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HISTORY OF THE NCO ESSAY

NCO IN THE AMERICAN ARMY (1775-1865)

The history of the United States Army and the noncommissioned officer began in 1775. It began with the birth of Continental Army, he did not copy the ways of the British. He like the American Army blended traditions of the French, British, and Prussian armies into a uniquely American institution. As the years progressed, the American Army noncommissioned officer removed themselves from their European counterparts, and created the American noncommissioned officer.

In the early days of the American Revolution little standardization of the NCO duties or responsibilities existed. In 1778 during long hard winter at Valley Forge, Inspector General Friedrich von Steuben standardize NCO duties and responsibilities in his Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the troops of the United States that was printed in 1779. This works commonly called the Blue Book layed down the duties and responsibilities for corporals, sergeants, first sergeant, quartermaster sergeants and sergeant major which were the NCO ranks at the time. It also emphasized the importance of selecting the best qualified soldiers for the rank of noncommissioned officer.

The duties that were set forth by von Steuben:

The Sergeant Major served as the assistant to the regiment adjutant. He kept rosters, formed details, handled matters concerning the management and discipline of the regiment.

The Quarter Sergeant assisted the regimental quartermaster, whose would assumed the duties as the Quartermaster in his absence. He also supervised the proper loading and transport of the baggage when on marches.

The First Sergeant enforced discipline and encouraged duty among the troops, maintained the duty roster, made morning reports, The roster listed the name, age, height, place of birth and prior occupation of every enlisted man in the unit.

Sergeants and corporals were expected to instruct recruits in all matters of the military training, including the order of their behavior in regard to neatness and sanitation.

In battle NCOs were to close the gaps occasioned by casualties and encourage men to silence, and to fire rapidly and true. The development of a strong NCO corps helped sustain the Continental Army through severe hardship to final victory.

Von Steuben called the NCO the “backbone” of the Army and his regulations established the centerpiece for the duties and responsibilities from 1778 to the present.

During the early stages of the American Revolution the typical Continental Army NCO wore an epaulet to signify his rank. Corporals wore green, and sergeants wore red epaulets. After 1779, sergeants wore two epaulets, while corporals retained a single epaulet. From the American Revolution to World War II the noncommissioned officer received his promotion from the regimental commander.

Three NCOs received special recognition for acts of heroism during the American Revolution. These men, Sergeant Elijah Churchill, Sergeant William Brown, and Sergeant Daniel Bissell, were awarded the Badge of Military Merit, a purple heart with a floral border and the word “merit” inscribed across the center. This award was the precursor of the Medal of Honor introduced during the Civil War.

When the United States declared war on Britain on 18 June 1812, the total Army numbered 11,744 men. The real basis for defense lay in the militias from the states, control of the militias centered in the states. To reduce the cost of maintaining an Army, units were often called to fight on short notice and sent home after the action.

In 1821 the first reference to noncommissioned officer chevron was made by the War Department. A general Order directed that sergeants major and quartermaster sergeants would wear a worsted chevron on each arm above the elbow, sergeants and senior musicians, one on each arm below the elbow, and corporals, one on the right arm above the elbow. This practice was officially discontinued in 1829. The first school of instruction was opened at Fort Monroe in 1824 this school instructed entire units, instead of individuals, in the use of artillery. Although it was suspended from time to time it would be the precursor for modern technical training. In 1832 Congress added to the ranks of noncommissioned officers, creating the ordnance sergeant. This was a specialized position, with duties centering around receiving and preserving the ordnance, arms, ammunition, and other military stores of the post for which he was assigned. The

annexation of Texas in 1845, and American desires for California, led to war with Mexico in 1846. The United States raised 115,000 troops, 73,000 were volunteers. NCOs often led the small detachments sent out from frontier forts to discourage Indians attacks on settlers or other troubles. The civil war marked a radical change in the American warfare, it brought the total war to American. This war required a large number of draftees and the launching of a massive campaign. New forms of technology to shape the Army during the civil War, railroads, telegraph communications, steamships, balloons and other innovations. These innovations would impact on the noncommissioned officer rank structure and pay. Pay for US troops during the Civil War varied according to branch and rank, with more technical fields receiving greater pay. As early as 1861, Army Regulations stated the pay scale as follows:

CAVALRY

Sergeant Major	\$21.00
Quartermaster Sergeant	21.00
Chief Bugler	21.00
First Sergeant	20.00
Sergeant	17.00

Corporal	14.00
Bugler	13.00
Furrier and Blacksmith	13.00
Private	13.00

ORDNANCE

Master Armorer	34.00
Master Carriage-Maker	34.00
Master Blacksmith	34.00
Artificer	17.00
Laborer	13.00

HOSPITAL STEWARDS

First Class	\$22.00
Second Class	20.00

Soldiers in the west were called upon to build or repair housing and fortifications, repair roads and bridges, serve as blacksmiths or bakers, performs guard duty, and other tasks. It was a hard life, pay was poor, and desertion was common. NCOs were fully tested in their abilities to maintain effective fighting units. Married NCO wives had a hard life, often working as laundresses or maids. Their meals consisted of beans, bacon, beef and hardtack, with eggs, sugar and other staples being too high-priced for their budgets. The NCOs first start during this period set the standards for what NCOS are today the back

bone of the Army and the reason our Army is the best trained, most professional, and most respected in the world. First-line supervisor execute day-to-day operations with precision whenever and wherever duty calls.

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A Short History of the NCO

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NCO History

<http://www.ncohistory.com>