

OATHS
(Commissioning and Others)

A Working Bibliography of MHI Sources

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GENERAL SOURCES

Burnham, W.P. Three Roads to a Commission in the United States Army. NY: Appleton, 1893.
pp. 158-59. UB413.B86.

Burt, Ernest H. "The Applicability of the Executive Power of Removal from Office to Commissioned Officers of the Regular Army." n.p., n.d pp. 10-12. UB412.B95.
Commission statement reproduced.

Callan, John F. The Military Laws of the United States..Phila: Childs, 1863. UB500.1863.A2.
See index, "Oaths."

Coffman, Edward M. "The Army Officer and the Constitution." Parameters (Sep 1987): pp. 2-12. Per.
See especially pp. 4-6.

Cogswell, David G. "The Soldier's Oath and Politics: or, What Role Should Military Men Play in the Politics of a Democracy?" AWC student paper, 1962. 49 p. Arch.

The Officer's Guide. 35th edition. Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole, 1970. pp. 2-4. U133.A6.O33.
Reproduction of oath.

Reese, Thomas H. "An Officer's Oath." AWC student paper, 1963. 85 p. Arch.

_____. "An Officer's Oath." Military Law Review: Department of the Army Pamphlet 27-100-25, dated Jul 1964. pp. 1-41. Per.

_____. "An Officer's Oath." Military Review (Jan 1964): pp. 24-31. Per.

_____. "The Oaths of Allegiance." US Naval Institute Proceedings (Sep 1965): pp. 52-63. Per.

See also:

-Bibliography on Codes & Creeds in Ethics.

US CIVIL WAR

For West Point graduates, the academy's oath must first be considered. Cadets received a "warrant" when admitted. Although early editions of USMA regulations do not reproduce the exact wording of this warrant, they treat it more as written contract than oath. Later editions contain a codified version of the warrant. Interestingly, the only significant divergence in the wording is in the 1839 edition, which required the prospective cadet to "pledge my word of honor as a gentleman." Such words are missing from the 1853 and 1857 editions. See:

U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Letter From the Secretary of War Transmitting a Copy of the Rules and Regulations for the Government of the Military Academy at West Point... Wash, DC: GPO, 1820. p. 14. U410.C3.1820.A3RareBook.

U.S. Military Academy. Regulations of... NY: Harper, 1832. p. 7. U410.C3.U55RareBook.

_____. Regulations Established for the Organization and Government of the Military Academy... NY: Wiley & Putnam, 1839. p. 10. U410.C3.1839.A3RareBook.

_____. Regulations... NY: Trow, 1853. p.6. U410.C3.1853RareBook.

_____. Regulations... NY: Trow, 1857. p. 11. U410.C3.1857RareBook.

Possibly in response to the exodus of officers to southern service, Congress formalized an oath for the cadets on 3 Aug 1861. Refusal to accept what was then formally identified as an allegiance "oath" meant dismissal from the service. See:

Callan, John F. The Military Laws of the United States... Phila: Childs, 1863. pp. 483-84. UB500.C3.

For the US Army as a whole, all officers and enlisted men were required to execute an oath upon entry. Several Congressional acts passed between 1790 and 1813 prescribed the following oath, which was not altered until 2 Jul 1862:

I, A. B., do solemnly swear, or affirm, (as the case may be,) that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the United States of America; and that I will serve them honestly and faithfully against their enemies or opposers whomsoever; and that I will observe and obey the orders of the President of the United States, and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the rules and articles of war.

The legality of the officers' abandonment of Federal service has been debated at length, but no scholarly study of the subject has been located. Another interesting aspect is the apparent discrepancy between resignation rights of officers and enlisted men. Commissioned officers felt they were releasable, unlike soldiers, who had enlisted for a prescribed period of time. However, the lack of any study of the noncommissioned and enlisted reaction to secession makes a comparison impossible. Ellsworth Eliot's West Point in the Confederacy (NY: Baker, 1941; E586.U5.E5), briefly explores legal aspects. He observes, p. 12, that "nearly all of the Southern graduates serving in the United States Army at the time the War broke out tendered their resignation before entering the confederate service, some without hesitation..." discard their commission. He does not, however, deal with the question of such officers then taking up arms against Federal authority. See:

-Patterson, Gerald A. "Rebels from West Point." American History Illustrated (Apr 1985): pp. 18-27. Per.

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Spiller, Roger L. "Animo et Fide: The Enlisted Response to Officer Resignations in Regular Army Mounted Units, 1861." MA thesis, Stephen F. Austin State, 1986. 160 p. E492.5.S65.
Uncovers no mass desertion to Confederate cause.

GERMANY-WWII

Kane, Robert B. "The Hitlerian Oath of Loyalty of August 2, 1934: Origins, Consequences, and Significance." PhD dss, U CA-LA, 1997. 413 p. UA712.K36.

May, Ernest R. "Conscience and Command." MHQ (Summer 2000): pp. 68-75. Per.
German officer corps oath of loyalty juxtaposed against the Army's tradition of disobedience for the good of the state.