



The Chosen Ground
Command Set No.2,
1st Corps Flagbearer
Mounted, No.31073



Union 2nd Corps Flagbearer
Dismounted, No.31115

A Mark of Distinction

James H. Hillestad, Member No. 6, focuses on Union Army Corps insignia

Corps badges were designed to identify troops in the field. An army corps was a large organization, made up of three divisions, each consisting of 10,000 to 12,000 men. In turn, divisions were made up of brigades and regiments.

The origin of corps badges is at-



tributed to General Philip Kearny. In 1862, he issued orders for soldiers in his command to place a two-inch square of red cloth on their hats, to avoid confusion on the battlefield. Kearny's idea was adopted by General Joseph Hooker the following year, after he assumed command of the Army of the Potomac. The goal was that the corps to which any

soldier belonged could be identified at a distance.

General Daniel Butterfield, Hooker's chief of staff, designed the distinctive badge shape for each corps. Further, to designate each of the three divisions of a corps, the badges were made in the three colors of the U.S. flag, red, white and blue.

The insignia were to be worn on the top of the forage cap. The purpose of this positioning was to allow officers, provost marshals (military police), and messengers riding by on horses, to look down on soldiers and immediately identify their corps and division.

These distinctive shapes were incorporated into corps headquarters flags. These flags marked the location of the commander on the battlefield and in camp, making it easier for him to be found by messengers. The corps headquarters flag was blue with a swallow-tail. Division flags were rectangles, and brigade flags were triangles.

The soldiers rapidly took to wearing the new corps badges, and most of them enjoyed having the distinctive symbol. Confederate troops did not have corps



ABOVE
This star leaves no doubt that the 28th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry was in the 12th Corps at Gettysburg.

badges, and never adopted anything like it.

Years after the end of the war, when veterans of the Army of the Potomac returned to Gettysburg to erect their monuments, they included their old corps symbols in their stone memorials. ■

LEFT
The insignia on the top of this forage cap signifies it belonging to the 2nd Army Corps, 1st Division.

Jim Hillestad operates under the name The Toy Soldier Museum. His museum, containing more than 35,000 figures and a large collection of militaria, is located in the Pocono Mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania. For directions and hours, call him at 570/629-7227, or visit his new website: www.the-toy-soldier.com

Note: In 1863 all corps flags used a white botonee cross (shown in figures at top of page) with the corps number in red. The second pattern corps flags would eventually adopt the distinct insignia seen on the next page.

Army of the Potomac Insignia at the Battle of Gettysburg

	1st Division	2nd Division	3rd Division
1st Army Corps			
2nd Army Corps			
3rd Army Corps			
5th Army Corps			
6th Army Corps			
11th Army Corps			
12th Army Corps			