

Museum Adds Jacket Worn By World War II Army Chief

The olive-colored service jacket worn by Gen. George C. Marshall while he was in charge of instruction for the 33rd Division of the Illinois National Guard is now part of the National Guard Memorial Museum.

“It’s one of the most valuable pieces of our collection,” said Jonathan Bernstein, director of NGEF.

It is part of a stash of 27 uniforms and other clothing items Bernstein recently added to the museum’s archives thanks to an unfortunate problem at the Museum of the City of New York.

The New York museum recently lost the lease on its storage facility and had to take a smaller building. Because of a shortage of space, much of its military collection had to be liquidated. Bernstein and representatives from the West Point Museum and the New York Military Museum were invited to look through the entire collection.

Bernstein stumbled upon Marshall’s uniform during his visit to New York. While examining the uniform, he found a patch stitched above the inside pocket of the jacket containing then-Col. Marshall’s name and rank, his former post of Fort Benning, Ga., and the year, 1929. When he saw that patch, Bernstein knew he had something special.

Right now, Bernstein is working to restore the uniform. Using historical records, he’s locating the proper patches and pins to accurately reflect what the uniform would have looked like when Marshall was assigned to the Illinois National Guard’s unit as senior instructor from 1933 to 1936.

According to the Web site of the Illinois National Guard, Marshall was assigned to the 33rd to “remedy the lack of financial support, training facilities,



The National Guard
Educational Foundation
has acquired a gem for
its growing collection of
National Guard artifacts

Then-Brig. Gen. George C. Marshall wears the jacket now in NGEF possession during a 1938 trip to Oregon.

service, teamwork, efficiency” and organizational problems within the unit.

Marshall was responsible for requesting updated facilities for the Illinois Guard, as well as organizing war games to increase communication and collaboration. He is credited with promoting an atmosphere of professionalism in the 33rd. His three-year stint ended in 1936 when he was promoted to brigadier general and assigned to Fort Vancouver, Wash.

Marshall’s later career is extraordinary. He was chief of staff of the Army during World War II and later served as secretary of state and then secretary of defense. His name is connected to the post-war Marshall Plan that helped Europe get back on its feet.

Bernstein is already carving out a spot in the National Guard Memorial Museum for the Marshall uniform. It will join the displays that tell the story of the National Guard from the “First Muster” in 1636 through the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Bernstein said another key acquisition for the collection is the uniform of Maj. Gen. Josiah Porter, who served as the adjutant general of New York from 1886 to 1894.

The NGEF provides an engaging learning experience that promotes greater awareness of America’s citizen-soldiers. The foundation operates the National Guard Memorial Museum on the first level of the National Guard Memorial, which is NGAUS headquarters, in Washington, D.C. Admission is free during the five days a week it is open or by appointment.

The NGEF also manages the Medal of Honor Gallery and the National Guard Monument on Omaha Beach in Normandy, France.

—By Andrew Waldman