

Donation of the Month

Petty Officer WWI Navy blue dress uniform

Donated by: Guy Rand
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In August 1791 the Secretary of the Navy wrote up instructions for officer uniforms; and by 1802 the Secretary instituted the blue and gold colors for the uniform. Between 1894 and 1973 the uniform specification didn't change much and even today's Navy uniform is very similar to those worn during WWI.



This dress uniform was worn by Lawrence Perry Sr., who during the war was known as John L.E. Perry. The dress uniform was worn during ceremonies, inspections and liberties. Pictured here is the flared trousers and "overshirt" typical of the era. As with all uniforms a rating badge is found on the sleeve. Perry's rating badge includes the eagle (common to all petty officers), the specialty mark (showing the trade), and the chevron (indicating rank). Perry's specialty mark is the wheel indicating that he was a Quartermaster. Quartermasters were responsible for safe navigation of the ship and took orders directly from the captain. Perry has one chevron indicating he was a 3rd class Quartermaster. Lower on the right sleeve is a bullseye patch, which indicates that Perry was an expert rifleman. This small patch called a distinguishing mark was worn by non-rated men or petty officers to note special qualifications or distinctions above basic training.



It wasn't until the mid-20th century that the United States earned its reputation as a naval power. Much of the reputation was due to the naval forces of WWII and later battles in the Pacific Ocean. Despite this recent distinction the origins of this branch of the military can be traced back to the Continental Navy of the Revolutionary War. While the force was disbanded after the war, Congress was given the power to reinstate it; which happened with the Naval Act of 1794. Under the Act 6 frigates were commissioned. By WWI the United States had a good size navy; and upon entering the war in 1917 many ships were sent to the Atlantic along the Western European shores or into the Mediterranean. Today, the United States retains a large naval force stationed throughout the world.

"Navy Uniform History," US Military, featured on: <http://usmilitary.about.com/od/navy/l/bluniformhist.htm>

"U.S Navy Uniforms and Insignia of World War I," Naval Reference, featured on: http://www.naval-reference.net/uniforms/ww1/ww1_uniform_index.html

"World War 1 at Sea: United States Navy," Naval History, featured on: <http://www.naval-history.net/WW1NavyUS.htm>

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