

U.S. Army Military History Institute
950 Soldiers Drive
Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5021
27 May 2011

Customs

UNIT CUSTOMS

A Working Bibliography of MHI Sources

CONTENTS

General Sources.....p.1
Drumming Out.....p2
“J” Company/Troop....p.2
Regimental Bowls....p.3
“Prop Blast”.....p.3
Commanders’ Coins.....p.3

GENERAL SOURCES

Harris: A Plea for the Colors.” Journal of the Military Service Institution of the US (1892):
pp. 491-500. Per.

Huston, James. “Tradition Can Help.” Combat Forces Journal (Oct 1951): pp. 38-40. Per.

DRUMMING OUT

The custom of drumming out is as old as the American Army. A general order of 23 Jan 1776, issued from Continental Army headquarters, Cambridge, MA, announced that a court-martial found Timothy Downing guilty of desertion and sentenced him to 39 lashes. Furthermore, "...it appearing to the Court that as the Prisoner is worthless and incorrigible, they order him to be drum'd out of the army." (The Writings of George Washington...1745-1795, Vol. 4. Wash, DC: GPO, 1931. p. 268. E312.7).

Like many American military customs, drumming out probably came as an inheritance from the British Army. According to The Oxford English Dictionary...on Historical Principles, Vol. III (NY: Oxford, 1933 & 1961), pp. 688-689, the term "drummed out" appeared as early as 1766. In addition, the OED found the term "Jack (John or Tom) Drum's entertainment" meant as far back as 1577 to turn an unwelcome guest out of doors.

In the US Army, drumming out of service functioned as a dishonorable discharge from a unit and cast ignominy upon the victim. Such punishment remained legal until about 1867, after which it received no official sanction, but was practiced anyway. Some examples:

Baldwin, Alice Blackwood. Memoirs of the Late Frank D. Baldwin, Major General, U.S.A.
Los Angeles, CA: Wetzel, 1929. pp. 154-55. E181.B18.
Drumming out episode, Ft Wingate, NM, 1868.

Custer, Elizabeth B. Following the Guidon. NY: Harper, 1890. pp. 311-12. F594.C952.
Drumming out incident, Ft Leavenworth, KS, 1869?.

During the Homestead Steel strike, 1892, a private in the PA National Guard was strung by his thumbs and then drummed out of camp for an "act of mutiny and treason." (He proclaimed his dislike of Henry Clay Frick, in charge of Carnegie Steel's fight against the union, and applauded the assassination attempt on him (The First Century: A History of the 28th Infantry Division, pp. 83-84; #05-28.1979).

Other sources:

Benet, Stephen V. A Treatise on Military Law and the Practice of Courts-Martial. NY: Van Nostrand, 1868. p. 200. UB500.B46.

Bowman, Allen. The Morale of the American Revolutionary Army. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, 1964. p. 142. E255.B76.

Duffy, Christopher. The Army of Frederick the Great. NY: Hippocrene, 1974. p. 63. UA718.P9.D8.

U.S. War Dept. General Order #4, dated 14 Jan 1867. MilPub-GO.
Drumming out not included on list of punishments, nor is it in Para 896 of 1881 General Regulations.

Winthrop, William. Military Law. Wash, DC: Morrison, 1886. pp. 613-19, 563-64. UB500.W5.

NO "J" COMPANY/TROOP

Boatner, Mark M., III. Military Customs and Traditions. NY: McKay, 1956. pp. 88-89. U766.B574.

Chandler, Melbourne C. Of Garry Own in Glory: The History of the Seventh United States Cavalry Regiment. Annandale, VA: Turnpike Pr, 1960. pp. 386-87. #303-7CAV.1960.

Mahon, John K., & Danysh, Romana. Infantry. Part I: Regular Army. In the official Army Lineage Series. Wash, DC: OCMH, 1972. p. 18. UA28.M352pt1.

See also:

-Entry #6705 in CMH "Thomas File" microfilm

REGIMENTAL BOWLS

Black, Robert. Papers. Arch.

Includes extensive correspondence file w/ British & American units on regimental bowls.

Brown, Fred D. History of the Ninth U.S. Infantry, 1799-1909. Chicago: Donnelley, 1909. pp. 840-41. #603-9.1909.

On the "Liscum Bowl"

Corregidor of Eternal Memory. n.p., 1946. p. 25. D767.4.U582.

On burial of 31st Infantry's Shanghai Bowl, which had been presented to the regiment by that city in 1933.

"2d Battalion, 23d Infantry [annual historical summary]," 1971. p. I. AHSColl.

On unit the Korean Bowl," made from 5,610 CIBs from members of 23rd Infantry Regiment.

PROP BLAST

(ceremony for airborne qualified troops who join a tactical organization for the first time)

Melchoir, Robert J. "307th Engineer Battalion Prop Blast: An Airborne Tradition." AWC student paper, 1991. 24 p. Arch.

Examines history of "prop blast" tradition in unit, 1951-89

The Prop Blast. [United States?: s.n., 19--]. 1 v. U353P76.

Seibert Donald. Papers. Arch.

Includes memoir of "prop blast" of airborne troops—documents concerning origin & reminiscence of 1950s ceremony.

COMMANDERS' COINS

Brooks, Jeanne F. "Coining a Tradition." Soldiers (Aug 1994): p. 30.

U.S. Army War College. Decorations, Awards and Honors: Commander's Coin and Certificate of Achievement Program: US Army War College Memorandum No. 672-4, dated 12 Sep 1995. 8 p.