

World War I

Discovery Box and Guidebook Index

(updated April 2009)

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World War I

Description of Discovery Box Contents

1. U.S. Army hat. The hat was called a “Montana” hat. It was the favorite headgear of most soldiers, but because it didn’t offer protection, it could not be worn in battle. Instead, soldiers wore steel helmets that had a rounded top and fastened onto the head with a chin strap. If a man was an officer, his hat would also be fitted with a ribbon and cord.



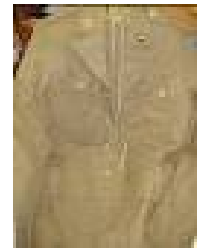
2. U.S. Army tunic. Also known as a jacket, this tunic is made from a canvas-like material and was used during the hotter summer months. Though the buttons are missing from this jacket, they would normally be made of brass and have the U.S. Army insignia on them. The collar would be worn up, and is closed using the hook-and-eyes. All the buttons and hooks caused problems for some soldiers during battle because they would become tangled in loose strings and straps on weapons.



3. U.S. Army trousers. During WWI, horses were still the main way to get from place to place. Because of this, the pants look very similar to riding pants. They were designed to keep soldiers warm during long nights in the trenches. The bottom of the pant legs could be pulled shut using string, to keep drafts out. With these, soldiers sometimes wore boots or gaiters (leggings), while others wore puttees, which were lengths of wool that men would wrap around their legs. All three would help protect the leg during the trench warfare that men had to fight.



4. U.S. Army jacket. This jacket is made from wool and was used mainly during the winter. Many servicemen were unhappy if it rained, because the jacket would become very heavy and take a long time to dry. The patch on the shoulder represents the corps, or group that the soldier belonged to. In this case, it stands for 9th Service Command.



5. Insignia (4 total). These stripes indicate a soldier’s rank. Often during the war, insignia was made in the field and attached to the jacket sleeve. This meant that not every insignia met a standard format. These particular insignia are called chevrons, and were worn point down on the sleeve. There are two gold chevrons on army green, one indicating the rank of a private first class (one ‘v’) and the other indicating the rank of a corporal (two ‘v’ on top of each other). The gold-on-scarlet (red) chevron was worn on a Marine’s dress blue uniform, and also indicated the rank of private first class. The final chevron, with red on green may have been worn by men who were preparing to go to war, but had not faced combat yet.



6. Uniform hardware (11 total). These metal pieces are an assortment of metal pieces that a soldier would wear on their uniform. Among the pieces, two bronze disks that were worn on the collar. On the left the letters “U.S.”, and on the right, two crossed cannons indicating artillery. There are also several buttons, a buckle, and a cross representing someone who was a marksman.



7. Mess kit. This kit was used whenever a soldier wanted to eat. By keeping the knife and fork inside the kit, soldiers could make sure that they would have the tools necessary to eat. The long handle that wraps around the skillet was used to keep hands away from the fire while cooking. The knife and fork are stamped "U.S." and the aluminum handle of the knife is dated 1917.



8. Service flag with one blue star. Family members on the home front would hang these flags in their windows to let neighbors know that they had a loved one who was enlisted to serve our country. The number of stars on the flag indicated how many men from a family were serving in the military, and if the star was gold, the family had lost a loved one serving their country.



9. Book *The Soldiers' French Phrase Book*. Before the United States entered World War I, many American men joined the Army Signal Corps and went overseas to fight with the French and English armies. This book was used to help American soldiers communicate with French soldiers and to navigate the unfamiliar lands of Europe.



10. Book *Provisional Drill and Service Regulations for Field Artillery*. This soldier's handbook was printed in 1917 and gives details on how to properly operate a six-inch Howitzer cannon. It also provides clear chain of command.



11. Book *Notes on German Artillery Material*. This handbook provides a quick reference for U.S. soldiers on German artillery. The manual is separated by German military divisions. Soldiers could use this book to help them take apart captured guns and understand the gun's capabilities.



12. Prince Albert and Tip Top brand cigarette papers. Anti-smoking movements had been gaining ground until WWI, when General Pershing said that tobacco was "as indispensable as the daily ration." Army physicians reported that smoking calmed injured soldiers, and in 1918, the Army made cigarettes a part of soldiers' rations. This was before the United States government officially recognized the link between tobacco and cancer.



13. Sheet music for "Keep the Home Fires Burning (Till the Boys Come Home)". Playing music at home was a popular form of entertainment during WWI, especially when the music was patriotic. Arkansas got its first radio station in 1921. "Keep the Home Fires Burning (*Till the Boys Come Home*)" was written in 1915. The chorus of the song encourages singers to remember that their loved ones are fighting with honor, and that they must honor them by being strong and waiting for the soldiers to return.



14. Sheet music for "It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary." This song was popular among British troops. Tommy Atkins is a fictional figure whose name was used as an example of how to properly fill out forms in the British Army.. The lyrics are about an Irishman who travels to London and writes to his lady love who lives in Tipperary, Ireland. She tells him if he doesn't come home, she will marry another man. The sheet music has personal notations written on February 18, 1969



15. Sheet music for “When There’s Peace on Earth Again.” Written in 1917, “When There’s Peace on Earth Again” is about the hope and joy that the end of the war will bring. The song encourages people to keep their hopes alive, and when the war is over, the world will be a better place for everyone.



16. Postcards (32 total). Postcards were a good way for soldiers to keep in touch with their family back home. They could show the exciting new cities that they were visiting through the pictures on the postcards. This set has an assortment of postcards, many sent from France. There are twenty postcards showing the aftermath of war on the French city of Verdun, nine unidentified pictures, two embroidered postcards that wish the recipient a happy new year in French, and hand-tinted postcards.



17. *The New York Times*, May 8, 1915. This newspaper article announces the sinking of the passenger liner the *Lusitania*. This was a significant event which spurred the United States to join in World War I. The *Lusitania* was a passenger ship similar to the *Titanic*. It was hit by a German u-boat (submarine) torpedo. 1,198 lives were lost, including 128 Americans, when the *Lusitania* sank.



18. *The New York Times* January 9, 1918. The article, “President Specifies Terms as Basis for World Peace...”, reprinted President Woodrow Wilson’s speech to congress about the Central Powers discussing “the possible basis for a general peace.” It is evident that Europe is tired of fighting, and that peace might soon be announced. Germany’s surrender, and the end of the war, would come almost ten months exactly from the print date of this newspaper.



19. *The Great War in Gravure*. This large book was published by the New York Times Company in 1917, and shows an incredible amount of photos from the Great War. This would have allowed people on the home front to experience just a piece of what war would have been like for the soldier on the front lines of battle. **Teachers, please do not let your students handle this book, and please be careful when you handle this book, as it is very old and fragile.**

