

Preserving Camp Upton: World War I Uniforms

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Abstract

Before Brookhaven National Laboratory opened in 1947, the site was a military training center known as Camp Upton during World War I. The camp trained and sent 40,000 soldiers to Europe, including the 77th infantry division. Several articles of soldier's standard-issue military uniforms have been donated and curated by Brookhaven Lab's Cultural Resources Program. The uniforms provide a historical record in military identity by sharing a soldier's disposition. This project analyzes primary materials, origin of raw materials, manufacture location, military function, and cultural insignia to understand the experience of a World War I soldier. These survey reports observe and record the material damage found such as fading of cloth, fraying of threads, or discoloration from time, etc. The key action to take is to proceed with a preventative conservation strategy to ensure no further damage affects the uniform pieces.

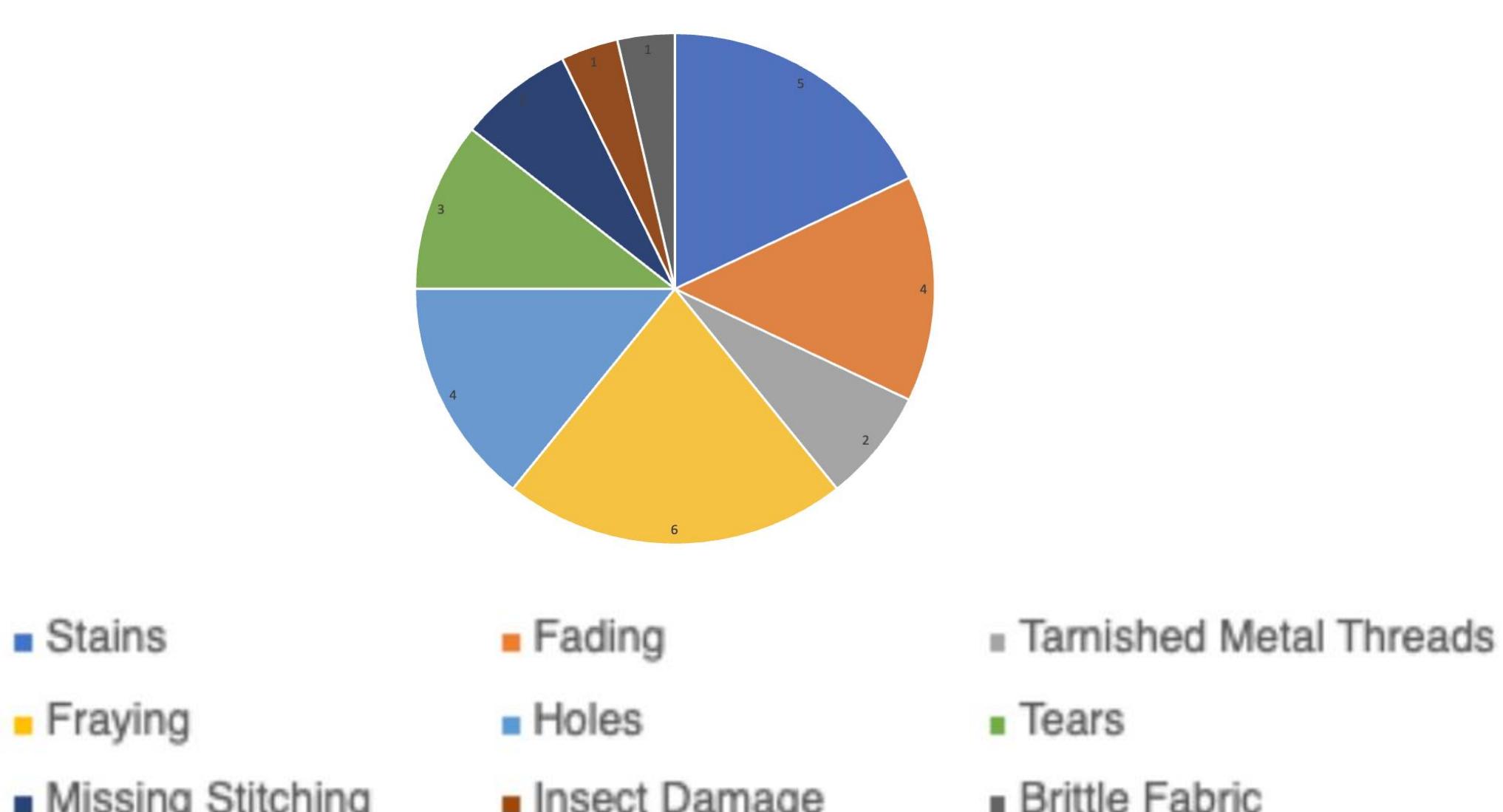


Introduction

- This project aims to evaluate the condition of the Camp Upton textile collection and develop tailored and implementable conservation and preservation recommendations.
- The frequent handling of artifacts can also cause damage to collections if no protective protocols are in place. Without protective actions, a curatorial facility may lose artifacts due to irreparable harm. Significantly, textiles are not just objects to be conserved; they also serve as primary sources of history, identity, and memory.
- The purpose of this research project is to provide recommendations that ensure the vital resources of the Camp Upton collection remain accessible in the years to come. To ensure these objectives are met, this research focuses on creating an assessment of the collection, environmental monitoring, and evaluation of current storage.
- The three main objectives of my project are: systematically documenting the current condition of each textile item through a detailed survey, identifying the primary risk factors that contribute to the textiles' damage, and proposing conservation and preventative practices tailored to the collection pieces.
- My research is guided by the principles of minimal intervention, reversibility, and respect for maintaining the historical integrity of every textile artifact. These guidelines will be in accordance with the American Institute for Conservation's Code of Ethics and the National Park Service Handbook.

Results

Frequency of Condition Issues in Camp Upton WWI Textile Artifacts



Discussion & Conclusion

- The condition survey revealed common signs of wear and deterioration, including fabric fraying, minor pest evidence, discoloration, and the use of aging housing materials.
- Key risk factors identified include light exposure, humidity fluctuations, material aging, and regular handling, which is widely recognized in historic textile preservation.
- These findings underscore the natural vulnerabilities of organic materials, even within climate-controlled, restricted-access storage environments.
- This research demonstrates that preventative conservation is achievable through refining current practices, with an emphasis on ensuring the artifact's long-term stability.
- All documentation and assessments were guided by core industry principles: minimal intervention, reversibility, and the preservation of historical integrity.

References

Conservation Standards

- Society for Historical Archaeology. *Curation Standards & Guidelines*.
- Maryland Historical Trust. *Archaeological Collections Conservation Standards*. 2022.
- American Institute for Conservation. *Code of Ethics*.
- American Museum of Natural History. *Condition Reporting Methodologies*.

Historical References

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Acknowledgements

This project was supported in part by the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Science, Office of Workforce Development for Teachers and Scientists (WDTs) under the Science Undergraduate Laboratory Internships (SULI) Program. I extend a big thank you to my mentor, Alison McGovern, whose guidance and support made this internship an incredibly meaningful experience. In addition, a special thank you to the Petroleum Museum for providing a condition survey report that guided the development and execution of these assessments.

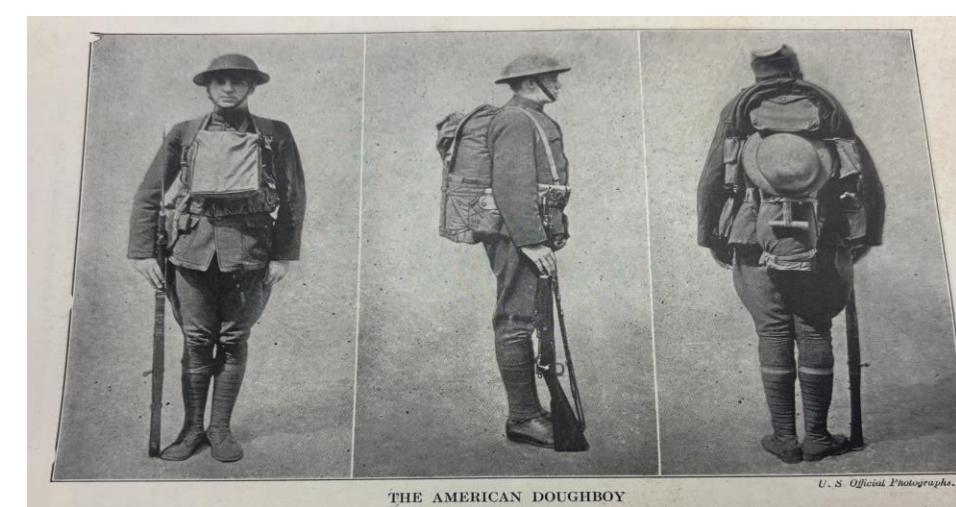
Methods

1) Condition Survey Reports: Guide to Preservation Measures

- To assess the condition of the Camp Upton textile collection, a detailed condition survey was conducted using formalized documentation forms adapted from the Petroleum Museum.
- The first step in determining the maintenance needs of the textiles was to document the current condition of the artifacts in Camp Upton's collection.
- The assessment focused on identifying visible damage, categorized into the following areas:

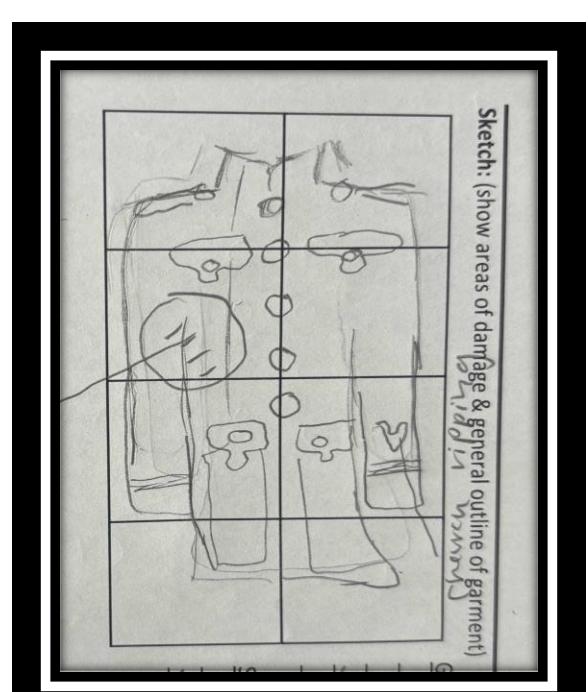
- » **Physical deterioration:** fraying, tearing, brittleness
- » **Biological damage:** insect activity, mold, staining
- » **Surface issues:** fading, soiling, discoloration

- The goal of the condition survey was to formalize the documentation process and ensure consistent assessment across all textile artifacts. This aligns with ethical standards in collections care, which emphasize the importance of maintaining detailed condition records for each item.
- The survey aimed to establish a baseline of current conditions, determine the material composition of each textile, and identify artifacts that are particularly vulnerable to further damage. It also evaluated the effectiveness of current storage methods, with attention to the types of supportive materials in use, such as hangers, covers, or mounts.
- Each artifact was documented with written observations, high-resolution photographs, and annotated drawings that mapped specific areas of concern.

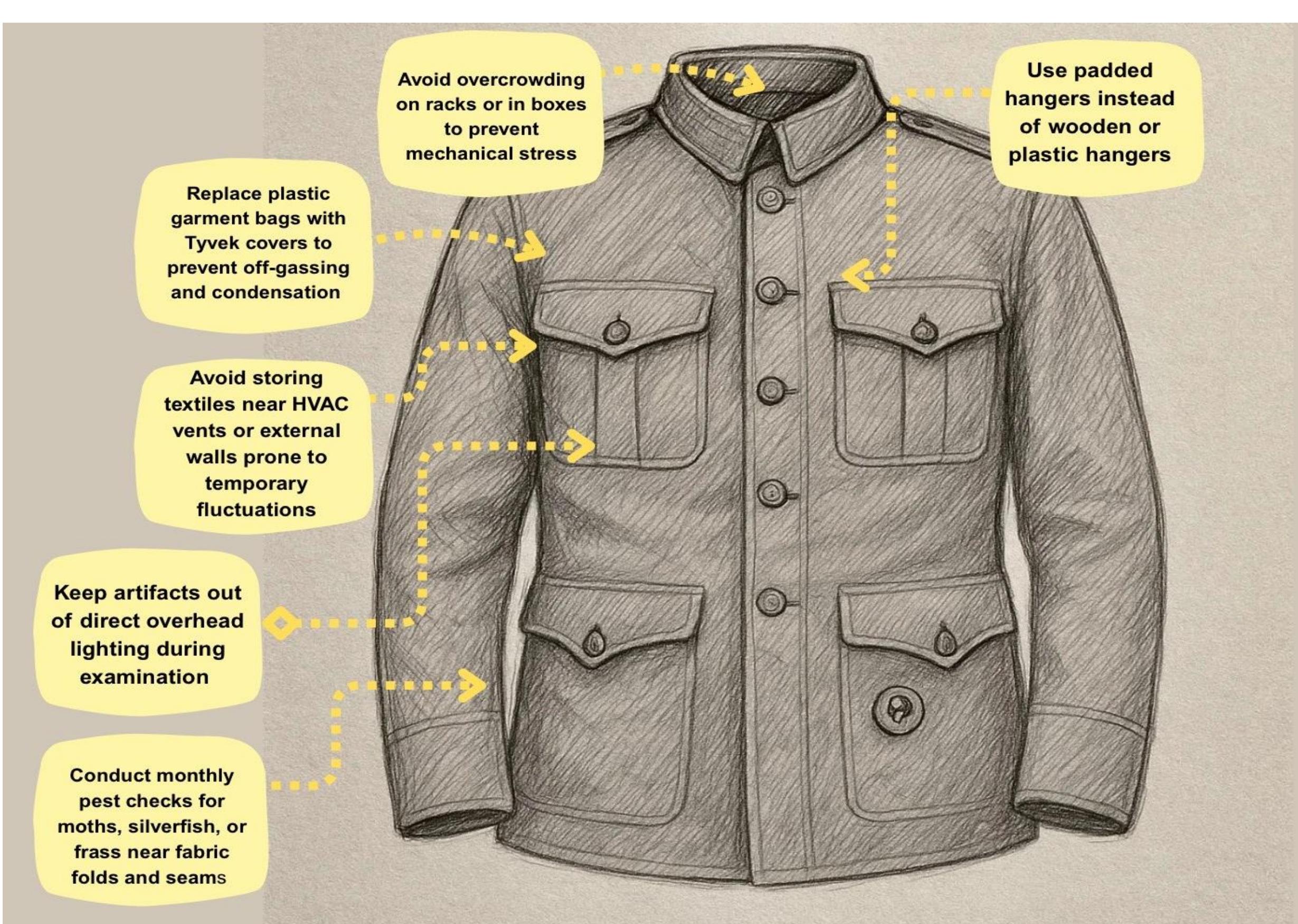


2) Assessment of World War I Textile Condition: Doughboy Jacket

- A total of ten artifacts from the World Wars were recorded. As an example, the Doughboy jacket worn by soldiers in World War I will be used. To document and track this item, it has been assigned Catalog Number 560.
- Catalog Number:** 560
- Type of Object:** Doughboy Jacket
- Fiber:** Wool
- Maker/History:** Unknown, circa 1917
- Condition Issues:**
 - Fading (left sleeve)
 - Stains (left armpit)
 - Tarnished metal threads
 - Fraying
 - Holes and tears in the armpit
 - Missing stitching (left sleeve)
- Present Treatment:**
 - Covered for protection
 - Stored in a closet/cabinet within an air-conditioned, dark room
- General Condition:** Fair
- Priority Level:** 3 out of 4
- Stability:** Unstable



3. Preservation Recommendations



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