

Insignia of Airborne Units

U.S. Army

Second World War

Airborne Breast Oval Background Trimmings



**Airborne Artillery Background Trimming
with Parachutist Badge**



**Embroidered Background Trimming (1)
with Glider Badge**

Most airborne units had a distinct oval cloth insignia worn under the parachutist or glider badge on the left breast. In 1941 when then Captain William P. Yarborough of the 501st Parachute Battalion returned to Fort Benning with the first 350 Parachutist's Badges there was a concern that the badges were small and did not stand out when worn on the uniform. To remedy this Captain Yarborough designed an oval background trimming to be worn under the badge and frame it on the uniform. The original trimmings used by the 501st were red with blue borders and were handmade of felt. During the course of the Second World War the original 501st Parachute Infantry Battalion was incorporated into the 503rd Parachute Infantry. Other airborne units were formed that adopted their own oval background trimmings in various color combinations. Army regulations existed that permitted units to adopt trimmings in addition to the familiar enameled crests distinctive insignia. Today the buff strap of the Third Infantry Regiment is the best-known of these regimental trimmings. In the course of the war the War Department suspended adoption of new trimmings and it does not appear that airborne background trimmings were officially approved by the War Department during the Second World War. Nevertheless, they were manufactured using regimental funds and widely worn. Background trimmings found their way into the official uniform regulations during the postwar period and are still proudly worn by airborne units today.

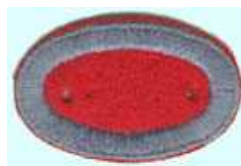


**Glider Badge and Background Trimmings
325th Glider Inf. Regt.**

Airborne oval background trimmings existed for most of the parachute infantry regiments. In addition ovals in the colors of branches of service existed for other combat branches (such as the artillery one above) and also support troops within the airborne divisions and for headquarter units. An exacting tally of all of the trimming variations and units of the Second World War has not been published, but a good source of information is Les Hughes' article: "Cloth Airborne Insignia of WWII: A Primer" The Trading Post (LIV Jan-Mar 1995):33-40.

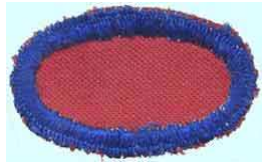
Examples

501st Parachute Infantry Battalion



The First Airborne Background Trimming

Parachute Infantry Regiments



501st



502nd



503rd



504th



505th



506th



507th



508th



511th



513th



515th



517th(2)



541th

Parachute Infantry Battalions



509th(3)



542nd



555th

Infantry Airborne Battalions



551th

Glider Infantry Regiment



325th (with Embroidered Glider)

Parachute Field Artillery Battalion



467th

Airborne Division Headquarters



11th

82nd

Miscellaneous Units



Medical (4)

Engineer (5)

Infantry Unassigned

127th Airborne Engineer Bn.

Airborne oval background trimmings that were worn during the Second World War differ from more modern ones in that they have a more narrow border and that they often are more "football" shaped than "racetrack" shaped. These differences can be subtle and there are exceptions. Some there made with two small holes for the hinge and the clasp of the qualification badge's pin or

clutches. Double borders exist on some trimmings and some occasionally have the image of a parachutist's or glider badge embroidered within the oval.



**504th Para. Inf. Regt.
Postwar Example
On Olive Drab Shirt**