

General List Cap Badge



DEFINITION

The **general list cap badge** was a standard badge worn by soldiers of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) during the First World War. In principle, the **general list cap badge** distinguished Canadian soldiers from their British counterparts. In practice, however, most Canadian units and formations designed and purchased their own distinctive cap badges.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many Canadian commanders did not approve of the use of privately-purchased distinctive cap badges, believing that they undermined discipline.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

When the Canadian government raised the first contingent of troops for overseas service in 1914, it organized volunteers into a series of numbered battalions that would make up the CEF. Many of the volunteers had belonged to militia regiments before the war, and incorporated the culture and identity of their militia regiments into the new numbered battalions.

One way of expressing this identity was by designing a cap badge for the unit, rather than using the **general list cap badge**.

These distinctive badges were often similar to the **general list cap badge**, with small differences like the addition of the unit's number. As a rule, distinctive badges were purchased out of pocket or using the profits of canteen sales.

Despite the proliferation of distinctive cap badges, many Canadian soldiers wore the **general list cap badge**. In some cases, a unit chose not to design a distinctive badge, and in others there were not enough copies to outfit newly-arrived members of a unit.

EVOLUTION/DEVELOPMENT

Although many variations of the **general list cap badge** exist, the badge has three common features:

- The background is a stylized maple leaf
- The maple leaf is superimposed with the British crown
- The maple leaf is superimposed with the word Canada

VOCABULARY LIST

Battalion:

During the First World War, a *battalion* was a military unit consisting of approximately 1,000 infantry soldiers. Normally organized into four equally-sized companies of soldiers, battalions were the key elements that commanders used to attack the enemy, or to defend positions against enemy attacks. In the British and Canadian forces, four battalions were grouped together to form a brigade, and three brigades formed a division.

Canadian Expeditionary Force:

The military force that the Canadian government raised to serve overseas during the First World War.

Canteen:

A place where food, drinks, and other amenities such as tobacco were sold or provided to soldiers. Many battalions operated their own canteens during the First World War, as did philanthropic organisations such as the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).

Militia:

In common English usage, a *militia* is understood to be a non-professional military force. In the Canadian context during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the peacetime army was called the Militia. The Canadian Militia consisted of two basic components. The Permanent Active Militia included career soldiers who served full time. The Non-Permanent Active Militia included a much larger body of citizen volunteers who served on a part-time basis, and who otherwise earned their livings in civilian trades and professions.

Numbered battalions:

During the First World War, the Canadian government did not send existing Militia forces overseas. Instead, it solicited volunteers for a series of newly organized numbered battalions (1st Battalion, 2nd Battalion, et cetera) for overseas service. These battalions comprised the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Units and formations:

Terms describing two generic types of military organizations. Units are generally understood to be smaller organizations, and formations are generally understood to be larger organizations which comprise several units or formations. For example, a division is a formation made up of several brigades, which are also formations. The brigades are formed of several battalions, which are considered to be units.