

The Pennsylvania Uniform and the Constable

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Governments around the world and throughout history have used tokens and other recognizable identifiers to assert legal authority among the people. As far back as ancient Egypt, pharaohs used objects to symbolically represent authority.[1] The patriarch Judah used a *chotam* and a *matteh* to symbolize his role and authority in ancient Israel.[2] Military patches today are used to represent rank, experience, and allegiance.[3] A public official who does not bear any token of authority will not be recognized and will be disregarded. An official who bears insufficient or inaccurate symbolism, will likely be misidentified and may still be questioned or disregarded. Symbols of authority include patches, badges, and other regalia, and make the total uniform an important method of communicating the authority of a public official.

This principle applies to law enforcement today. Pennsylvania State Constables are no exception. There is not currently a universal uniform for all Pennsylvania Constables because each office is an independent governmental entity.[4] No evidence is known that an official uniform ever existed. It is this absence of formal symbolism that erodes the authority of the office. The title State Constable indicates that the state of Pennsylvania is the issuing authority. While constables are locally elected, they serve statewide and operate a law enforcement agency of the state of Pennsylvania. To think otherwise would result in Johnstown Constables, Pittsburgh Constables, and Allentown Constables. But that is not the case. Individual cities can employ police as employees, but those employees do not have state jurisdiction because a city does not have authority to grant state jurisdiction. Cities do not issue state authority. The state of Pennsylvania issues state authority to constables who are locally elected. The only constables that exist in Pennsylvania are State Constables. There are no city constables. Therefore since the issuing authority is the state, the uniform should also be issued from the state and be universal throughout the Commonwealth. A citizen deserves the right to identify those who have authority over them at a glance without having to do research and investigate. There is no question that all state constables need to utilize a common uniform and

symbolism.

That being the case, upon what basis is selection of the uniform made? It shouldn't be made on the basis of fashion or on a whim. The decision should not be locally driven based upon the trends of one community or county. Whatever the decision is, **it must necessarily be based upon history, tradition, and symbolism.**

Pennsylvania State Constable Uniform

A uniform is valuable because it identifies the specific authority of an official at a glance. Even if they recognize an official as law enforcement, the uniform should indicate the level of authority and jurisdiction. The issuing authority of a State Constable is the state, so the uniform should also be a state issued uniform, and it should be the same uniform across the Commonwealth. When the public interacts with a Pennsylvania State Constable they should immediately recognize the uniform and identify it no matter which part of the state they are in. The uniform should communicate law-enforcement with state-wide authority.

Since Pennsylvania Constables have not had official uniforms, in order to determine what the uniforms would have been or should have been, we have to step back and take a look at the evolution of the constable and what uniforms were utilized. Law enforcement and policing in the United States developed from the British, and followed the settlers who travelled from England to settle in the North American English colonies.[5]

In Anglo-Saxon times, the Frankpledge system was utilized for protection and law enforcement. [6] In this system, communities appointed a group of approximately ten males to defend the community and pursue criminals. These organized militia groups were called tithings. Additionally,

one to three constables were elected to lead each tithing.[7] These constables were known as parish constables or petty constables. During this same time, the office of Lord High Constable was established in England. This office is one of the Great Offices of State in Great Britain and the Lord High Constable was the leader of the English military forces, among other things.[8][9] These two different kinds of constables did similar things, but on different levels. The office of High Constable was a continuous position until 1521. Since that time, the position remains in abeyance except for periodic ceremonial purposes.

When the British military was organized in 1645, the new position of Commander In Chief arose and assumed the High Constable duty of commanding the military. This equates to the continuation of the Lord High Constable role under a different name. Law enforcement was always military, and constables were always law enforcement. So constables always performed a defacto military or paramilitary function. Constables and military fulfilled interchangeable and overlapping roles.

At the time of American colonization, the uniforms that existed in England relating to constables were the Commander In Chief, and the British regular soldiers. The Commander in Chief during the period of the American Revolution was Jeffrey Amherst, who is pictured below. This is



closest thing to a constable uniform before the United States came into being.

The national High Constable position did not carry over into the American colonies, but the constable concept did, although states did have High Constables. Law enforcement in the American colonies was handled by constables informally much in the manner that the Frankpledge system had in England.[9][10] Sheriffs were appointed by governors, and constables were appointed by the people. [11] That is the end of the British contrinution and heritage prior to our independence and ability to create our own uniforms.

So where does the constable uniform path go from here? There are two ways to look at it. The first is: What did other states do about Constable uniforms? Massachusetts had petty constables with local authority since colonial times, but around the time of the War between the States, Massachusetts introduced uniformed constables with state authority.[12] Pictured below is a picture of the first known



constable uniform in the United States. In the portrait, Constable Hair is wearing a military style tunic with centered buttons and a badge over the heart.

The second way is to use the way that Great Britain developed, and project that if the American colonies continued to remain part of them, that this is what our uniform would have been. When you consider the portraits in the list of British Commanders-in-Chief, a distinction can be noticed in the early 1800's. The uniforms before this time reflect the Renaissance Era formalwear. The Commander-in-Chief that wore the uniform that has remained until current times is Arthur Wellesley and he is pictured below. Wellesley bears the classic tunic that evolved into the well-known uniform used by



London constables. Pictured below is a London constable in the 1800's.



What is common in the Massachusetts and London examples is the military style tunic, center buttons, and mandarin collar. Since this style of uniform was solidified by Arthur Wellesley, I call this style the Wellesley Protocol.

Constables operating in a ceremonial manner, or working low-threat duty or traffic control may want to adhere to a buttoned collar. High-threat or tactical duty environments are more appropriately served using what is known as a combat shirt. The combat shirt features Wellesley protocol, but utilizes a zip up collar.

Pennsylvania State Constable Colors

The colors are also an important component of any uniform. Along with the uniform style, the color also communicates important things and is the most readily visible part. As previously discussed, the Pennsylvania State Constable originated with constables in England. The basis for the constable colors comes from the position of Lord High Constable, Commander-in-Chief of the military, and British regular soldiers. The Yeoman of the Guard wore red at the coronation of King Henry VIII in 1509. When the New Model Army was organized in 1645, the color red became standardized as the military color.[13]The English army has worn the classic red tunic since as early as the Battle of the Dunes in 1658.[14] Here we show the redcoats of the British army.



The above picture shows the Constable of the Tower in London, England. The office of constable has historically been a military position, among other things.[15]

In referencing the difference between the High Constable and a petty constable, we see that a High Constable more of a military position, and a petty constable was less so, and more of a paramilitary and less formal official. Let's look at this picture again. Here is the equivalent of a



petty constable who performed law enforcement duties. His color is predominantly black. We see here

another below.



Here is a modern police constable in London pictured below. These are the classic black and



white checkered pattern even down to the tie that people associate with constables.

The conclusion is that historic colors of High Constables and military are red. Current as well as historic petty constables in England are black and white. A reasonable conclusion is that the colors of High Constables are red, and the color of petty constables are black and white or simply black. Pennsylvania currently does not have a statewide High Constable, but probably should. If that occurs, the color red should be incorporated into the state seal and uniform of the Commonwealth High Constable. Those of us who are locally elected by our communities are considered petty constables, and can reasonably be represented by the color black or the combination of black and white. This pattern is easily understood, accepted, and recognized by the public around the world.

Pennsylvania State Constable Badge

A search of the oldest Pennsylvania Constable badges yields a variety of results. They are too numerous to suggest that there has been an official tradition in Pennsylvania.







A six-pointed star is commonly used among Pennsylvania Constables today, although not universally at this point.

Pennsylvania State Constable Patch

There are a number of patches that are utilized, and there are too many to suggest that one is an official Pennsylvania Constable patch.



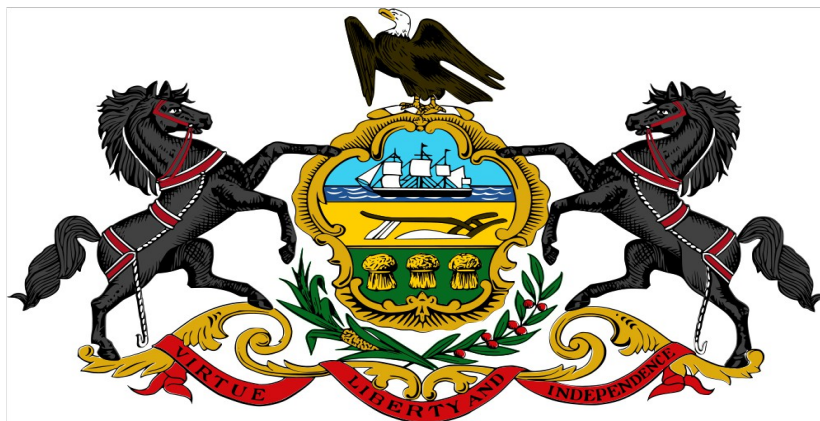


Heraldry is the practice of announcing or identifying authority. This is the basis for patches and other regalia. The history is much too voluminous to outline here. Concisely, Pennsylvania has official emblems that are used to represent the Commonwealth. They are listed here below.

Pennsylvania State Seal



Pennsylvania Coat of Arms

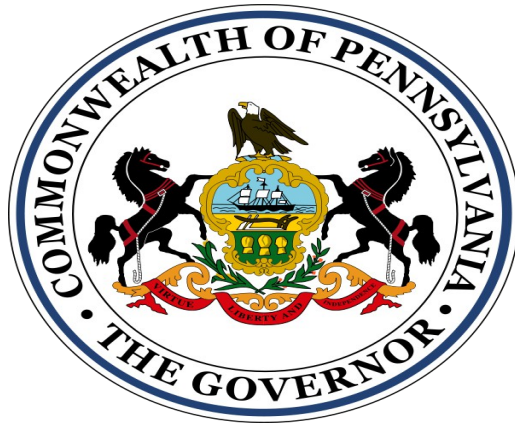


Pennsylvania State Flag



It is evident that the Coat of Arms is composed of the Great Seal with horses in the rampant pose on each side and the state motto below. The flag is simply the Coat of Arms in a field of blue.

The State Seal is used as “a symbol of authenticity which verifies that proclamations, commissions and other papers of the state are legal and official[16]”. This means that the Seal is used to give authenticity to documents. A coat of arms represents an individual.[17] That means that the Pennsylvania Coat of Arms gives authenticity and authority to an individual, and the Seal of the State of Pennsylvania gives authority to a document. See the Governor's Seal below.



A public official is not a document, and therefore can not be embossed or sealed. The Coat of Arms symbolizes authority on display. No badge, patch, or decal officially represents the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania without the Pennsylvania Coat of Arms.

While Pennsylvania State Constables have not had official uniforms, the Pennsylvania National Guard has. Why is that important? Look at the Pennsylvania National Guard patch.



The patch bears the Coat of Arms and designates the soldier as an official who is empowered with authority by the State of Pennsylvania. It also bears the color red. This is traditionally the color of a military official. The point is that the closest thing to a Pennsylvania Constable patch, is going to

be a Pennsylvania National Guard patch. The Pennsylvania National Guard is an interesting merger of a High Constable and a petty constable.

A reasonable Pennsylvania State Constable Patch should necessarily include the Pennsylvania Coat of Arms to demonstrate authority granted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Without it, there is no authority. Do not wear a seal unless you are a document. This will embarrass us among those who understand symbolism. Using the example given by the National Guard, the patch should include the Keystone. And lastly, staying consistent with the colors of a petty constable, the color scheme should be black or black and white.

It is important to note that we don't use police for historical references because police sprang from constables, and not the opposite. In Pennsylvania, the State Police operate under the power of the constable and are themselves *ex-officio* constables. Police do not have an independent heritage. Their heritage begins with the constable, who has been established for centuries. Therefore, police do not have any historical reference or heritage to contribute to constables.

Footnotes

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