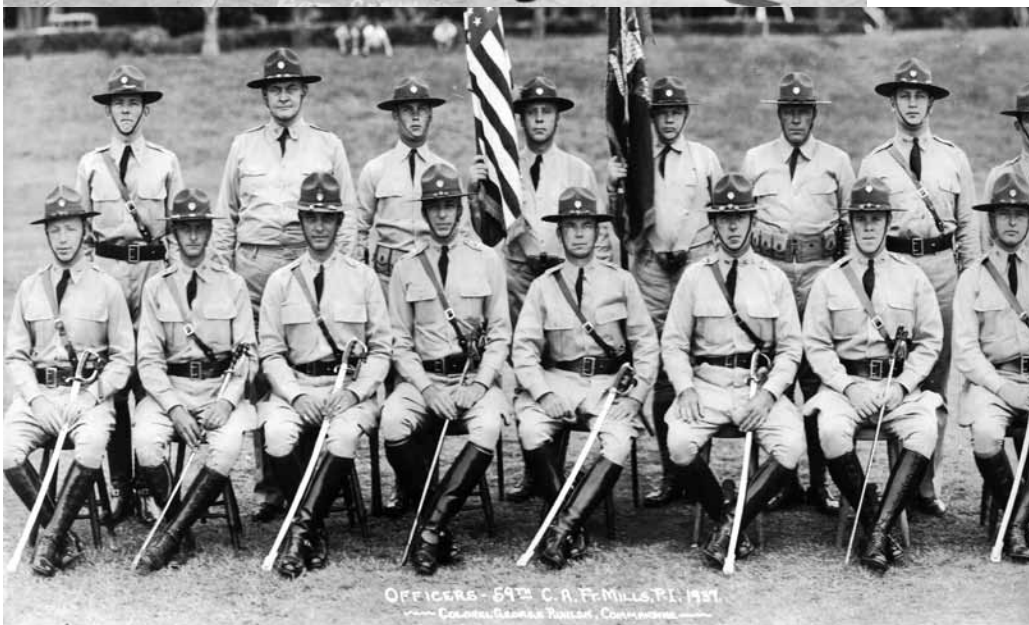
Ft Worden men manning the 6-inch guns of Battery Stoddard. The bib overalls show well here.



Enlisted men in work detail coveralls at Fort Worden, WA, photo from the mid-1910s, Note rank chevrons on sleeves of several of the men. (Puget Sound Coast Artillery Museum)



Officer and enlisted men in work detail coveralls at Fort Worden, WA, photo dated 1924/25. Lt. Oliver Hazen is standing in the bottom row, third from the left, wearing a campaign hat and the Sam Brown belt with the M1910 jacket. (Puget Sound Coast Artillery Museum).

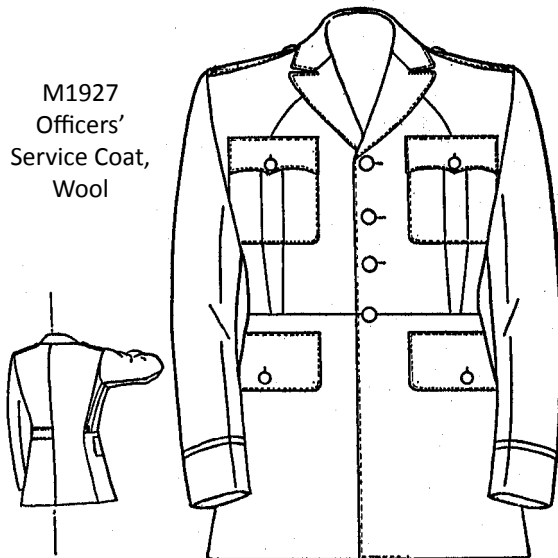
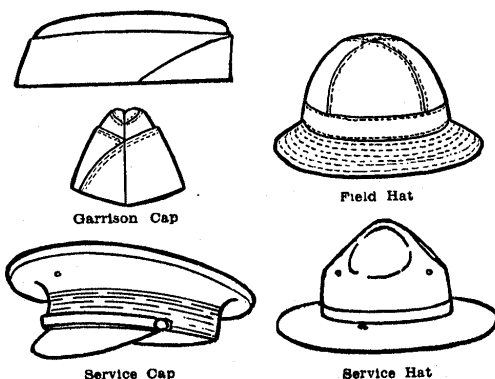


Officers of the 59th Coast Artillery Regiment, C.A.C., Fort Mills, the Philippines, 1937, Col George Ruhlen, commanding (seated fifth from left)

In 1922 the officer's uniform acquired a much-loved accessory, the "Sam Brown" belt with shoulder strap (which remained in use through 1942 when some frills of the uniforms were dropped in favor of more practical fashions).

Only minor alterations in uniforms occurred up until 1924. At this time the brass insignia was changed from gold for dress uniforms and black for field service to gold for all uniforms. This dressed up the olive drab coat.

The next major change was in 1927. The standing collar gave way to an open necked design with flat lapels. Some minor adjustment were made over the next ten years for trends in style, but this basic pattern would remain in use into modern times, the major changes being in material and color. Except in detail and color the officers and enlisted men's uniforms were fairly similar in style. Up to 1927 the officers coat and trousers were the same color. After this time the trousers would be changed to a shade of gray and the coat to a darker shade of olive green/brown, introducing what became known as "pinks and greens". The enlisted uniform colors remained about the same.



1920s-1930s uniforms
 (left) Soldier in work dungarees over service uniform,
 (middle) sergeant in service uniform, men in brown & blue work denims,
 (right) officer in service uniform
 (Greg Hagge photo collection)

In 1943 another detail was changed—the black silk/wool necktie was replaced with a tan necktie. This basic uniform (1927 pattern) remained in use until 1957. The current Class-A dress coat is basically the same cut but in a different color. The Second World War did not bring many changes in uniforms for the Coast Artillery. The officers and men tended to use the regulation service uniform for duty/off duty and the various field uniforms and accessories for daily wear. The M1941 short waist jacket was very popular. Being “stateside” and not in combat, the CAC attire did not change much from the pre-war times. The M1917A1 “dish pan” style helmet eventually was replaced with the new M1 “steel pot.” The field gear was replaced with the new M1944 pattern in dark olive green. Generally the supply system cycled out the old material, as new material became available. The next major change of style for the army was the general introduction of the M1944 field uniform, the “Ike” jacket. This was intended to be a combat dress, styled on the British field uniform. State side troops received this outfit along with the rest of the army.



Officer at Fort Worden, WA, in the 1930s, wearing a M1927-style jacket and a Sam Brown belt (Puget Sound Coast Artillery Museum)



Coast Artillery soldiers in WW II-era service uniforms and coats with a M1910 azimuth scope at Fort Story, VA in the 1940s. (Shawn Welch collection)



Capt. Harry J. Harrison in a service uniform at Fort MacArthur in 1941 (Fort MacArthur Museum collection)



1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 9th Coast Artillery District shoulder patches (1940s) (Greg Haggge Collection)



Colonel Fulton Q.C. Gardner, CAC, at the Coast Artillery School, Fort Monroe, VA, c. 1935. The officer-style coast artillery insignia are on his lapels and the coast artillery school distinctive unit insignias (DUIs) are on his shoulder straps above his rank insignia. (courtesy the Gardner family)



Private Norman E. Hope, Harbor Defenses of Portsmouth, NH, 1942. Typical enlisted man dress uniform 1930-1945. Note the circular coast artillery collar insignia on the upper jacket lapel and the distinctive insignia for the 22nd Coast Artillery Regiment on the lower lapel. He is wearing the Eastern Defense Command patch on his shoulder, which were worn stateside after 1941. (courtesy Norman E. Hope)



European Theater of Operations, circa 1945.

Among the mix of styles here, most men are wearing the short-waisted M1944 "Ike" jackets. The fourth man from the left is dressed in the pre-war style "pinks and greens." The second man from the right is dressed in a service uniform that was similar to those worn at the stateside coast artillery posts.