

A Short Historical Note

“A Military Officer’s Oath of Office
Has Civil War Heritage”

Current Commissioning Oath

I, _____, having been appointed an officer in the Army of the United States, as indicated above in the grade of _____ do solemnly swear (or affirm) that **I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic**, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservations or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter; So help me God.“

REF: Since 1959, 5 Title, Par 3331

The First Oath

Feb 3, 1778

I, A.B. do acknowledge the United States of America to be free, independent and sovereign states, and declare that the people thereof owe no allegiance or obedience to George the third, king of Great Britain; and I renounce, refuse and abjure any allegiance or obedience to him; an I do swear (or affirm) that I will, to the utmost of my power, support, maintain and defend the said United States in the office of ---- which I now hold, with fidelity according to the best of my skill and understanding, So Help me God.

The Initial Oath under the Constitution

Sept 29, 1789

Officers: *I , A.B., do solemnly swear of affirm (as the case may be) that **I will support the Constitution of the United States.** -- deleted in 1790)*

I, A.B., do solemnly swear or affirm (as the case may be) to **bear true allegiance to the United States of America**, and to serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies or opposers whatsoever, and to observe and obey the orders of the President of the United States of America, and the orders of the officers appointed over me.

REF: 1st Congress, 1st Session, Sec 3, Chap 25; 1st Congress, and acts in 1795; 1802; 1812; 1813

Cadet Robert E. Lee

September 1825

"I, Robert E. Lee, a cadet born in the state of Virginia, aged 18 years and nine months, do hereby acknowledge to have this day voluntarily engaged with the consent of my mother to serve in Army of the United States for the period of five years, unless sooner discharged by proper authority. And I do promise upon honor that I will observe and obey the orders of the officers appointed over me, the rules and articles of war, and the regulations which have been or may hereafter be established for the government of the Military Academy"

REF: Chapter 3, "Robert E Lee" Freeman in foot notes

Cadet Regulations circa 1839

I (name of cadet) of the State of () aged () years, () months, having been selected for an appointment as Cadet in the Military Academy of the United States, do hereby engage with the consent of my (parent or guardian) in the event of my receiving such appointment, that I will serve in the Army of the United States for eight years, unless sooner discharged by competent authority.

And I, Do Solemnly Swear, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the United States of America, and that I will serve them, honestly and faithfully against all their enemies or opposers whatsoever; and that I will observe and obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the Officers appointed over me, according to the Rules and Articles of War (*Same as 1790 version*)

Ref: Letter from Chief of Archives, USMA, to Elizabeth Crary, dated December 10, 1959 found in McCrea files; Act of Congress, 1839, Sec 1, Chapter 20, para 10

Oath of Allegiance



McCrea

Cadet Warrant -
official commission
as a cadet in the US
Army

United States Military Academy
West Point N.Y. July 1st 1858.

I Tully McCrea, of the State of Ohio aged Eighteen years, Eleven months, having been selected for an appointment as Cadet in the Military Academy of the United States, do hereby engage, with the consent of my Guardian, in the event of my receiving such appointment, that I will serve in the Army of the United States for eight years, unless sooner discharged by competent authority. And I

And I, Tully McCrea, do solemnly swear, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the United States of America, and that I will serve them Honestly and Faithfully against all their enemies or opposers whatsoever, and that I will observe and obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the Officers appointed over me, according to the Rules and Articles of War

Fifty-nine before me
D. L. Winfield Clerk of Orange County

37th Congress, 1st Session

August 3, 1861

All Cadets now in service...

"I, A. B., do solemnly swear **that I will support the Constitution of the United States**, and bear true allegiance to the National Government; that **I will maintain and defend the sovereignty of the United States paramount to any and all allegiance, sovereignty, or fealty I may owe to any State, county, or country** whatsoever; and that I will at all times obey the legal orders of my superior officers and the rules and articles in effect governing the armies of the United States."

REF: 37th Congress, 1st Session, Chap 42, An Act for the better Organization of the Military Establishment, Sec 8.

“Iron Clad Oath”

July 2, 1862

I, (name).. do solemnly swear that I have never voluntarily borne arms against the United States since I have been a citizen thereof; that I have voluntarily given no aid, countenance, counsel, or encouragement to persons engaged in armed hostility thereto; that I have neither sought nor accepted nor attempted to exercise the functions of any office whatever under any authority or pretended authority in hostility to the United States; that I have not yielded a voluntary support to any pretended government, authority, power, or constitution within the United States, hostile or – thereto. (dropped in 1884)

And I do further swear that to the best of my knowledge and ability, that **I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic**, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same, that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter, so help me God.

Ref: Act of Congress,— Chapter CXXVIII,

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Aug 1861 Oath

Ido solemnly swear, that I will support the Constitution of the United States, and bear true allegiance to the National Government; that I will maintain and defend the sovereignty of the United States paramount to any and all allegiance, sovereignty, or fealty I may owe to any **State, county or country**, whatsoever; and that I will at all times obey the legal orders of my superior officers, and **the rules and articles governing the armies of the United States**.

REF: 37th Congress, 1st Session, Chapter 42, Section 8, August 3, 1861



I, _____, do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States, and bear true allegiance to the National Government; that I will maintain and defend the sovereignty of the United States, paramount to any and all allegiance, sovereignty, or fealty I may owe to **any State or Country** whatsoever; and that I will at all times obey the legal orders of my superior officers, and the **Uniform Code of Military Justice**.

REF: USMA Catalog, Appendix , p. 43

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July 1862 Iron Clad Oath

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Current Officer's Oath

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REF: Since 1959, 5 US Code, Par 3331