

# **‘Follow Me!’**

## ***A Brief History of the Infantry School Shoulder Patch***

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The shoulder patch of the U.S. Army Infantry School at Fort Benning dates back to just after World War I. There have been subtle changes over the years, but the basic elements and meaning are the same.

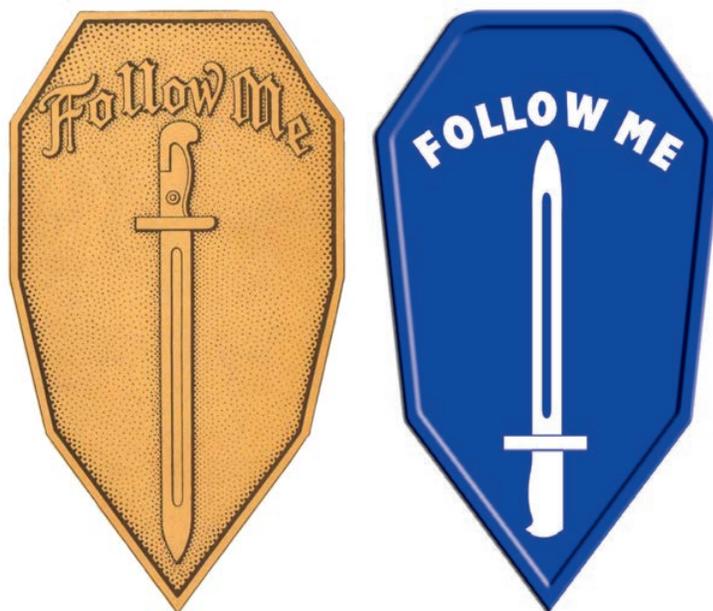
Army Soldiers began wearing theater-produced shoulder patches on their uniforms during the last few weeks of World War I. The first was the 1st Division’s “Big Red One” of red felt. The other divisions, corps, armies, and a few specialty units down to aerial squadron created and wore their own patches. It was considered unique for the new Camp Benning to create a shoulder patch for a school rather than a unit.

The elements are the shield of a foot Soldier, the U.S. Model 1905 Rifle Bayonet, the background color of Infantry blue, and the motto “Follow Me!” While there are a number of legends regarding BG Henry L. Benning using the order at the Battle Chickamauga, etc., the motto is adopted from a command in the 1918 Infantry Drill Regulations for a leader to get a group of Infantry Soldiers to move at their direction in the field.

In 1922 to 1923, the U.S. Army officially recognized the Infantry School as a branch school and authorized the post name change to “Fort Benning” as a permanent installation. At the same time, the tip of the bayonet was reversed from the attitude of honoring the dead to the position of combat at the end of a rifle. The motto then was changed to block letters to make it easier to machine embroider.

During the Vietnam War, a subdued green and black version of the “Follow Me” patch was created for wear on fatigue uniforms in garrison just as the troops would wear in combat. The patch was last “sealed” in 1967 and the official sample is with The Institute of Heraldry files in Washington, D.C. Since the original form of the Camp Benning Infantry School patch was only in use for a little over four years, the appearance of the symbol with the bayonet pointing downwards helps date early documents or booklets. Pictured are some of the favorite examples of the early Infantry School symbol.

Figure 1 — Versions of the U.S. Army Infantry School Patch



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Figure 2 — A page from the original 1920-21 Infantry School Company Officers and Basic Officers Course class book, *The Doughboy*. (Many of these old publications can be accessed on the Donovan Research Library's website at <https://www.benning.army.mil/Library/Doughboy/index.html>.)

