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Customs

THE HAND SALUTE

A Working Bibliography of MHI Sources

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GENERAL SOURCES

- "Army Salute." Army and Navy Register (14 Mar 1942): p. 25. Per.
History and meaning explained.
- Boatner, Mark M. Military Customs and Traditions. NY: McKay, 1956. pp. 45-50. U766.B574.
- Edwards, T.J. Military Customs. Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1961. pp. 213-16. U355.G7.E4.
- Ferrill, Michael. "Silver Dollar Salute." Soldiers (Jun 1989): p. 52. Per.
On an officer returning his/her first salute from a subordinate.
- Field, C. "Salutes and Saluting, Naval and Military." Journal of the Royal United Service Institute (RUSI) (Feb 1918): pp. 42-49. Per.
- Kennett, Lee. G.I.: The American Soldier in World War II. NY: Scribner's, 1987. pp. 84-85.
D769.1K46.
Representative opinions and anecdotes on the practice.
- Kozaryn, Linda. "Salute: Do I Have To?" Soldiers (Jun 1981): pp. 24-26. Per.
Advice to the soldier.
- Lovette, Leland P. Naval Customs, Traditions and Usage. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute, 1934.
pp. 23-26. U310.L68.
- Smith, George. A Universal Military Dictionary. Ottawa: Museum Restoration Service, 1969 reprint
of 1779 edition. p. 228. U24.S64.

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U.S. Army. Hawaiian Dept. Circular No 20, Ft Shafter, 3 Jun 1935. Reprinted in full, Army and Navy Register (6 Jul 1935), pp. 1 & 20. Per.

An explanation of what virtues the practice expresses.

U.S. Army Field Forces. The Senior R.O.T.C. Manual. Vol. II. Wash, DC: Office, Chief of Army Field Forces, 1948. pp. 194-96. U133.A48.

U.S. Dept of Defense. The Armed Forces Officer. Wash, DC: GPO, 1950. pp. 50-51. U133.A5.

Vetock, Dennis J. "Arms and the Child: When the Flag Salute was Suspect as Un-American." Vignettes of Military History No. 271, 14 Jan 1985. 1 p. D25A1.U58.

On the Nazi-like salute used by school children during 1905-1930s.

_____. "Saluting: It's How You Do It." Vignettes of Military History No. 232, 18 Jul 1983. 1 p. D25.A1.U58.

SALUTING IN CIVILIAN CLOTHING

The earliest reference found to hand salutes by military personnel in civilian clothing is para 805 of Emory Upton's Infantry Tactics, Double and Single Rank.... (NY: Appleton, 1874; UD160.A3). It reads: "Officers in citizens' dress are saluted in the same manner as when in uniform." Para 607 of the U.S. War Dept's Regulations of the Army of the United States and General Orders in Force on the 17th of February, 1881 contains identical wording. Para 396 of Regulations for the Army of the United States, 1895 reads as follows:

When an enlisted man without arms passes an officer he salutes with the hand farthest from the officer. If mounted, he salutes with the right hand. Officers are saluted whether in uniform or not.

The 1913 Army Regulations (Para 383, Sec 2), which were still in force in 1923, included the admonition that "in civilian dress covered or uncovered, officers and enlisted men salute military persons with the right-hand salute." Para 4(h) of AR 600-25, 30 Jul 1925, repeats that warning. On 3 Jun 1935, General Hugh Drum, commanding the Hawaiian Department, issued a circular on saluting (reprinted in Army and Navy Register, 6 Jul 1935, pp. 1 & 20). It announced:

The courtesy of the salute is incumbent on all military personnel, whether in garrison or in public places, in uniform or civilian clothes. The exchange of salutes in public places impresses the public with our professional sincerity (sic), and stamps officers and enlisted men as members of the Governmental instrumentality which insures law and order and the preservation of the nation.

On page 5 of the War Dept's 1942 Basic Field Manual, Military Courtesy and Discipline: Field Manual 21-50, one finds the following: "An enlisted man dressed in civilian clothes salutes an officer when he recognizes him, even when both are in civilian clothes." The Army and Navy Register (14 Mar 1942, p. 25) noted that early in 1940 the Army had relaxed regulations that required the salute outside of military reservations, but in 1942 the requirement for saluting beyond the limits of a post was reinstated.

Cited below are pertinent paragraphs of AR 600-25, 25 Sep 1963, and Change 4, AR 600-25, 23 Feb 1976:

3(e) If the exchange of salutes is otherwise appropriate, it is customary for military embers in civilian clothes to exchange salutes upon recognition. **(1963)**

1-3(f) Salutes are not required to be rendered or returned if either the senior or subordinate or both are in civilian attire. **(1976)**

The change in policy may have emanated from the Volunteer Army experiments of 1970-1972. References to changes in saluting procedure appear on p. 27 & 97, respectively, of the following monographs:

Latham, Willard. The Modern Volunteer Army Program: The Benning Experiment, 1970-1972. Wash, DC: Dept of Army, 1974. 146 p. U390.1.L37.

Moore, Harold G., & Tuten, Jeff M. Building a Volunteer Army: The Fort Ord Contribution. Wash, DC: Dept of Army, 1975. 139 p. U390.1.M6.

The Archives Branch holds 30 boxes of manuscript material on the "Volunteer Army (VOLAR) Evaluation Project, Fort Ord." A close study of that material may reveal references to changes in saluting procedure. For example, in Box X contains a copy of the Center of Military History's Chronology of Significant Actions and Decisions Relating to the Development of an All-Volunteer Army, 30 May 1972. Its page 63 refers to a Dept of Army message of 28 Jan 1971, which stated that salutes were "no longer required to or by personnel in vehicles (except for gate guards) or if either the senior or subordinate or both (were) in civilian clothing." (msg, DA/DCSPER to AIG 7401, 282148Z Jan 71, subj: Saluting and Wear of Military Headgear).

FORM OF HAND SALUTE IN CIVIL WAR

According to regulations, the hand salute rendered by the U.S. soldier during the Civil War resembled the British salute, i.e., with the palm facing outward. Article XXXIX of Army Regulations for 1857, 1861, and 1863 specifically prescribe that the soldier without arms or with just side-arms will "...raise his hand to the right side of the visor of his cap, palm to the front, elbow raised as high as the shoulder...." The Confederate soldier followed the same procedure. See:

Confederate States of America. Army Regulations, Adopted for Use of the Army of the Confederate States... Richmond: West & Johnston, 1861. Article XXIX, pp. 23-25. UB504.A5.

U.S. War Dept. Regulations for the Army of the United States, 1857. NY: Harper, 1857. Article XXIX, pp. 31-33. UB501.

_____. Revised United States Army Regulations of 1861... Wash, DC: GPO, 1863. Article XXIX, pp. 40-43. UB501.

Williams, Lemuel D. The American Illustrated Military Text-Book. Baltimore: Murphy, 1861. pp. 102-04, including Plate 15. UD153.W54.

An extensive but unsuccessful search for a photograph of a contemporaneous Civil War salute was conducted in our photo archives. It appears that such a photograph will be a rare find, indeed. Illustrators, rather than photographers, would have been more likely to depict the hand salute at that time, as in these examples:

Homer Winslow. "Union Officer at Fort Benton." Civil War Times Illustrated (Feb 1976): cover & p. 3. Per.

Johnson, Rossiter. Campfires and Battlefields: A Pictorial Narrative of the Civil War. NY: Blue and Grey, 1958. pp. 46 & 329. E468.7.J6.

Pyle, Howard. "Sheridan's First Interview with Rowand." Harper's Monthly (Jun 1909): p. 2. Per. See also cover of Civil War Times Illustrated (Apr 71).

Zogbaum, Rufus F. 1886 illustration from Century Magazine. In Civil War Times Illustrated (Dec 1962): pp. 6-7. Per.

_____. Drawing of cavalry. Civil War Times Illustrated (Feb 1966): p. 39. Per.

The 1863 Regulations remained in force until superseded by these of 1881. Emory Upton's new system of infantry tactics, officially adopted by the War Dept in 1867, prescribed hand salutes with "the palm of the hand down" in Lesson II. The proposed regulations of 1873 and those actually adopted in 1881 omitted the earlier specifications for hand salutes and instructed the soldier to simply raise his hand to his cap. See:

Upton, Emory. A New System of Infantry Tactics... NY: Appleton, 1867. p. 14. UD160.A3.

U.S. War Dept. Revised Army Regulations. Report, U.S. House of Representatives, 42nd Congress, 3rd session, 1 Mar 1873. pp. 50-51. UB501.

These regulations were never officially in force, but the saluting provisions therein were identical to the ones in the regulations of 1881.

During the American Revolution, the Continental soldier without arms saluted like his British counterpart; by removing his tri-cornered hat and sweeping it downward to his side. The British soldier, however, used his left hand, whereas the American soldier used his right. Soldiers without tri-cornered hats rendered hand salutes, and the British palm-outward salute can be traced at least as far back as the mid-18th century. American colonial troops probably copied the British, although specific instructions to this effect were found.

U.S. Army regulations of 1821, 1835 and 1847 provide no exact specifications for executing the hand salute, other than for the soldier to raise his hand to his cap. This vagueness certainly allows the palm-outward salute. Two recent uniform prints by H. Charles McBarron, cited below, depict that salute by Americans in the 1840's. See:

Company of Military Collectors and Historians. Military Uniforms in America, 1840-1860: Plates 52 & 91. Vol. I. SpecColl.

Field, C. "Salutes and Saluting, Naval and Military." Journal of the Royal United Service Institute (RUSI) (Feb 1918): pp. 43-44. Per.

Peterson, Harold L. The Book of the Continental Soldier. Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole, 1968. pp. 224-25. UC263.P47.

U.S. War Dept. General Regulations for the Army, or, Military Institutes. Phila: Carey, 1821. Article 7, pp. 18-19. UB501.

Wilbur, C. Keith. Picture Book of the Continental Soldier. Harrisburg: Stackpole, 1969. p. 53. E259.W5.

Wright, John W. Some Notes on the Continental Army. Vails Gates, NY: National Temple Hills Assoc, 1963. pp. 45-46. E255.W7.

It is interesting to note that there was a time when permissible to salute with either left hand or right hand, depending upon which hand was "farthest from the officer." Upton's New Infantry Tactics provided by-the-numbers instructions for both right and left hand salutes. Regulations continued to authorize this ambidextrous arrangement until 1913, which then prescribed only the right hand salute. See:

Upton, New Infantry Tactics, cited above.

U.S. War Dept. Regulations of the Army of the United States and General Orders in Force on the 17th of February, 1881. Wash, DC: GPO, 1881. p. 60. UB501.

_____. Regulations for the Army of the United States, 1913. Wash, DC: GPO, 1913. p. 79. UB501.

LATER

Allert, Tilman. The Hitler Salute: On the Meaning of a Gesture. Translated from the German by Jefferson Chase. NY: Metropolitan Books, 2008. 115 p. DD256.6.A4513.

Originally published as: Der deutsche Gruss Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn Verlag, 2005.