

An Army Field Band Overcoat, circa 1950

At the end of World War II the US Army had many gifted musicians who had served as combat infantrymen. The army organized some of these musicians into the ad hoc First Combat Infantry Band that started a “victory tour” in October 1945. The band had the mission of bolstering support for their fellow soldiers and it initially toured for a year and a half performing in community outreach concerts that also supported the sale of War Bonds. In March 1946 General Jacob Devers, commander of the Army Ground Forces, converted the First Combat Infantry Band into the Army Ground Forces Band. In 1950 the Army Ground Forces became the Army Field Forces. As a result the band changed its name to The United States Army Field Band. It still exists under that name.

In 1945 band members wore standard uniforms, but with the 1946 designation Army Ground Forces Band and the recognition it was to be a permanent organization, special uniforms became inevitable. Band members changed to officer-style uniforms: tropical worsted coat and trousers for summer wear, and the dark olive drab coat with grey trousers (the so-called “pinks and greens”) for winter, both with unique insignia, that very briefly included colored coat epaulettes.

An example of this wear of officer uniforms by enlisted members of the Army Field Band is the short officer’s overcoat (right). The overcoat shown here has a shoulder patch with the tab “U. S. ARMY FIELD BAND” that dates the coat as 1950 or later. As shown below the sleeves are decorated with gold colored rayon that borders a narrow red, white, and blue center.



One of the most striking and obvious unique devices included specially colored chevrons that were of standard size and design. Initially in 1946 the chevrons had golden colored stripes on a red wool background, with a blue

edge. Within a year or two a narrow white inner edge was added around the blue, as worn on this coat, but due to stocks of chevrons on hand, members wore both types of chevrons for a few years. Band members wore these two chevron types on their officer-style olive drab shade 51 and tropical worsted tan coats, as well as on standard officers' short overcoat and ordinary khaki shirts. Band members wore both officers' trousers and the tropical worsted trousers with red stripes.

Despite special cuff trim and other red, gold, and blue insignia that set off the band uniforms, the largest and most noticeable insignia were the chevrons. In 1949 for most non concert uniforms, the band switched to the two-inch wide combat chevrons, but the nominal three-inch wide red, white, blue, and gold chevrons continued on concert uniforms until late 1954 when the band adopted standard chevrons on blue uniforms. This dates the coat as having been worn between 1950 and the end of 1954.



A label stitched inside the overcoat's inner chest pocket is below.

