

## Before Chevrons.

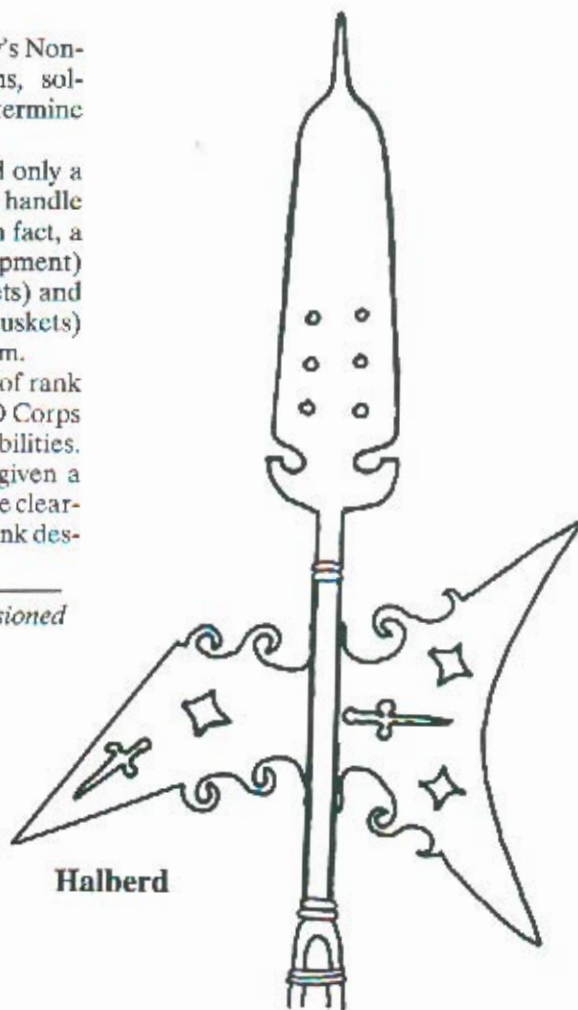
By L. R. Arms

**C**hevrons serve to identify the rank of today's Non-commissioned officers. Before chevrons, soldiers looked for other visual signals to determine the rank of NCOs.

During the American Revolution, NCOs carried only a halberd (typically a battle ax and pike mounted on a handle about six feet long) or sword to signify their rank. In fact, a variety of visual systems (items of clothing or equipment) were adopted—from colored shoulder pads (epaulets) and aiguillettes to types of weapons (halberds, swords, muskets) to colored sashes—before chevrons became the norm.

From 1779 to 1856, NCO insignias or indicators of rank changed a number of times due to growth in the NCO Corps and the need to clarify NCO duties and responsibilities. Epaulets gave way to chevrons and the NCO was given a unique device to display rank. The NCO ranks became clearly differentiated from each other and the specialist rank designation began to emerge. ■

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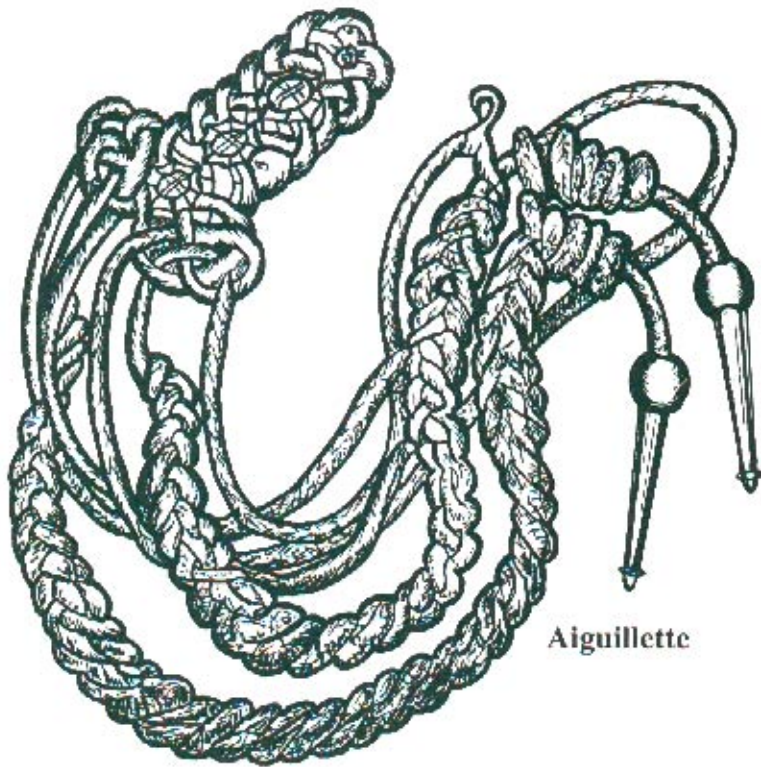


Halberd



Musket

# Identifying NCO Rank



Epaulet

