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## Don't Let Your Tags Dangle in the Dirt

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

Originally “dog tags” would have only a name on them and would be little more than a wooden dowel or stick tied onto the wrist or worn around the neck. In the event the service-member was unable to communicate due to injury (mental or physical trauma) or due to being killed in action the individual would be returned to their respective camp for treatment, or in the case of being killed in action, the remains could be properly returned to the family.

This is why perhaps more than any other item the service member is issued or possesses, it is the dog tags that are most valued and most personal - during and after service.

Military's since the ancient Spartans (approx. 900-192BC) have issued varying types of identification to their members - respective to nation, language and available material. However at times such tags were little more than a piece of paper or stenciled name on the inside of a blouse or coat.

What we know today as a dog tag originated from U.S. Army, through War Department General Order No. 204, dated December 20, 1906. *“An aluminum identification tag, the size of a silver half dollar and of suitable thickness, stamped with the name, rank, company, regiment, or corps of the wearer, will be worn by each officer and enlisted man of the Army whenever the field kit is worn, the tag to be suspended from the neck, underneath the clothing, by a cord or thong passed through a small hole in the tab. [...]”*



Photo of tags, MM2016.1.1.

These particular tags belonged to Bernard McGuire (b. Jan 6, 1896) from Cresson, PA. He was a member of the 7th Army Corps, Headquarters Troop, serving from June 24, 1918 to July 2, 1919.

When America entered World War One in 1916 General Order 204 was updated to require each man be issued two tags - one to remain with the killed in action, and the other to be given to the commanding officer whom forwarded it to the burial services & record keeping team.

The information on the dog tags has changed over the years; including but not limited to name, rank, serial or social security number, inoculations, religion, next of kin. Depending on the time period and branch of service, the dog tag style and manufacturing along with stamped-information has varied greatly.

Across all time periods of the now ubiquitous dog tags their dangling around the neck of our brave men and women has remained the same, and their sentimental value as they are handed from one generation to the next, or tucked in the fold of a burial flag.