



World Wars I & II Trunk Artifacts Inventory

Artifacts Common to WWII Military

1944 Field Jacket, Wool OD M-1944, Olive Drab Wool Model-
(This field jacket is on loan from the 12th Armored Museum)

This field jacket has the following:

- Armored Force Shoulder Patch – left shoulder, denotes that the wearer served as an instructor at US Army's Armor School
- One Enlisted Service Stripe – diagonal stripe, left sleeve, denotes 3 years of military service
- Five Overseas Service Bars – horizontal stripes, left sleeve, each bar denotes 6 months of service overseas (Wearer of this jacket served our country a total of 30 months in overseas deployment.)
- Honorable Service Emblem – right side, above pocket, This served as proof that the wearer had been honorably discharged from duty. Unofficially, it was an identifier to law enforcement, as well as transportation companies who provided free transportation to returning veterans during WWII, that the wearer had been legally discharged, and was not AWOL, (Absent Without Leave).

WWII Victory Medal and Service Bar-

The WWII Victory Medal is a service medal that was awarded to soldiers who served between December 7, 1941, (Attack on Pearl Harbor) and December 31, 1946, (Date President Harry

S. Truman declared an official end of hostilities). There were over 12 million eligible recipients, thus the WWII Victory Medal is one of the most widely awarded medals of the US military.

The smaller Victory Service Ribbon shares the same significance, and was issued for wear in place of the Victory Medal when it is not appropriate to wear the actual medal.

Military Patch –

This is a US Army Master Sergeant's (E8) patch. The points of the chevron face up, and it signifies his rank.

Garrison Caps –

The Garrison Caps, sometimes called Overseas Caps first emerged in WWI, and were only worn by US troops based overseas. In time, it was used both overseas as well as stateside. The piping was eventually added to indicate the branch of service. There are two Garrison Caps included in the trunk. The one that has the maroon and white piping was most likely worn by someone in the medical branch. The other one with the green and gold piping, most like belong to Military Police.

Military Pistol Belt. (You will need to determine if it is appropriate to share all of these items with your class.)

Soldiers carried several pounds of equipment on these belts, in order to have many items easily accessible. This particular belt has a canteen, and a fake grenade. There is also an ammo pouch with an empty magazine that would be attached to the belt.

WWII Mess Kit –

Soldiers were issued a mess kit, which was compact, and contained silverware and cookware needed for eating meals. (This one apparently doubled as a shave kit.) When opened, the mess kit contained two halves. The deeper half was referred to as the “meat can”, and was to receive the meat portion of the meal. The shallower, divided half was called the “plate”, and could hold two separate foods. The two halves were designed to serve as a tray, as the soldiers moved through feeding lines when they were in camp. However, when they were out in the field, and had to prepare their own meals, the “meat can” could double as a skillet to reheat their premeasured serving of C- rations, or K-rations. When they were finished, everything was rinsed off, closed up, and stored in their backpacks. All mess kits were date stamped on the folding handle. This one is dated 1945, so it would have been issued toward the end of WWII.

Military Issued K-rations –

K-rations were individually packaged meals that were issued primarily to airborne troops, motorcycle couriers, tank crews, or other mobile units during WWII. They were only intended to serve as daily meals for a short duration, and not for long term. One ration contained three boxes. One labeled “Breakfast”, one labeled “Dinner”, and one labeled “Supper”. Each meal contained just under 3,000 calories, and was thought to provided adequate energy and nutrition to sustain a soldier until the field kitchen could catch up to him. Unfortunately, the K-rations were not very tasty or satisfying.

WWII German Helmet –

Called a Stahlhelm, which is German for “steel helmet”, it replaced the boiled leather, spiked helmet Germans wore during WWI. Its distinct shape was very recognizable, and was

one of the most iconic symbols of the WWII German soldiers. The shape was designed to protect the soldier's head and neck from shrapnel and explosive debris. It also protected the wearer from direct sunlight and rain. On one side is an eagle clutching a swastika, and on the other side would have been a tricolored shield, made up of black, white and red stripes, representing the colors of the German national flag at that time. Approximately 25 million were made during WWII, and apparently this was one of those worn by a German soldier.

Artifacts Common to WWII Home Front

Ration Books/Coupons –

During WWII rationing became a way of life for Americans on the home front beginning in the spring of 1942. Although the British had earlier asked Americans to conserve food and other items needed for Britain's soldiers, rationing did not officially begin in America until after the attack on Pearl Harbor. No longer could someone just walk into a shop and purchase items such as sugar, butter, meat, or even clothing. All of these things were rationed, which meant that you could only buy a small amount, even if you were able to afford more. You had to have the correct ration stamp, which had to be handed over along with the money, in order to make such purchases. Even gasoline and tires were rationed, along with things such as typewriters, bicycles, stoves, coal, and many other items. New cars could not be purchased, as all of the automobile manufacturing plants had switched to manufacturing tanks and other military vehicles.

Rationed Items	Rationing Duration
Tires	January 1942 to December 1945
Cars	February 1942 to October 1945
Bicycles	July 1942 to September 1945
Gasoline	May 1942 to August 1945
Fuel Oil & Kerosene	October 1942 to August 1945
Solid Fuels	September 1943 to August 1945
Stoves	December 1942 to August 1945
Rubber Footwear	October 1942 to September 1945
Shoes	February 1943 to October 1945
Sugar	May 1942 to 1947
Coffee	November 1942 to July 1943
Processed Foods	March 1943 to August 1945
Meats, canned fish	March 1943 to November 1945
Cheese, canned milk, fats	March 1943 to November 1945
Typewriters	March 1942 to April 1944

Some of this rationing was caused by supply sources being cut off by the Japanese and Germans, but it was generally due to the need to supply troops with the necessities of war.

Rationing was strictly enforced, and violators were penalized. If a person entered a hospital or any other institution for more than ten days, they were required to turn over their ration book to that institution. If a person passed away, the family had to return that person's ration booklet to the local ration board. Following the end of WWII, most rationing in the United States ended in 1945, with sugar continuing to be rationed until 1947. However, Britain maintained its rationing for fourteen years, ending in 1954.

Throughout the duration of WWII, many on the home front planted Victory Gardens to supplement their supply of food. By 1945, almost 20 million Victory Gardens were in use, supplying about 40% of all vegetable consumed in the United States. Also, it was considered to be a patriotic duty to recycle scrap metals and rubber. Even items as small as rubber bands, and kitchen aluminum foil were never wasted.

Gas Mask –

Fears of further attacks on the United States home front, lead to precautions such as blackout requirements at night.

Although it was not mandatory, many Americans felt it was necessary to provide gas mask for the members of their family. Meanwhile, British citizens were required to have their own gas mask. These gas masks were to accompany them wherever they went. Just like the adults, children carried their gas mask with them every time they left the house, whether they were going to school, or just out to play.

Blue Star and Gold Star Service Banners –

The Service Banner or Service Flag was originally designed by a father to honor his two sons that were serving during WWI. These banners become more widely used during WWII. These flags were usually handmade by mothers, sisters or wives of those who were serving in the military. The number of blue stars signifies the number of immediate family members that were serving in the U.S. Armed Forces during WWII. If a gold star was placed over a blue star, it was an indication that this family member had died during their military service. These banners were displayed in a front window of a home, facing toward the street. During WWII, many homes on every block displayed these banners. Although they are still used today, they are not as prevalent.

The most famous Service Banner was that of the five Sullivan brothers who all died on the U.S.S. Juneau during WWII. (The deaths of all five brothers when a Japanese torpedo sank the U.S.S. Juneau, lead to the formation of the Sole Survivor Policy. This is a set of regulations the U.S. Military designed to protect members of a family from the draft or combat duty if they have already lost family members in military service.)

Postcards –

Many postcards and posters during WWII displayed ideas to promote patriotism, as well as the war efforts.