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Bag, Duffel

(Pennsylvania Military Museum, T. Gum, Site Admin.)

US Military personnel have a lot to carry and are expected to mobilize at a moment's notice. The standard issue Duffel Bag is a piece of personal gear that has been in service since 1943. This oversized olive drab canvas bag has been carried, thrown, shipped, and passed down in families for over seventy-seven years.



The shape & orientation of handles is perhaps the most recognizable. Able to be opened on its end with a hopper style opening, it is easily loaded; however, “first in is last out” must be remembered. On one side of the bag is a single strap, or depending on variation, two shoulder straps.

Regardless of strap-style, the opening is common across all variations. By gathering the hemmed canvas, a hook connected to the shoulder (or flap) is passed through each of the grommet openings, and then snapped onto itself. A rather basic closure, it is easy to operate and even easier to repair unlike a zipper. For example, if the snaplock breaks, the open end can still be gathered and tied shut.



Typical markings on the outside of the bag included but is not limited to name, serial number, and sometimes unit... which added to the flair and sentimental value. Other common markings included manufacturer, and a bold US.

The duffel bag was commonly the last piece of kit a serviceman or woman would travel home with, containing all of their personal belongings. From there, the duffel bag often took on a life of its own. Civilian life would see the duffel bag used to transport sports equipment, tools, hunting gear, and countless other items.

Bag, Duffel – a common piece of gear, thousands of uses, and generations of service.