



Did You Know?



John Joseph “Black Jack” Pershing

General of the Armies John J. “Black Jack” Pershing (1860-1948) commanded the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) on the Western Front in World War I, 1917-1918. He was the only American to be promoted in his lifetime to the General of the Armies rank (Washington was promoted posthumously).

John Joseph “Black Jack”¹ Pershing²

In recognition of his distinguished service during World War I, the U.S. Congress authorized the President to promote Pershing to General of the Armies of the United States, the highest rank possible for any member of the United States armed forces. The rank was created especially for him to hold through his lifetime. Pershing was authorized to create his insignia for the new rank and chose to wear four gold stars (displayed below), which distinguished his insignia from the four (temporary) silver stars worn by Army Chiefs of Staff of the 1910s and early 1920s.

In 1944 Congress created the General of the Army and Fleet Admiral five-star ranks which were presented to four Army and four Navy officers. When asked if this made Pershing was a five-star general, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson commented that it did not, since Pershing never wore more than four stars, but that Pershing was still to be considered senior to the present five-star generals of World War II.” Because of his relative seniority, some unofficially considered Pershing to be a Six-Star General.



What does that have to do with ANCC? From the beginning ANCC endeavored to enlist high ranking officers to lend credibility to the Club’s membership drives. In this vein, Club leadership sought General Pershing’s endorsement of the Club as well as his permission to use his name as a member of the Advisory Board³ - permission apparently granted as his name appeared in the letterhead of a letter dated January 28, 1927 under the heading “Officers, Governors and Advisory Board”. Pershing also gave his permission to use his signature on the personal letters that accompanied the engraved invitations for Life Members.⁴ Lastly, General Pershing received an offer to be the first Club President but he “declined by

¹ General Pershing’s nickname stems from his command of the “Buffalo Soldiers” of the 10th Cavalry Regiment (1892-1897), one of the original Buffalo Soldier regiments composed of African-American soldiers under white officers.

² Much of this narrative is taken from General Pershing’s Wikipedia web page

³ Minutes of the General Meeting of the Members, May 4, 1925

⁴ Minutes of the Board of Governor’s meeting, January 16, 1935

reason of the fact that he was out of town so much”.⁵ But in spite of all this, no proof that he was actually a member has been found.



General of the Armies Rank Insignia Designed and Worn by General of the Armies John J. Pershing



Unofficial Rank Insignia for Six-Star General/Admiral

⁵ Army Navy Country Club “1924-1989 Historical Review”, page 11