



---

U. S. Army Colors and Standards of 1808

Author(s): Edward C. Kuhn

Source: *Military Affairs*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Winter, 1941), pp. 263-267

Published by: Society for Military History

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2937578>

Accessed: 28/07/2009 12:38

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=smh>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We work with the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



*Society for Military History* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Military Affairs*.

<http://www.jstor.org>



## NOTES AND ANTIQUITIES

### *U. S. ARMY COLORS AND STANDARDS OF 1808*

The alarms of 1807 and 1808 led to an increase in the Regular Establishment of the army. In the latter year, by an act of April 12, Congress authorized the creation of five regiments of infantry and one each of light dragoons, light artillery, and riflemen. It was the function of the Secretary of War to see that these new organizations were equipped with all the necessary paraphernalia, including their flags and all that went with them. In that period it was customary for each regiment to carry a "standard," or national flag, and a "color," or regimental flag. The standard was not—as it is today—the Stars and Stripes; each branch of the services had a more or less distinctive standard bearing what purported to be the Great Seal or coat of arms of the United States.

It is doubtful if the Secretary of War knew much about flags, but even before the new force was authorized he began to secure its complement of colors. Remembering that a few years before there had been a similar alarm and a similar increase in the force, he wrote to the Purveyor of Public Supplies on March 16, 1808, "I will thank you to inform me whether there were Standards or Regimental Colors furnished by the public to the 12 Regiments raised in 1798 & 1799, and if there were, what has become of them."<sup>1</sup> A few days later, after getting in touch with his subordinates and predecessors, the Purveyor replied that he had been unable to find any record of a previous issue of emergency flags.<sup>2</sup> The Secretary was thus forced to take the matter into his own hands, and on May 9 he sent the following order to the Purveyor:

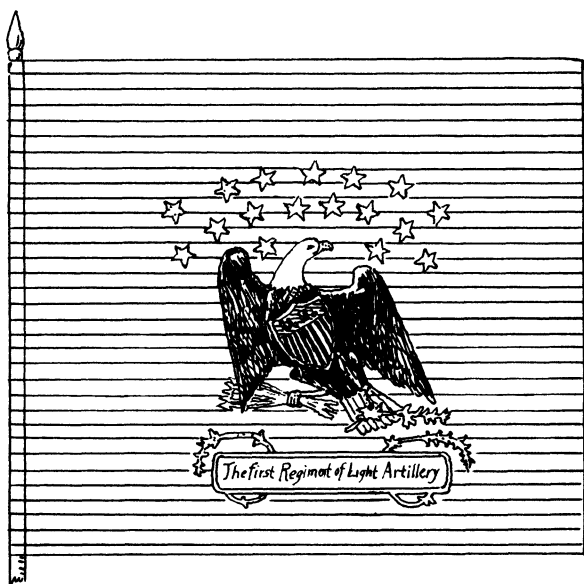
. . . Seven Regimental Standards and a equal number of Regimental Colors should also be procured.

The Standards should have a deep blue field with full spread Eagle in the Centre surrounded by 17 stars, handsomely wrought in needle work with yellow silk for the Artillery and white silk for the infantry on both sides. Under the Eagle should be the number of the Infantry Regiment, 3, 4, 5, 6, & 7; those for the Artillery designated 1st Regt Lt. Artillery—the one for the Rifle Regiment 1st Rifle Regt.—U. S. should be on the breast of the Eagle, in white silk needle work.

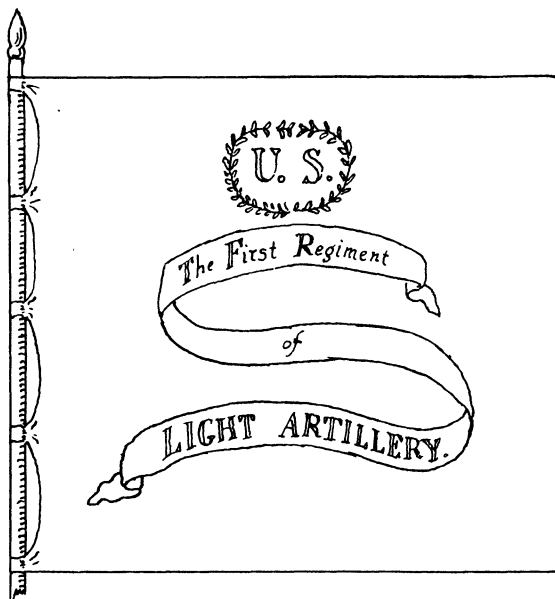
---

<sup>1</sup> Secretary of War to Tench Coxe (Secretary of War, Miscellaneous Letters Sent, III, 200 [in *The National Archives*]). For this document and the others cited below I am indebted to Mr. Detmar H. Finke.

<sup>2</sup> Tench Coxe to the Secretary of War, March 21, 1808 (Secretary of War, Document File for 1808 [in *The National Archives*]).



A



B

FLAGS OF THE 1ST U. S. LIGHT ARTILLERY  
*A, the standard, and B, the color, at the United States Military Academy.*

The size of the Standards should be two yards on the Staff & 2½ yards in length; the silk should be strong & pliant. The Eagle ought to be so large, that the extent from tip to tip of his Wings will be two and a half feet; his head should be white. If the whole of the Eagle could be handsomely wrought in the real Colors of the Eagle it would be preferred; but unless it can be well executed, it had better not be attempted.

The Standard for the light Dragoons should be of like kind, but much smaller.

The Regimental Colors, except for the Rifle Regiment, may be plain buff colored silk, with the letters U. S. & the designation of the Regiment. The Rifle Regiment colors should be green.

As the Horse will be dispersed, it may be well to have a small Company flag, or Colors, for each Company.

The size of the regimental Colors should be 5 feet on the Staff, and 6 feet in length.

The length of the Staff for the Regimental Standards should be 10 feet, including the Brass tip, and 1¼ inch in diameter from the lower end to the middle, and then tapered so as to terminate at ¾ of an inch at the top, made of strong white Ash, well painted of an Iron Color.

The staff of the Regimental Colors to be 9 feet in length, and of the size of the others, & painted in the same manner.

The ferrule for the lower end, & the tip for the upper end, should be of Brass, made neat & strong.<sup>3</sup>

Thus were issued what are probably the earliest regulations concerning United States military flags. It will be noted that the 1st and 2d Infantry Regiments were not specified. They were part of the "Old Establishment," having existed since 1784 and 1791, respectively. They already possessed their colors and standards, although the records show that new ones were later issued to them also.

The contract for the embroidery of these flags—or most of them at least—was given to the sisters Anna and Eliza Leslie of Philadelphia. Embroidery took a long while, however, and flags were needed by the new regiments for recruiting. To fill this need painted flags were ordered from William Berrett, also of Philadelphia. By 1809 both types were being issued as entries in the blotter of the United States Arsenal show:<sup>4</sup>

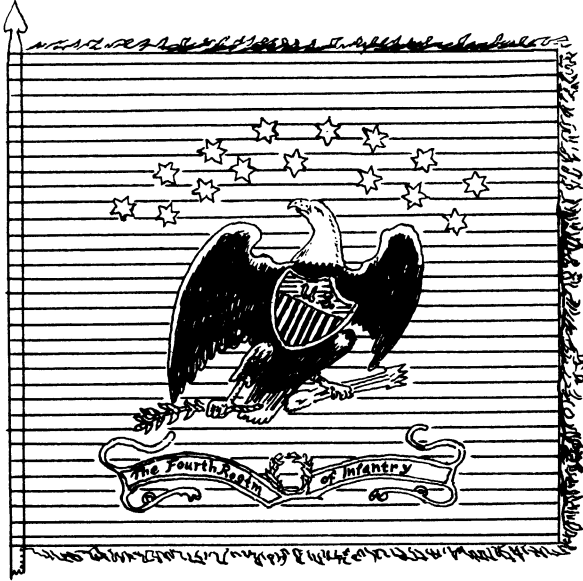
Receipt 32	November 8th [1809]
Rec'd of Tench Coxe Esqr. by E & A. Leslie	
1 standard flag L[ight] A[rtillery] embroidered 75.00	

Voucher 33	December 8th [1809]
Issued for transportation to Col. John P. Boyd, Ft. Independence	
1 Blue Standard	} 4th Regt. Inf. Painted
1 Buff Regt. Colors	
2 Pr. Cords & Tassels	
2 Flag Staves	

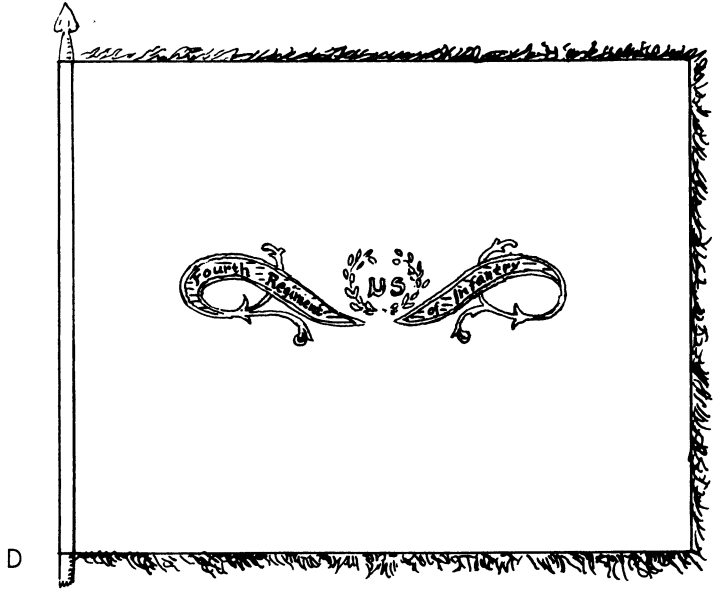
Unfortunately, the records of the War Department contain no drawings of these colors and standards. To visualize their appearance it is necessary to

<sup>3</sup> Secretary of War to Tench Coxe (Secretary of War, Miscellaneous Letters Sent, III, 249-50 [in The National Archives]).

<sup>4</sup> Blotter for 1809-12 (among miscellaneous books of the Purveyor General of Public Supplies [in The National Archives]).



C



D

**FLAGS OF THE 4TH U. S. INFANTRY**

*C, the standard, and D, the color, in the Chelsea Hospital, London.*

examine the flags preserved today which are known to have been in service during the War of 1812. Examples of these are illustrated.

The standard and color of the then newly organized Regiment of Light Artillery (figs. A and B) now hang at West Point. Both are marked "First Regiment" as ordered, suggesting that further regiments were anticipated. The regimental color (fig. B) appears white today but could once have been buff. Both are embroidered. The Arsenal blotter entry, quoted above, indicates that the standard embroidered by the Leslie sisters was blue, and other supply records of the period show that a "yellow regimental color" had been made earlier in the year for the Light Artillery.

The standard and color of the 4th Infantry (figs. C and D) are considerably different than those of the Light Artillery, but, other than being painted, they also conform to the regulations of 1808. These particular flags hung for many decades (and perhaps still do) in Chelsea Hospital in London. They were captured by the British when General William Hull surrendered the 4th Infantry with the rest of his ill-fated army at Detroit on August 15, 1812. In this connection it is interesting to note, as seen above, that painted colors were issued to the regiment in 1809. Thus, in spite of the fact that certain ladies of Boston are supposed to have presented similar flags about this time, it appears probable that the colors carried by the 4th Infantry at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811 and surrendered the following year had a much more prosaic origin.

EDWARD C. KUHN

### *MECHANIZED MOBILITY PROPOSED IN 1900*

At the turn of the century the automobile was in an experimental stage. Its potentialities in peace and in war were yet to be appreciated. That John Brisben Walker (1847-1931) was one of those who foresaw the utilization of the auto as the means of endowing armies with a higher degree of mobility is made evident in the document printed below.<sup>1</sup> Walker, a journalist and publisher of wide experience, began to manufacture the steam "Mobile" in 1898 at the factory he built at Philipse-Manor-on-the-Hudson. He served as the first president of the Automobile Manufacturers' Association.<sup>2</sup>

His letter also reflects something of the War Department's attitude in this vital matter. After receiving it, the Secretary of War, in November 1900, appointed an informal board of five officers to observe the machine in operation with a view to determining its adaptability for military use. On October 9, 1901, the five officers, with Walker and his two sons, left Jersey City in a

<sup>1</sup> Adjutant General's Office, Document File, No. 350017 (in The National Archives).

<sup>2</sup> Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1928-36), XIX, 347-48.