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ASC HISTORY NEWSLETTER

Army Heraldry and the ASC Crest

This MONTH in military history...

- **1777:** The U.S., led by Benedict Arnold, wins 2nd Battle of Saratoga
- **1797:** USS Constitution, "Old Ironsides," is launched
- **1813:** Tecumseh killed
- **1862:** Battle of Corinth, MS
- **1916:** ROTC created
- **1917:** First US Sailor killed in WWI on USS Cassin

The Army Sustainment Command, like most other Army commands, has a Distinctive Unit Insignia, more commonly called the unit crest. The ASC crest is full of heraldry symbols in a combination that is unique to ASC. How are crests developed and what does ours mean?

The Institute of Heraldry (TIOH) is responsible for crests, patches and mottos for the Department of Defense. Their website notes: "TIOH has a long and distinguished record of support to the United States Army. Its roots were firmly planted in 1919 when President Woodrow Wilson directed the creation of the Heraldic Program Office under the War Department General Staff. Its purpose was to take responsibility for the coordination and approval of coats of arms and other insignia for Army organizations. By the end of World War II, its role expanded

to include the other military services. In 1957 Public Law 85-263 directed the Secretary of the Army to furnish heraldic services to all branches of the federal government."

When a unit wants a new item of heraldry they first consult the regs (there are precise parameters based on type of unit and number of military assigned) and then the unit is responsible for generating a draft design. Graphic artists and symbology experts at TIOH turn the draft into a proposed drawing. The unit is asked to approve or request changes. Eventually the unit commander approves the design. In a tug-of-war between unit and TIOH, the TIOH generally wins as they are charged with maintaining the designs to heraldry standards. TIOH is then responsible for finding a first vendor to cast crests and make patches.

The ASC crest, like many other crests in the Army, has symbols that illustrate our current missions while looking back to missions of our predecessor commands. The three points of the stylized caltrop symbolize resolve, spirit and professionalism. The silver disc voided by a triangle represents unity. The gear wheel underscores efficient support to soldiers around the world and industrial operations. The bomb highlights the ordnance maintenance mission; the globe represents the scope of the missions and field sustained support. The sword refers to combat readiness and the organization's support to Soldiers. The reversed chevron symbolizes the Command's mission as the single point of entry for all Army units to the Army Materiel Command. Our motto on the crest reminds us that ASC is **On the Line** in its support to the Army.



- **1945:** The United Nations is born

- **1950:** MacArthur tells the President the Korean War will be over by Christmas and the Chinese will not intervene
- **1959:** Werner von Braun starts working for NASA
- **1974:** National Guard enforces school busing in Boston
- **1994:** President Aristide returns to Haiti
- **2000:** USS Cole bombed in harbor at Aden, Yemen
- **2002:** Saddam Hussein wins unanimous reelection victory in nationwide vote

During the month of October, the weird, strange, and uncommon make their appearance in many aspects of life. Often these are stories passed by word of mouth, getting further and further from the truth. Our fair arsenal is not spared from creative suggestions to provide explanations for mundane events. A list of ten myths was solicited concerning Rock Island Arsenal. The myths, and some explanation, are below.

1. **There is a secret tunnel that connects all arsenal buildings.** Only if you call steam line tunnels a secret. Steam line tunnels approximately 5x5 feet do lace the island.
2. **There is a secret tunnel connecting Quarters 1 to building 390 and/or 350.** Again, no such tunnel. If anything, there are more steam tunnels, but Q1 has its own heat system.
3. **There is a tunnel connecting Quarters 1 to the mainland.** This is false. In the 1960s, a group of high school kids were caught on the island without permission. When asked how they had gotten there, they replied—"through a secret tunnel." They had really arrived through standard means.
4. **The arsenal was used as a nuclear test site. Uranium cores lurk underwater in a basement of one of the buildings. The windows were painted black because the interior glowed at night.** Unlikely, though Bldg 64 had extensive remediation due to the chromium plating pits. In regards to atomic bombs, Rock Island Arsenal was never a part of uranium work, but did contribute to the effort by forging the shell body for the first bomb.
5. **Rock Island Arsenal is/was on the top ten list of nuclear strike**

RIA Rumors

sites by an enemy. There is not one "official" list for this. Most are from bloggers, or educated doomsday believers who have compiled lists of their opinions. Rock Island Arsenal does not appear on these lists. In fact, Moline occurs more frequently.

6. **Confederate grave stones used to be on the other side of the road – but they only moved the headstones, not the bodies when they put in base housing.** The cemetery was not moved across the street. The Confederate burial spot was moved twice during the Civil War with 671 remains moved to the current site in 1864. Over 1,000 more were buried there before the POW camp was closed in 1865. Union dead were buried close to the Confederate dead, near the west edge of the housing area, but were moved to the old post cemetery in the back of the current Federal cemetery before 1880.

7. **Confederate gravestones were designed with a peak to keep "Yankee arses" from sitting on them.** Confederate graves were granted grave stones by an Act of March 9, 1906. They were built from the same material as Federal stones. The variance was the shape, with Confederate stones pointy on top. The intent for the pointed design—a desire of the Daughters of the Confederacy to keep Yankees from "sitting their arses" on the stones—is cited in the official history of the national cemetery system.

8. **Blackhawk or members of Sauk/Fox tribe, used to bring their girlfriend here to pick berries and court them.** I'm sure there is some grain of truth

to this as this was Native land before the Americans arrived. Black-Hawk mentioned in his autobiography that the island was used as a garden and relaxation spot. Whether young men brought their girlfriends there on dates is a fact lost to history.

9. **Tarantula spiders were raised here. Their thread were harvested and used in the manufacturing of gunsights. The webbing was used as the crosshairs in the sights.** This is our favorite—maybe the spiders were radioactive and the windows were painted black because the creatures glowed.....However, tarantulas do spin silk. This product is mostly used to line their nests. Tarantulas are warm climate creatures and are only rarely found in Illinois. Reticles, known as cross hairs, are made from wire, etching, or illumination, not actual hair. We don't think there were industrial spiders.

10. **Quarter's One is haunted by...civil war soldiers, unhappy servants, deceased commanders.....** You'll have to visit for yourself and decide! The Golf Club is hosting Haunted House Dinners on 17, 25, and 31 October. Call the club for a reservation.



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