

Rag Clippings

Steve and Dave Johnson

POST-WWI PATCHES

2nd Division Variants

As soon as we heard that *The Trading Post* was changing to all color illustrations we knew we had to produce a column befitting the new format. There are any number of patches that are colorful in their own right but two units that had a multi-colored past came immediately to mind. First was the 2nd Division from WW I into the 1920s and second was the 1st Cavalry Division in the 1920s and 30s. Both these units had many colorful variants for their subordinate units and both are highly sought after by patch collectors. As is usual with patches for which there is high demand, both series of patches have long been reproduced. For all these reasons, we decided to devote our first full-color column to these units.

In order to make this column reasonable in length we are addressing only the post-WWI variants of the 2nd Division. We occasionally see these post-war 2nd Division patches advertised at shows and on-line auctions as “WW I” and our hope is to shed a little light on that problem. For reasons we will discuss, these post-war patches are actually scarcer.

In an effort to “keep it simple” we are categorizing the post-war 2nd Division patches into three major types. The illustrations show that there are sub-variants of the three types but they fit generally into the three types. But, before we address the three major types, we should mention the hot-button issue of whether any of these patches were worn by Marines? Our answer is: “probably not” because the 5th and 6th Marine Regiments had already left the 2nd Division and reverted to their pre-war status as pure Marine units under the control of the Marine Corps. However, it is likely that some of these patches were obtained by Marines who had been members of the 2nd Division during the war and so, are sometimes found in groupings of insignia attributed to Marines.

The first of the three major types of post-war 2nd Division patches is also, seemingly, the scarcest. These appear to exist in all the shapes and colors used by the division in WW I but because we have

seen so few of these over the years we could not swear to that. The distinguishing characteristics of this series of patches are that all the Indian warrior profiles are machine embroidered on a star made of dense wool felt and the stars are sewn to dense wool felt background shapes (Figs. 1-3). The significant trait in each embroidered profile is a flowing, blue feathered headdress where the feathers are curved and pointed at the tips. Close examination of each reveals minor differences in detail that suggests more than one source for the patches or, at least, different patterns in use. For our purposes, we will call these the “Type I” variant.



Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

So why is the Type 1 variant so scarce? There are several possibilities for this. First and foremost is the size of the post-war division. It was tiny compared to what it had been in WWI. Fewer soldiers equals fewer patches. It may also be that the Type 1 was the victim of the War Department edict that shoulder patches would not be worn in peacetime. For whatever reason, the Type I is a “rare bird.”

The patch series we are calling “Type II” is more common in some respects but seems to be equally rare for some subordinate units. This type is also an embroidered Indian warrior in profile, wearing a blue headdress. In this case however, the feathers are not as curved or pointed at the tips. The feathers are also fatter. This series also exists on multiple colored and shaped backgrounds (Figs. 4-5). The stars are again made from dense wool felt and as with Type I, there are small differences in detail to be found. The thing to keep in mind about the Type II patch is that it was reproduced sometime in the late 1960s or early 1970s and the repros are good enough to make one stop and take a second look when they are on display at shows.



Figure 4.



Figure 7.

1st Cavalry Variants

In preparation for this article, a group of us convened and brought together over fifty different examples of 1st Cav patches from the 20s and 30s to examine and compare. Many of the patches are attributed examples and a number of them were on uniforms. This helped us to date the different types. We decided to keep it simple and focus on three major "Types" of these patches. Keep in mind that these patches were essentially handmade and die cut i.e. a sharp metal pattern was used to cut the pieces out of either wool or felt cloth and



Figure 5.

The third type (Type III) is most often found on the black shield background (Figure 6) that the division adopted for all its subordinate units in an effort to simplify the process. We have, however seen at least one example of a Type III with the 9th Infantry shape (Figure 7). Collectors should be aware that this may have been cut out of a black shield, however.



Figure 6.

then sewn together. Because they were hand-made, one must expect some differences among the same "Types." No one knows how many sets of the dies were made and used over the years but at least one set of dies was available for use by anyone who wanted to make a patch. This set was last seen on display in the museum at Fort Bliss, TX. However, by the 1970s the metal handle had shattered from use over the years so that no one was allowed to use it anymore.

We do know that the use of patches of these types covered a period of thirteen years from 1921 to 1934. Keep in mind throughout this narrative that the time periods we estimate are based on known dates and while an early type may show up on a newer type uniform, e.g. as a trooper changed to a newer uniform, we never found what we consider to be a later type patch on an older type uniform.

The 1st Cavalry QM uniform shown in Figure 8 is an example of what we consider to be the early standard design or Type I. The horse's head is very rudimentary, almost dog like. The lines are fairly straight and would be a simpler pattern for the die used to cut them. By comparing attributed examples and ones on uniforms we determined that these Type I patches are generally found on the standing collar uniforms.



Figure 8.

The standing collar uniform was superseded in 1926 by the lapel style coat. While it is probable that standing collar uniforms saw some use after 1926, another Type I patch we examined on a standing collar uniform was for one of the machine gun squadrons and it is impossible for that coat to have been worn after 1928 because that unit was inactivated on 1 FEB of that year.

As an example of the Type II 1st Cav patch we decided to use a Division HQs, shown in **Figure 9**. In this design the horse's head is more rounded and detailed. This patch has multiple curves on the lower cheek of the horse's head and there is more definition to the horse's forehead and nostrils than in the Type I. This example was worn between 1931 and 1933 by Colonel William Nalle when he was the G2 of the 1st Cavalry Division. We estimate that this design was prevalent from around 1928 to 1933 or so. This estimate is based on the fact that it is found on uniforms with lapels but we could not find an example on a standing collar uniform.



Figure 9

The last major variant (the Type III) we found had more of an arch to the crest of the neck and more closely resembles the horses seen in the standard WWII fully-embroidered patch as seen in the patch shown as **Figure 10**. We have talked primarily about the horse's head design in this analysis but the shapes of the shields seem to have changed over the years as well. They seem to have been narrower to begin with and got wider over time. We couldn't determine a pattern in the shape of the shield that was as definite as that of the horse.



Figure 10.

And finally, a word about the cloth that was used: we found patches made of both wool and felt but wool was the predominant material—less than 5 per cent were made from felt. Some wool was heavier and had more nap (fuzzier) and resembled felt but by holding examples up to a strong light we found that most had a discernable underlying weave and were therefore wool.

We hope this helps our fellow collectors tell the period when these patches were worn. As always, we invite comment on our opinions.

Even though this is off the subject of post-WWI patches, we thought this was an interesting patch to discuss briefly. Most patch collectors know the round, red patch with a yellow gopher as the 205th/206th Infantry Brigade which was a post-WWI unit. That would lead one to believe that the two diamond-shaped patches shown with it in **Figure 11** might be the same unit. But, look at the enlarged portion of a photo (**Figure 12**) from the unit history of the 4th Anti Aircraft Machine Gun Battalion. The collar brass is clearly



Figure 12.



Figure 11

shown and the diamond-shaped, gopher patch on the officer's shoulder is clear enough to positively identify the diamond-shaped patches as belonging to that unit.

Our thanks to ASMIC members Ross Ford, Jim Hammack for their assistance

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Bill & Kurt Keller for sharing their patches and expertise about 1st Cav patches and to Dick Graney for providing the info on the 4th AA MG Bn.

10th Bombardment Squadron (Medium)

Lineage

Constituted 10th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) 22 December 1939. Activated 1 February 1940. Redesignated 10th Bombardment Squadron (Medium) 7 May 1942. Inactivated 17 June 1944. Redesignated 10th Bombardment Squadron (Light) 11 March 1947. Activated in the reserve 18 June 1947. Inactivated 27 June 1949. Redesignated 10th Bombardment Squadron (Medium) 7 June 1955. Discontinued and inactivated, 25 June 1961.

Assignments

25th Bombardment Group, 1 February 1940; VI Bomber Command, attached 13 December 1943; and assigned 17 December 1943; 2nd Air Force, c. 9 May-17 June 1944; 341st Bombardment Group, 18 June 1947-27 June 1949; 341st Bombardment Wing, 1 September 1955-25 June 1961.

Stations

Langley Field, VA, 1 February-26 October 1941; Borinquen Field, PR, 1 November 1941; Edinburgh Field, Trinidad, c. 1 November 1942 (detachment operated from Port of Spain, Trinidad, 27 August-12 October 1943); Waller Field, Trinidad, 1 October 1943; France Field, Canal Zone, 11 December 1943-2 May 1944; Lincoln Army Air Field, NE, 25 May-17 June 1944; Westover Field, MA, 18 June 1947-27 June 1949. Abilene Air Force Base, TX, 1 September 1955-25 June 1961.

Aircraft

B-17, 1940; A-17, 1940-41; B-18, 1940-43; B-25, 1943-44; B-47, 1955-61.

Operations

Antisubmarine patrols and convoy escort in Caribbean and Pacific after 7 December 1941. Replacement training, 1943-44.



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10th Bombardment Sq (M) at France Field, CZ, VI Bomber Command, 6th Air Force, c. 1944

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