ENLISTED CUTLASS

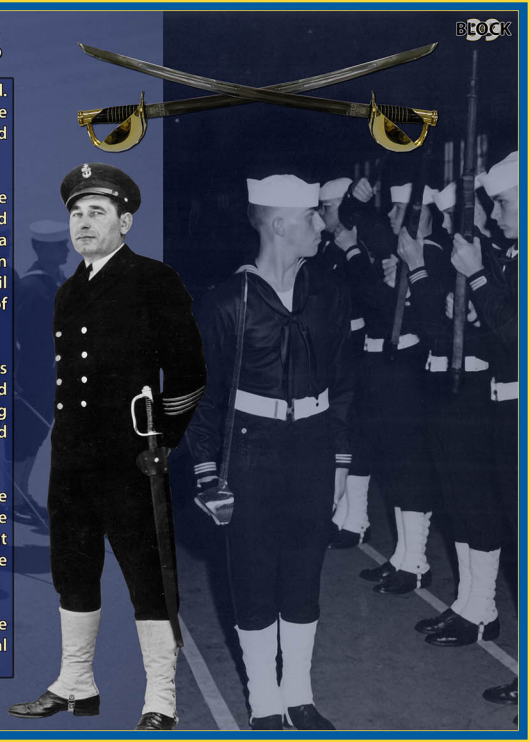
The cutlass has been a Sailor's weapon since the U.S. Navy was established. The cutlass was never an official part of the enlisted uniform like the officer's sword. Nevertheless, the cutlass was carried and used by enlisted Sailors in combat during the first hundred years and more of our Navy.

The typical Navy cutlass had a short one-inch wide, single edge blade about two feet in length. The blade was slightly curved with a bowl-shaped hilt to protect the Sailor's hand. The cutlass blade was designed for a slashing action against the enemy as opposed to the thrusting action of an officer's sword. The use of the cutlass as a weapon declined after the Civil War, although it remained in some ship armories through the beginning of WWII.

The last U.S. Navy cutlass manufactured was the Model 1917--which was not widely distributed or issued to the fleet. The Model 1917 was used mainly for ceremonial purposes carried by Chief Petty Officers leading formations of Sailors or recruits. The cutlass was eventually declared obsolete in 1949.

In the early 1950s, the cutlass was revived and used by recruits on parade grounds at Naval Training Centers. At the time, five recruits that were members of the battalion staff carried the cutlass during training. That tradition continues today as Recruit Chief Petty Officers (RCPOs) carry the cutlass during Navy Recruit Training.

In March 2010, The Chief of Naval Operations approved a uniform change that authorized the Chief Petty Officer Ceremonial Cutlass for optional wear.



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http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/uniform_sword.htm

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