

Warrior

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# US Doughboy 1916–19



Thomas A Hoff • Illustrated by Adam Hook

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# US DOUGHBOY 1916-19

## INTRODUCTION

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**A**n old story illustrates the attitude of the doughboy in comparison to those of his comrades in arms ... a sentry on duty in the inky dark of the night challenges an approaching figure:

*Halt! Who goes there?*

*"A soldier of the King."*

*Advance Englishman, to be recognized.*

*Then another figure approaches.*

*Halt! Who goes there?*

*"Soldat Francais."*

*Advance Frenchman, to be recognized.*

*And then yet another:*

*Halt! Who goes there?*

*"Who the hell wants to know?"*

*Advance American ...*

In 1917 the United States Army made a rapid change in its course of development. What had been a small professional force, functioning for the most part as a constabulary, blossomed into an army of continental European scale – a nation in arms, drawing manpower from all strata of society. It assumed a new role as well, for this army was intended to fight total war on foreign soil.

The average US soldier in World War I was a rifleman, and a conscript as well. To understand the United States Army in the Great War, it is helpful to comprehend what the individual soldier underwent. The focus of this volume, therefore, will be the experiences of an infantryman. With the exceptions of some aspects of training and actual combat, these experiences can be extrapolated to cover that of any member of a combat arms formation.

Conspicuous by their absence are the African-Americans who served during the war. Due to the racial prejudices of the time, they served in segregated regiments. This separation led to their operational integration into the French Army during the war. Black soldiers wore US uniforms, but with French helmets, equipment, and weapons, and their tactical use was also in line with French theory. Their experience was therefore significantly different from that of white soldiers, and space does not allow that experience to be shared in this format. Those black

soldiers that remained attached to the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) often performed menial jobs for the Services of Supply. This led to their serving as labor at the ports where supplies were brought in and as grave diggers attached to Graves Registration units.

African-Americans were the only ethnic group so treated by the army. Besides a temporary experiment with ethnic companies assembled for training purposes, the army was well integrated. Whites, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans all served side by side. The higher command even felt that the integration of Native Americans was a positive move, as white recruits would feel inspired to serve alongside members of “warrior races.”

The level of importance attributed to the American entry into the war is somewhat controversial. Many Americans believe that the US Army won the war single-handed, saving Europe on behalf of the Europeans. Conversely, the opposite opinion exists: that US involvement was insignificant, coming late in the war. The truth probably lies in between. When the war ended the doughboys were occupying a greater frontage than the British, although the British advanced much farther than the Americans during the great Allied offensives of 1918. While the Americans didn’t “win” the war, they played a crucial role in contributing to the Allied victory.

A lesser controversy is the origin of the word “doughboy.” It was not the official word used to describe the US soldiers sent to France, but an informal term, much as the British soldiers were called “Tommies” and the French “*Poilus*.” The French, and to a lesser extent the other allies, referred to the Americans as “Sammies,” after Uncle Sam. “Sammy” does

**“The Silk Stocking Regiment” – 7th New York National Guard – on September 11, 1917 en route to training. The regiment was renowned for recruiting from the elite of New York City society.**



make an appearance in some of the popular songs of the day, but never seemed to catch on with the men themselves. The term doughboy, however, was one which was used by the soldiers. Prior to US commitment to the war, “doughboy” was a term used to describe an infantryman; after the war it became a generic term for a US soldier, just as “GI” covered a later generation. One traditional explanation for the phrase is a derogatory comment made by cavalrymen about the infantry: after marching in the dust of the South-West an infantryman would be covered with so much dirt and sweat that he resembled adobe, the common building material. “Adobe” was in turn corrupted to doughboy. Another theory, not branch specific, was that the nickname came from the large buttons on the blouses worn by the troops, said to have resembled the lumps of fried dough called “doughboys.”

Either way, the name evolved just as the US Army evolved in its size and ability. At the time of Pancho Villa’s raid on Columbus, New Mexico, the army only numbered around 125,000 men, not counting the National Guard. During the course of the war 4,734,991 served, of whom two million went to France. It was a great expansion indeed.

The army was initially divided into three armies, the Regular Army, the National Guard, and the National Army. This last force was to be composed of conscripts. However, due to the manpower needs of modern war the three were combined into one Army of the United States, with all divisions containing some conscripts. It is the life of one of these conscripts, a composite character, which we will be following.

## CHRONOLOGY

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<b>August 4, 1914</b>	In response to the outbreak of war in Europe, President Wilson declares the United States’ neutrality.
<b>February 10, 1915</b>	The United States announces it will hold Germany solely responsible for the sinking of US ships by submarines.
<b>May 7, 1915</b>	The <i>Lusitania</i> is sunk by a German U-boat off the coast of Ireland.
<b>March 9, 1916</b>	Columbus, New Mexico is raided by Pancho Villa, a Mexican revolutionary. Seventeen Americans are killed in the action.
<b>March 15, 1916</b>	6,000 US troops under the command of John Pershing enter Mexico in an attempt to eliminate Pancho Villa. Additional troops are later committed and National Guard units mobilized and deployed to the border.
<b>June 3, 1916</b>	The National Defense Act is enacted, which increases the manpower of both the Regular Army and the National Guard.
<b>January 16, 1917</b>	The German Foreign Minister, Zimmerman, offers Mexico US territory in exchange for assistance in a war with the US. The telegram is intercepted by the British and released to the American public on March 1, 1917.
<b>February 1, 1917</b>	Germany recommences unrestricted submarine warfare; two days later the US breaks off diplomatic relations.
<b>April 6, 1917</b>	The United States declares war on Germany.
<b>May 10, 1917</b>	Gen John Pershing is given command of the American Expeditionary Force.
<b>May 18, 1917</b>	Conscription is authorized, as the Selective Service Act is passed.
<b>May 26, 1917</b>	The first US troops arrive in France.
<b>June 5, 1917</b>	National Draft Registration Day. Ten million young Americans enroll for selective service.
<b>October 21, 1917</b>	Near Luneville, France, US troops enter the trenches.

- December 7, 1917** The United States declares war on Austria-Hungary.
- May 27–June 5, 1918** Battle of Chateau Thierry fought by 3d Division.
- May 28–31, 1918** Cantigny is taken by the 1st Division in the first US offensive.
- June 6–25, 1918** Battle of Belleau Wood fought by 2d Division.
- July 4, 1918** Four companies from the 131st and 132d Regiments (33d Division) accompany the Australian 4th Division in an attack at Hamel.
- July 18–August 6, 1918** Second battle of the Marne. US 1st and 2nd Divisions, along with a French division, spearhead the assault at Soissons. US I and III Corps involved in subsequent operations.
- August 18–October 12, 1918** US troops participate in the Amiens–Oise offensive.
- September 12–16, 1918** The St. Mihiel Offensive by US First Army and French II Colonial Corps.
- September 26–November 11, 1918** The Meuse–Argonne campaign.
- November 11, 1918** Armistice between Germany and the Allies.
- March 15, 1919** American Legion is founded in Paris.
- September 1, 1919** The last American combat division in France embarks for home.
- January 3, 1920** The last US troops in France leave.
- August 25, 1921** Peace is signed between the United States and Germany.
- January 24, 1923** The last American occupational troops in Germany leave.

## CONSCRIPTION

On the north side of Chicago, Illinois lived a 24-year-old first-generation American named Kurt Schneider.<sup>1</sup> As the son of immigrants from Germany, he favored the neutrality of the United States at the beginning of the war. Like many other German and Irish-Americans, he was disturbed by President Wilson’s policies regarding trade with the Entente. Kurt was a product of his times though, and in line with his progressive sympathies, he had supported Theodore Roosevelt’s American Progressive or “Bull Moose” party and was concerned about the fate of democracy in Europe. The “Bull Moosers” were a branch of the Republicans that tried to overcome the party’s conservative elements and promote social reform. They eventually split into a third party, but rejoined the Republicans after losing a presidential election to Democrat Woodrow Wilson.

As the United States began to sell food and munitions to Great Britain, and Germany initiated unrestricted submarine warfare, Kurt’s apprehension grew. Several of his acquaintances had already gone to Toronto and enlisted in the Canadian Army, and he knew that he would soon have to make a decision about his involvement in the war. One of his friends had even mailed Kurt’s sister Ruth a postcard of himself in a Canadian Army uniform, the only message on the back being “Recognize this Hun Hunter?” – perhaps not the best way to impress a girl of German descent. Many of his co-workers at Humpsner’s Brewery were opposed to any US involvement in the war, particularly if they had emigrated from Europe to avoid military duty. Yet when the time came, Kurt knew that he would put his questions behind him and do what was required.

Conscription was a very delicate subject in 1917; it had been implemented during the American Civil War amidst riots and bloodshed and had been extremely unpopular. It was reintroduced

<sup>1</sup> Kurt is a composite; his experiences are those of several actual doughboys from different divisions.



**The 1st Illinois National Guard leaving the armory in Chicago, 1917. Considering the way many men felt they were treated by their officers, there is a certain irony to the advertisement for a dog show.**



during World War I for several practical reasons. Conscription provided the army with a steady flow of manpower and numbers that could be relied on, which in turn assisted the development of a training program. Furthermore, the high command of the army was dissatisfied with the way the volunteer system had worked during the Spanish–American War. By circumventing “volunteerism” with conscription, the regular establishment thought they would have a better hold on the development of the army, and this would hopefully reduce political interference in the command structure. The weak link in this policy would be the National Guard, but with their eventual incorporation into a centralized army that problem would pass as well. It should be noted that conscription did not prevent volunteering, but the volunteer would go into an existing Regular Army or National Guard unit. About two million did volunteer, the bulk volunteering for the navy.

Unlike the Civil War, conscription for World War I, known as Selective Service, was run by a civilian board instead of the military, and some 4,000 local draft boards went about choosing who would serve. They also made the decisions about deferments. A side effect was that African-Americans, due to poorer economic conditions and the attitudes of the draft boards, received fewer deferments and were conscripted in higher proportion than white Americans.

Growing up in an area with a substantial population of German immigrants, Kurt Schneider was fluent in both English and German, and felt himself to be as much German as American. The involvement of the United States in the war had a cultural as well as political impact for German-American families, Kurt’s included. After all, his parents had emigrated from imperial Germany because they wanted a different way of life for themselves and their children. When the United States entered the war on the side of the Entente, like many others of German descent Kurt was subjected to a nationalistic backlash. As a result he was quick to register for the draft, which had been introduced in May 1917.





By registering on National Draft Day, June 5, 1917, he avoided receiving the red postcard ordering him to do so. This date was for initial registration of men between the ages of 21 and 31; there would be additional enrollment dates as the war continued. Kurt received one of nearly 24 million draft cards issued, and if called upon by law enforcement or service personnel could produce it to prove that he was not a “slacker,” the term used to describe what a later generation would call draft-dodgers. It was a word that eventually described anyone who failed to support the war effort fully. The draft card could even be a lifesaver to a young man with a German surname, as the occasional lynching was known to happen. Later that summer Kurt was ordered to appear for a physical examination, and within a month the fateful blue postcard, informing him that he had to be ready to report within 24 hours, arrived. Three days later he found out he was in the army.

One of Kurt’s first experiences in the army would be to take a rudimentary IQ test. This was one of many tests set up to determine who took which jobs in the military, with those adjudged the most deficient placed in labor units. Part of the problem with the tests, and there were many, was the inherent bias. One test, eventually known as “Army Alpha,” was slanted towards literate, native, middle-class English speakers with urban experience. Many of the questions were multiple choice, and designed to test common sense. An example was: “If plants were dying for a lack of rain, you should: water them, ask a florist’s advice or put fertilizer on them.” Other questions were “fill in the blank.” The problem with these was that only a specific word was considered correct. The test taker could be correct in concept, but still be graded wrong. There was, however, a picture-only version of the test, Beta, that could be administered to the illiterate. Some 25 percent of those inducted ended up taking the Beta version. As a result, recruits

**Draftees on the way to Camp Upton, Long Island. The figure on the left is looking quite formidable, and reminding the reader that even Al Capone’s brother was a doughboy. The number “145” probably signifies their draft number.**

**A group of recruits prior to undergoing the psychological exam. Dressed in only partial uniform, absent are items such as leggings and, in the case of the first recruit in the second rank and third from the right in the first, trousers. Instead the men are wearing overalls, typical of the agricultural workers of the time.**



**In a training exercise used to this very day, troops of the 77th Division at Camp Upton in Yaphank, Long Island, prepare to go into the building for gasmask training. March 5, 1918.**



from rural areas, central Europeans, and African-Americans tended to fare poorly. (Army Alpha was derived from the Stanford modification of the Binet test. This test, the Stanford-Binet, is still given to schoolchildren across the United States.)

Another series of examinations, the “Trade Tests,” were given to see if new recruits had any special skills or talents that the military could use. This mania for testing, natural in the progressive, scientifically minded society of the time, extended into the higher ranks as well. A test, based on one used to rate salesmen, was even administered to those wishing to be promoted to captain.

Conscripts made up 72 percent of the army during World War I, and they were to be found in every division, be it Regular, National Guard, or National Army. The balance of manpower came from the federalized units of the National Guard and the Regular Army. The United States had produced a new style of army for a new style of war.

## TRAINING: THE THEORY AND THE REALITY

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General Pershing had some very strong beliefs as to how the war should be fought, all of which were the natural result of the recent experiences of the US Army. Based on lessons learned in combat against the Indians, the Spanish, and the Filipinos, the official doctrine called for a war of fire and maneuver. It was also dogma that “Fire + Maneuver = Offense.” Therefore what was needed to win the war in Europe was offensive action, which in turn meant a break from trench warfare. Open warfare was what Pershing wanted, and what his army was to be trained for.

The offensive attitude was catered for in the manuals used by the army for training. Two important books, *Infantry Drill Regulations* (1911) and *Field Service Regulations* (1914), both made the assumption that the rifleman was the decisive weapon, and that artillery and machine guns were merely there to help him get into within killing range. The continued use of these volumes ignored the massive changes to warfare that had occurred since the publication of *Field Service Regulations*. As a result, doctrine minimized the effectiveness of machine guns and did not address gas, airplanes, or tanks, all of which were a battlefield reality for the combatants already engaged in Europe.

The regulations were also written with larger units in mind, because the pre-war organization for a division included three brigades of three regiments, giving an amazing 27 battalions to a division. It should be remembered that at this time most European divisions comprised nine to 12 battalions. The large US formation was quickly scaled down by the War Department, 15 battalions being pulled out, but American divisions were still massive compared to European formations.

The reorganization of July 1917 restructured more than the division; it also had consequences for the battalion, reorganizing it from four rifle



The 40th Division at Camp Kearney, training for open warfare and giving a wonderful view of the long pack. Wearing so much early equipment and uniform items, this photo could easily be from the Mexican Expedition.

companies to three, with an additional machine-gun company. All of these changes caused consternation for the army, which saw the need for large combat formations that could maintain (as well as achieve) open warfare. The command staff of the army, to a degree still “fighting” the Spanish–American War as opposed to the current conflict, felt that the division should be an independent entity capable of sustained operations, hence the need for more manpower. The July reorganization did reflect an understanding that too large a formation would be unwieldy and hard to command on a battlefield, yet there would be further changes.

In August 1917 the division was restructured again; it would retain this organization for the remainder of the war. The July organization of two brigades of two regiments was kept. However, every battalion had its fourth rifle company restored, and the regiment raised an additional company that became the machine-gun element. Not only did this arrangement help to keep up the rifle strength, but the rifle companies also had their establishment raised from 103 to 256 officers and men, of which 216 were riflemen.

The company was subdivided into four platoons, each of which had four sections. Unlike in the army of World War II, these squads were not identical, but rather task-orientated. This organization catered to the principles of fire and maneuver. The first squad was comprised of 12 men designated as grenadiers; the second had nine men designated as rifle grenadiers. These men were equipped with a modified version of the French VB *tromblon* (a rifle grenade discharger). Many did not see these until they were deployed, and in some cases not until they had already been in combat in France. The third squad had 17 riflemen, and functioned as the maneuver element along with the first squad. The fourth squad, 15 men with four Chauchat automatic rifles, provided a base of fire along with the rifle grenadiers.

Supporting all of these infantrymen was an array of heavier weaponry. The “square” division, so called because of the four infantry

**Distribution of rations. The food that came in cans was distributed to the company cooks who prepared the food for the troops. This photograph gives a good impression of the appearance of US troops during the Mexican Expedition or early in the commitment to the Great War. Note the canvas leggings, the “Montana” hats, and the officer’s Sam Browne belt.**





**An early lesson on trench mortars, reflecting the lack of equipment, namely trench mortars. The variance of clothing worn by the students is in direct contrast to the instructor who is in full uniform. The man standing second from the left has what appears to be a second shirt pulled over the first. The outer shirt is without breast pockets, but seems to have pockets at hip level. The man on the right of the group appears to be wearing the cotton drill trousers as opposed to the wool ones worn by his comrades.**

regiments, was supported by three regiments of artillery. Two of these regiments, armed with 75mm guns, consisted of two battalions each. These were in turn broken down into three batteries of four guns. These 48 guns were the famous French “75.” Unlike a later war that saw the United States providing weaponry to her allies, 1917 found the future “Arsenal of Democracy” unable to meet her own needs. The third regiment also had French guns, but these were 155mm howitzers. Organized into three battalions, each of two batteries, these 24 guns would greatly contribute to the firepower supporting the doughboys.

Machine-gun supply was lavish, with guns purchased from France filling the void. The regiment controlled a heavy weapons company which operated six mortars and four 37mm guns, but the meat of the company was 16 heavy machine guns, much larger than the German machine-gun company of six weapons, although comparable to the British machine-gun corps companies held at brigade level. In addition to these regimental companies, every brigade had a battalion of three 16-gun companies, and at the divisional level there was an additional battalion of four companies. The divisional battalion was in theory motorized for quick deployment, but the vehicles proved a liability in the Argonne region. The machine guns were supposed to be US-manufactured Brownings, but due to supply difficulties the French Hotchkiss was often used. In total, an American division had an incredible 224 heavy machine guns on establishment. Compared to the 100 or so machine guns that a German division could theoretically deploy in 1918, it was a massive disparity in firepower.

US Army organization supported the idea of “open” or maneuver warfare, as was intended. As new material was developed to give some direction to training, it continued to emphasize open warfare. *The Infantry Drill Regulations* were reinforced in April 1917 with the *Manual for Non-commissioned Officers and Privates of Infantry of the Army of the United*



**Chateau Thierry, Pte G.W. Newbury of Company A, 9th Machine Gun Battalion of the 3d Division, with his Hotchkiss machine gun. The Americans made great use of French weapons during the war, not just artillery and tanks but smaller arms as well. Of particular interest is the overhead concealment over the weapon pit.**

Army entered the war with a marked lack of direction in training.

Training was done mostly at unit level. Prior to the war the policy was for a new recruit to undergo 12 months of training before being considered a combat soldier. The training involved six months of garrison training followed by six months of field instruction. The teachers were the NCOs of the unit, since after induction the recruit spent only a brief period in a depot being physically examined and receiving his uniform. For an army the size of the one that was intended for the Great War, such a system would clearly fail to produce troops in a timely manner, and the extensive garrison training proved to be unnecessary for the wartime army. The plan had been to build every division around a corps of 900 regulars who would provide the instruction, but in reality this was unfeasible.<sup>2</sup>

So how would US Army training policy have affected Kurt? Following his induction he was assigned to the 86th Infantry Division, a National Army formation. It was with this formation that he began to learn the basic arts of soldiering. While taking his aptitude tests Kurt learned the basics of close-order drill and the rudiments of military life. Classes were taught on the organization of the army, and the role the individual played in “fighting the Kaiser.” Spare time would be put to good use in maintaining the buildings and grounds of the training facility. It was during this initial period that Kurt would slowly be equipped as a soldier. Due to initial shortages it was not unusual for recruits to carry wooden “dummy” guns while drilling, nor was it odd to see those on the extremes of the uniform sizing wear items of civilian clothing.

A good deal of time and effort was spent on the rifle range. Philosophically this fitted in with Pershing’s vision of mobile warfare: the desire was to create an army of marksmen.<sup>3</sup> While the 86th Division never saw combat, the troops it trained did. In addition to becoming a competent rifleman, Kurt began to pick up the other tricks of the trade. Eventually the training company would begin to teach the rudiments of

<sup>2</sup> With the political need for the rapid deployment of troops to France, the Regular Army diverted considerable manpower into organizing the 1st and 2d Divisions, which nonetheless had a high proportion of conscripts.

<sup>3</sup> A skill still stressed in the US Army. While the USMC always loudly stresses that every marine is a rifleman, the US Army quietly assumes that everyone, despite their job, is an MOS 11B, infantryman.

fire and maneuver, as well as the use of cover and concealment. Alongside marksmanship, the application of the bayonet was taught. On occasion all of these activities were done while wearing gasmasks.

Kurt did not stay long with the unit. In late October of 1917 he was one of a draft of men, 5,600 in all, who were transferred to the 33d Division, a National Guard formation from Illinois, and was assigned to the 132d Infantry Regiment. This was not uncommon, the conscripts being used to bring regular and National Guard units up to full strength. Initially the National Guard units relied on drafts from other National Guard units, such as when the 7th New York sent 350 men to beef up the 69th New York. Later, when going into federal service, the 7th New York received massive drafts from the 1st New York and the entire organization was renumbered as the 107th US Infantry. Nor was it unusual to see large numbers of men transferred at a time. The 86th Division, Kurt's original formation, never did achieve combat readiness and deploy to Europe. However, some 186,000 men passed through the formation during the war, the division in effect functioning as a replacement depot.

Fortunately for all concerned, a good deal of the National Guard, some 110,000 men, had been active during the Pershing expedition into Mexico. While not involved in offensive operations, the Guard's duties along the Rio Grande had served as an excellent school for the soldier. This experience would give the guardsman the opportunity to do sustained service, living in camps and adjusting to military hygiene, communal eating, and deprivation from family and normal life. The knowledge gained was beneficial after activation in 1917 and gave the army an expanded base of experienced manpower. It was not uncommon for units in France to value these "Mexico men" as much as they valued a pre-war regular.

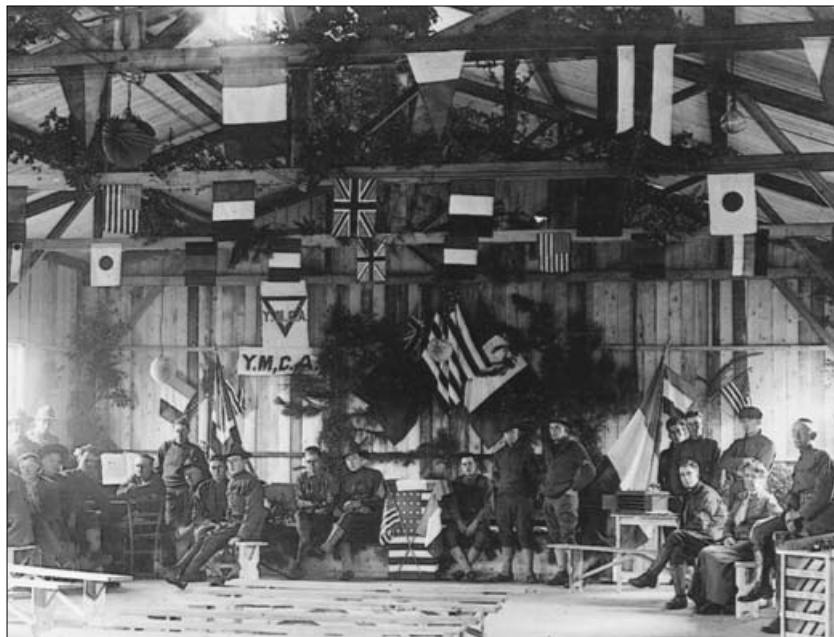
Experience did not translate into combat-ready formations. With the rapid expansion of the army the aforementioned cannibalization of units was to prove detrimental. As divisions became combat worthy, men would be drafted out to fill the ranks of other units, dooming the division stripped to recommence aspects of training. Furthermore, the training received by many units was scanty and ill-organized, much being left to local commanders, as the army had not completely centralized training doctrine.

An additional problem was language. Roughly one quarter of the army during World War I was foreign-born. A sizeable proportion of these men had emigrated to the United States as adolescents or adults and as a result had poor, and in some cases no, command of the English language. For many of these men the training program was very demoralizing. Unable to understand the instructions, such men were used for menial purposes. Luckily the army was aware of this problem and took steps to correct it. A Foreign-speaking Soldier Subsection (FSS) was established to help train these men.

The FSS organized its recruits in training companies that spoke the same language, jokingly referred to as "foreign legions." The men received instruction in their native tongue, and also underwent three hours of English instruction a day. This was in addition to the 40 hours per week of military topics. It should be noted that these companies were for training purposes, not as final combat formations. The army



The interior of the YMCA Camp Penhoet, St. Nazaire. The YMCA did some beneficial work for the doughboys, but was viewed with a certain distrust by many. John Dos Passos' *Three Soldiers*, one of the greatest American novels about the war, reflects this sentiment.



did, however, deploy “ethnic” platoons into “American” companies once in France. The idea was that these men would integrate into “mainstream” American culture through contact with their company, yet not be isolated as individuals. The military, influenced by the progressive movement, made great strides in the integration of various ethnic groups into a homogenous body. Catholic and Jewish chaplains became commonplace, and while not as influential as the YMCA, both the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic organization, and the Jewish Welfare Board were given access to the men.

Throughout the United States training camps were built, some hastily, to deal with the influx of manpower. When first arriving at the camps the troops were classified as casuals. Not yet fully uniformed, they began to learn the rudiments of military life, and were also employed in maintenance jobs around the camp. While at these camps the men were exposed to some of the realities of modern warfare. Many had their perceptions of war formed by hearing stories of the American Civil War, and for a considerable number the Spanish–American War was a childhood memory, complete with tales from older siblings and relatives. The war being fought in Europe was vastly different from these two conflicts, most notably in the dominance of technology. In an attempt to bring the nature of the “new” way of war home, it was not unusual for recruits to be drilled in their gasmasks. These became a common item in the camps, and the men were often required to carry them everywhere. A gas “drill” might even be called in the mess hall, where all present were required to put on their masks. Stateside training facilities also included sections of trenchworks, so that the recruits would start to understand the value of cover and the lethality of modern weapons. It should also be noted that the fatigue parties which built and maintained these works received some of the most accurate “training” for the real war in France.

An additional advantage of the stateside camps was that they gave the army a chance to indoctrinate the new recruits politically. For many,

particularly the foreign-born or the illiterate, the reasons for American participation were hazy. As part of the training course, classes were given in how the war affected life in the United States. Some of these were crude and served a propaganda purpose, but the instruction was deemed especially important after it was decided to accept recruits whose origins were in the German or Austro-Hungarian empires. The initial exclusion of these men was overturned when it was realized that many, particularly those of Czech or Polish background, were eager to fight against the “oppressors” of their homelands. During the classes, citizenship and the importance of democracy were stressed. It was also an opportunity to present a set of moral standards that were deemed desirable. Many of the morals were clad in an aura of military necessity, for example, abstain from going to a brothel not because it is immoral, but because the risk of acquiring a sexually transmitted disease will impair your ability to be a soldier. Furthermore, the doughboy should consider the shame that he would feel if he became a casualty as a result, rather than from enemy action.

STDs became a real consideration once soldiers were overseas, due to the different attitude towards prostitution that existed in France. A cat and mouse game between soldiers patronizing these establishments and the military police became a frequent theme in the memoirs of the soldiers. Stateside, things were done a little differently, with the inevitable rise of bordellos near training camps being counteracted with “prophylactic” stations. Those who did contract a disease were held to have done so willingly, and would, after court martial, be given a punishment including confinement, labor, and loss of wages.

The net result of much of the indoctrination was that the doughboy truly felt that he was fighting to make the world safe for democracy, a fight he shared with the soldiers from Britain, Belgium, Italy, Serbia, Romania, and other countries from the Allied cause.

In theory all troops would receive three months’ training – not the four months suggested in *WDD No. 656*, although foreign-speaking companies still got four months – and then be transported to France for an additional three months of training. In order to prepare the men for trench warfare, many camps created trench systems to be used in training exercises. Those who trained there considered the system constructed for the 27th Division Camp, Wadsworth, on the outskirts of Spartansburg, South Carolina, quite impressive. British and French officers also arrived in the United States to aid in the process. The foreign advisors and a good number of the American commanders understood the need for learning trench warfare – it was what the army was going to be committed to. Gen Pershing, on the other hand, favored



**The gasmasks were worn during all phases of training to acclimate the troops to them. Sometimes this had a definite benefit for the wearer! Peeling onions for the 40th Division, Camp Kearney, California.**

**Camouflage techniques ... the men oblivious to the reality of the Western Front. The framework that the men are behind supports a mirror angled slightly forward. This would reflect the ground before it, allowing the man pushing the mirror to advance unnoticed.**



a school of open warfare and felt that more attention should be paid to field craft. As a result the troops spent much time and effort on the rifle range, much to the bemusement of the visiting French. This is not to imply that grenades and other tools were ignored, but that the US Army exhibited a more conservative approach to training. Likewise, the men received instruction in close-order drill. This activity was continued in France, where units pulled out of the line and into “rest” areas were regularly subjected to the drill ground.

## **UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT**

When Kurt was inducted into the army he was issued with bits and pieces of uniform, at first just a “campaign hat” and a shirt. The hat, similar in shape to that worn by Canadian Mounties and drill instructors in the modern US Army, was of the same drab color as the uniform. The shirt was a khaki drab pullover, with three buttons down the front and two breast pockets. Unlike the banded collar shirts that many European armies favored, the American shirt had a stand and fall collar. As he was taking his Alpha and Trade tests, Kurt wore this shirt along with his civilian trousers and shoes. Within a few days he was issued the rest of his uniform. Cut from an olive drab wool, the pants and jacket had a coarse feel to them, and areas such as the neck were lined with cotton. The jacket had a stand collar, which was adorned with two bronze circles, the one on the right bearing the letters US, the other a pair of crossed rifles. Some National Guard units originally had a state cipher in place of the “US.” There were five bronze buttons, bearing the seal of the United States, which held the jacket closed. The trousers as originally specified in 1902 had a slight flare to them, but this was modified in 1917 to a closer cut. Suspenders could be worn, but the trousers were made with belt loops. Worn with this uniform were brown boots and a pair of canvas leggings. The leggings, cut from a khaki shade of material, were fastened with a cord. The cord was visible externally: at

the top, at the bottom of the legging, and, when worn, toward the front as an outward pointing “>”. Impractical for the realities of trench life, these leggings were soon replaced with puttees made from the same material as the uniforms themselves.

Cut in the same pattern, but out of a lightweight khaki duck material, was a uniform for wear in warmer climates. Many of the troops involved in Mexico wore this, often in shirtsleeve order, leaving the jacket behind. Some of these uniforms made their way to France, but Kurt and his comrades were not issued them, and the US soldiers who fought in the initial actions of the AEF in the summer of 1918 did so in the wool uniforms. The army also provided for cold weather with a greatcoat. Double breasted, it was adjustable by means of a belt in the back. It had two rows of four bronze buttons, similar to the ones on the uniform jacket. Unlike the uniform jacket, the greatcoat had a stand and fall collar. In addition, a brown leather jerkin, lined with green wool and closed with bone buttons, was approved; it was almost indistinguishable from the jerkin issued by the British Army. A shorter “Mackinaw” style jacket and a peaked cap were also regulation for drivers and other personnel. Troops deployed to Siberia or Northern Russia saw use of a variety of heavier coats, some acquired locally. Fur caps were also worn during these expeditions.

For rainy weather, two different options were available. A rubberized poncho was issued that was very similar to the ones used during the American Civil War, only in khaki instead of black, which could also be used as a shelter half. The poncho had certain limitations, particularly when soldiers had to don a gasmask quickly, and with this in mind, the men were issued a raincoat made from treated canvas that was allegedly waterproof. The raincoat had an oversized collar and large buckles to keep it closed.

It was soon realized that like the leggings the campaign hat, sometimes referred to as a “Montana” hat, was incompatible with trench warfare. An “overseas” cap replaced it. A fore-and-aft style cap, it was issued in two different patterns. One had a higher point on the front and back, much like the French cap. The other was lower, with a slight crest to the center. The cap was issued with the sides loose at the top;



**German prisoners with American captors, Menil-la-Tour, March 29, 1918. Of interest is the use of British leather jerkins and knit caps by the Yanks.**

these would be stitched together by the soldier himself. The cap was often seen with a bronze "US" disc on the front right side. The overseas cap had one great advantage over the campaign hat in that it could be easily folded down into a small size for storage while the helmet was being worn.

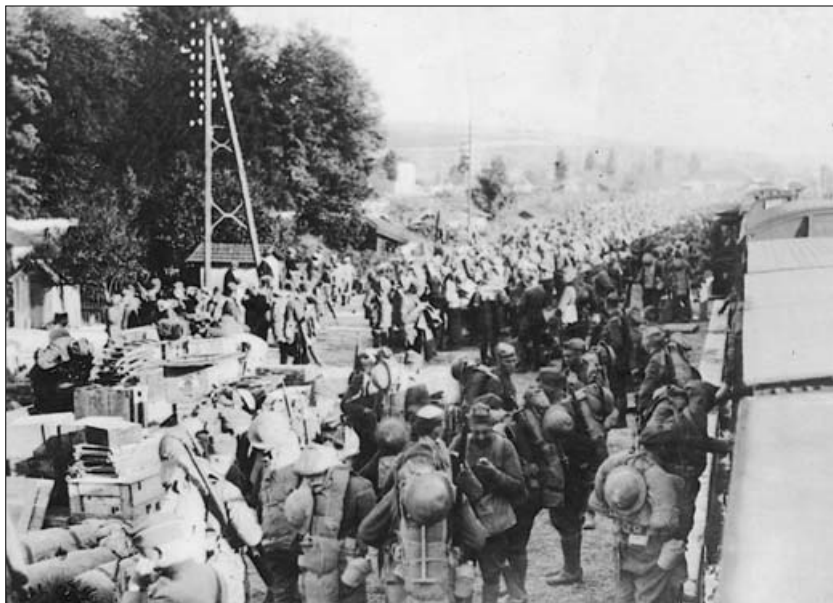
For protection in the front lines a steel helmet was worn. The US M1917 helmet was a copy of the helmet worn by British soldiers, with some minor differences in the liner and chin strap. The helmet was painted in a mixture of olive drab paint and sawdust which resulted in a textured finish that cut the reflection of light off the metal.

It should be noted that while divisional insignia was approved during the war, it was not worn by the troops, and should be considered part of the Army of Occupation era, rather than of the war itself. It was not until the end of October 1918 that it was decided that a divisional patch, following the British model, should be worn on the left sleeve. Two weeks later the fighting had ended.

For Kurt and other infantrymen, the main piece of equipment was the cartridge belt. Made of khaki-colored webbing, the belt had ten pouches, each capable of holding two five-round stripper clips. This gave the rifleman 100 rounds of ammunition immediately available. The belt was also equipped with eyelets, so that the bayonet and first-aid pouch could be attached, although the bayonet was often carried on the side of the haversack. The canteen, or water bottle, carrier was connected to the belt in a similar fashion. Into this khaki fabric item was slipped the M1910 aluminum canteen, which nestled inside an aluminum cup. Two press tabs, similar to the tabs on each of the ammunition pouches, held the canteen in place. The canteen carrier was stenciled with the letters "US."

The belt was the central piece in the M1910 pattern web gear. Without it the rest of the equipment could not be worn, as the haversack, not having shoulder straps, was equipped with front and rear suspenders that attached to the belt. The haversack was designed to be attached to a lower pack carrier to enable the infantryman to carry all of his equipment on a march. The entire combination was to be worn in a specific manner, which precluded carrying equipment that had not been visualized at the developmental stage. This system would prove to be a liability during actual combat conditions. There was a separate pouch to carry the mess tin/meat can and the entrenching tool would connect to the back of the pack under this pouch. The entrenching tool carrier, designed to carry a T-handled shovel, could also be worn off the belt, and was also stenciled with the letters "US." After it was realized that a soldier would need to carry more than 100 rounds into action, cloth bandoliers carrying 50 rounds in five pockets of ten were made available. These came in both khaki and green. They were intended to be discarded as emptied, and were in fact issued with the ammunition already in them.

Inside the haversack itself would be carried, according to the regulations, the soldier's rations and his washing/shaving kit. Additional clothing was carried in the lower pack carrier, along with the poncho/shelter half, blankets, and bivouac necessities. The M1905 bayonet and scabbard could be attached to the left side of the haversack, as could the M1917 pattern bayonet (this made it less of a nuisance while



**The 2d Battalion, 320th Infantry, disembarking from a train at Ligney en Barrois, Meuse, September 12, 1918. In the foreground note the two different ways of carrying the long pack.**

marching). The haversack and pack carrier were originally produced in a greenish shade of canvas, but this later changed to a khaki color.

For those not issued a rifle, there was an alternative belt available for use. The “pistol” belt was made of khaki webbing and fitted with the same grommets that the cartridge belt had. The grommets, set in groups of three, were spaced around the entire belt, allowing equipment to be hung off at various places. A very successful design, the belt continued in use with succeeding patterns of US field gear. The other item of equipment that became universally issued was one not visualized in the M1910 equipment design. This was the M1917 box respirator, which was carried in a khaki pouch on the user’s chest. Based on the British design, the respirator and bag were supported by a khaki strap that went around the wearer’s neck. The strap could be expanded to allow carrying on the hip. The bag also had a string attached to it that could be tied around the torso to prevent the gasmask from flopping about during movement. This piece of equipment was always worn facing inwards, so that when opened the top flap would be away from the soldier.

## **WEAPONS**

Initially, due to shortages of weapons, wooden rifles were issued to drill with, and use was made of dummy guns in bayonet training as well. The primary rifle of the army at this time was the 1903 Model Springfield. A .30 caliber weapon based on a Mauser action, it was a rifle that in various forms would have a service life into the 1950s. The integral box magazine held five rounds that were loaded with a stripper clip. The rifle was extremely accurate (its long service time reflected its value as a sniper’s weapon) and with a turn-down bolt it was quick to rechamber and unlikely to get snagged on obstacles. The length was only 43½in overall, so it was not an unwieldy weapon, like the Mauser ’98 or the Steyr M95, for use in trench warfare. Furthermore, the rifle only

weighed a little more than 8½lb, so it was not a heavy burden. During the war a modified version, the M1903 Mk.I was developed. This rifle was compatible with the “Pederson Device.” The Pederson Device replaced the bolt of the original rifle, and functioned as a semi-automatic receiver. Top fed with .30 caliber pistol ammunition, it was envisioned that the device would give the doughboy overwhelming firepower. The Pederson Device was awkward to use, and was only issued late in the war and in limited numbers. It did, however, prove to be a step on the way for the US Army to develop semi-automatic weapons that led to the M1 Garand being introduced into service in 1936. For the American army, the main problem with the '03 was that at the outbreak of war there were only 600,000 in the inventory. The Springfield was partnered with the M1905 bayonet. Eighteen inches long, it was carried in a scabbard made of brown leather and covered in khaki cloth. While extensive training was done with the bayonet, the men learning both French and British drill, it was seldom used in action.

As beloved as the '03 Springfield is in the American mythology of the war, it was not the primary service rifle for the doughboy in France. The British had been buying a Mauser-action rifle from the United States earlier in the war, known to the British as the No.3 Mk.I, or as Americans refer to it, the P14 Enfield. A fine weapon in its own right, in British service it was overshadowed by the Short Magazine Lee-Enfield (SMLE). This was for a variety of reasons, including the P14's length, only 1½in under 4ft, and its weight, 9½lb. Additionally, the magazine only held five rounds as opposed to the SMLE's ten. By these standards it was also inferior to the Springfield. There was one big advantage that the P14 had as the United States entered the war. It was in production. Rechambered from .303 to .30-06, the rifle was taken into service by the US Army as the P17 Enfield. This rifle ended up equipping the bulk of the AEF, and was carried by such luminaries as Sgt Alvin York. York was a conscripted conscientious objector who decided the war was a righteous cause. On October 8, 1918, as a corporal he was part of a patrol in the Argonne that encountered a German machine-gun unit. Eight of the 17 Americans became casualties, but York rallied up his



**Company K, 111th Infantry, 28th Division. Three US divisions served alongside the British, the 33d eventually being returned to American operational control. The 28th and 30th, to ease logistics, were issued British weapons, and in some cases British uniforms with American buttons. The troops illustrated here have just been issued No.1 Mk.III Enfields.**



men and took the German position, capturing 132 and killing up to 25 more. He received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions. (This award did lead to a minor controversy when a motion picture based on his life depicted him with a Springfield.) The M1917 Enfield bayonet was carried in the same scabbard as that of the Springfield.

Again, the African-Americans had a different experience. Just as they received French leather gear and gasmasks, so they were equipped with Berthier 07/15 rifles and bayonets. The Berthier, a long unwieldy weapon (51½in long) with a thin bayonet prone to snapping, also had a five-round magazine, although early versions only carried three rounds. This weapon reflected French reliance on the grenade and artillery, and was markedly inferior to the Springfields and Enfields carried by the AEF.

One last rifle merits discussion, even though it was not used in France. Just as Great Britain placed contracts to manufacture the P14 Enfield, the Tsarist government of Russia placed orders for the manufacture of the M1891 Mosin-Nagant rifle. Following the revolution, shipment ceased, and the Remington Company was left with an extensive inventory. When the decision was made to send American troops to Siberia as part of the expeditionary forces, they were equipped with these rifles. In .30 caliber and having a five-round magazine, it was similar to other rifles at the time, although longer than any other US-used rifle. The bayonet had a socket style of attachment, much like earlier muskets, and the blade resembled a spike. There was no special web gear introduced for use with this rifle as the standard equipment belt functioned perfectly.

The training that Kurt and his comrades received reflected the realities of war as observed by the British. Emphasis was made on trench life, and on the use of hand grenades and supporting machine-gun fire. This is not to imply that Pershing's desires were overlooked; individual marksmanship was still stressed, as was "open" warfare. The troops were also instructed in British bayonet drill. The divisions that were placed with the French were getting the same types of instruction.

These training courses helped to compensate the men for the lack of access to weaponry in the US. In Europe troops had access to actual trench mortars and light machine guns (LMGs) in order to better learn their functioning. Some weapons systems were still lacking, however. It was noted that originally rifle grenadiers were issued French rifles and discharger cups. A version for the Springfield and P17 Enfield was issued just in time for the 1st Division's attack on Cantigny.

Not only did the rifle grenadiers originally receive foreign weapons, but so did the automatic riflemen, and they kept theirs for the duration of the war. The French Chauchat was issued as the standard LMG, despite the availability of better designs such as the Lewis gun. Weighing over 20lb, and armed with a 20-round magazine, the weapon had several major drawbacks. Some 19,000 of these awful weapons, chambered to accept the US .30-06 round were ordered. Cheaply constructed, the weapon was prone to jamming and in some instances simply falling apart. The tendency to jam was aggravated by the half-moon-shaped magazine. With open sides it allowed in dirt and grime that further exasperated the Chauchat's malfunctions. It was not unusual for those issued with the Chauchat simply to discard it, acquire a rifle, and cease to function as an auto-rifle squad. In the last weeks of the war, the

Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) was introduced, but most units suffered with the Chauchat (there was a post-war scandal over the contracts). The BAR, which saw service up into the Vietnam era, was well liked by the doughboys. A special version of the equipment belt, with pouches to hold the BAR magazines, was developed and issued. In place of an ammo pouch, a cup to hold the butt of the weapon while firing from the hip was installed on the far right side of the belt.

With the prolific American issuance of heavy machine guns, these weapons became a fundamental part of the tactics used by even small units. While a very small number of the 1895 Colt “potato diggers” were sent over to France, the main American weapon used by the machine-gun companies was the Browning M1917. Externally resembling the Vickers and Maxim guns, the Browning actually functioned differently, using what is known as a short-recoil system. Water-cooled, and fed from 250-round belts, it was a weapon that would see service in several wars. The other machine gun used in great numbers by the American Expeditionary Force was the French Hotchkiss Mle 1914. Air-cooled and fed from 24- or 30-round strips (a longer strip of 249 rounds linked in three round groups was available, but unreliable), the Hotchkiss suffered from feeding mechanism problems, and due to the method of using strips, a low actual

rate of fire. As a result of the low numbers of available Browning M1917s, the Hotchkiss was the most common machine gun used by the AEF. Due to the weight of these guns, machine-gun companies were often supplied with carts to transport the guns and ammunition over distances. Pulled by mules, the machine-gun companies acquired the nickname “jackass batteries.” This use of animals to pull machine guns was not an American policy only, the Belgian Army being famous for its dog carts earlier in the war. Trench mortars were also used, these being of French or British design.

Many US machine-gun companies were armed with Hotchkiss guns, and US artillery was also of French design. Exceptions to this were the 27th and 30th Divisions, which stayed with the British, and for supply purposes were equipped with British weaponry, and in some cases British uniforms with American buttons. For the rifleman this meant being issued an Enfield, surprisingly not the P14, which was a .303 version of the same gun as the American-issued P17 Enfield (the Eddystone) that US soldiers would have been familiar with, but rather the SMLE.

The average American showed considerable skill in grenade-throwing, a skill commented on by their foreign

**Just as the Chasseurs Alpins taught the Americans how to use grenades and other lessons of trench warfare, the American was quick to repay the debt by teaching French children how to use traditional American weapons. The American soldier has always had a reputation for getting along with the children of the local populace.**





**A nice change from the hollow tubes and wood contraptions of training. A trench mortar of the 111th Trench Mortar battery of the 42d (Rainbow) Division moves forward. Nauilly, France, February 4, 1918.**

advisors. There was a cultural reason for this – the years that Kurt spent playing baseball in the yard by St. Benedict’s did pay off, although a baseball weighs somewhat less than the 22oz of a Mark II grenade ...

US grenades were modeled after existent French and British models. The most common, and one that saw service up into the Vietnam War, was the Mk.II, aka “the Pineapple.” The origin of this weapon was the Mills bomb, as well as a French grenade known as the LeBlanc. Pulling out the pin that held back a striker armed the grenade, fuzed for five seconds. To keep the weapon safe after the pin was pulled, the doughboy would push down on a metal lever, or spoon. When the pressure on the spoon was released it would flip up, and the striker would hit a primer, igniting a fuze. The fuze in turn would cause a detonator of fulminate of mercury to explode. The resultant explosion would break apart the outer metal shell into fragments that could travel up to 80 feet. Because of the blast radius the weapon was best used when the thrower had some cover to shelter behind.

The standard rifle grenade was the VB, or Viven and Bessieres. This was the same rifle grenade in use with the French Army. The mechanics of the detonation sequence were similar to those of a hand grenade, only the fuze ignition was started by a bullet. Unlike some systems which used special “grenade-launching” blanks, the VB used a standard rifle round, the bullet setting off the fuze as it passed through a tube which was in the center of the grenade. The same gas that sent the bullet on its way propelled the grenade itself. Traveling about 200 yards, and fired off the ground (*never* from the shoulder) at an angle of 45 degrees, the rifle grenade became an important part of the platoon commander’s arsenal.

These were not the only grenades that the doughboy learned to handle. There was a French-designed thermite grenade, used to destroy captured or abandoned artillery when dropped down the barrel of the gun. The

**Conscription spared no one ... Hank Gowdy, star catcher of the Boston Nationals, ended up playing for the 166th Infantry. Baseball, established as the national sport on a professional basis well before the Great War, was very popular as a recreation with the troops.**



thermite charge would need to burn itself out, and the grenade would burn hot enough to “weld” a breech mechanism shut. Other grenades were developed for other specific missions. An “offensive” grenade, being a charge in a cardboard tube, was developed. This caused an explosion with no fragmentation, the effect stunning those within the concussive zone. A gas hand grenade was also developed; it delivered a small amount of gas, and was to be used to clear pillboxes, cellars, and the like.

At the other end of the extreme were the variety of “trench knives” and other “nasties” acquired by the doughboys once in France. The M1917 Trench Knife, which Kurt carried, consisted of a triangular blade set into a handle with a cross bar. The cross bar curved down like a hand guard linking up to the pommel. This bar was covered in jagged metal studs, being in effect a “brass knuckle” of the type adored by street brawlers of the time. Also popular were an assortment of “trench-art” maces, clubs, daggers, and other sundry unpleasanties. Considering the lack of bayonet fighting, one often wonders why the soldiers of World War I would equip themselves with, and in fact manufacture, these weapons. In the close confines of a trench, however, a rifle with an attached bayonet could be a liability. This is why many of the foot-and-a-half-long bayonets that started the war were ground down to a length of 10in or 12in. The other consideration is that most patrol actions in no-man’s land were conducted in the dark. In night fighting a muzzle flash would betray the firer’s position, and this is one reason why there was a reliance on grenadiers, or bomb-throwers, on trench raids. This is not to imply that rifles were not carried on these excursions: they often were, and used as well. But there always existed the possibility of close-up killing. This is also where pistols and revolvers fit in, although they too suffered from the drawback of muzzle flash.

There were two handguns that were most often issued by the army, both in .45 caliber. They were carried by officers and senior NCOs, as well as by machine-gun crews and other specialty soldiers. Inevitably they



**Jackass battery: machine-gun company from the 18th Infantry on the move at Bonvillers, May 30, 1918. A US infantry division had a lavish complement of machine guns. For transportation mules were used to tow the guns and ammunition.**

trickled down into the ranks and could be found in the possession of the occasional private or corporal. The most famous of these guns is the M1911 Colt, a single-action semi-automatic. The M1911 and its derivatives spent seven decades as the sidearm of the US military, which speaks volumes for its performance. The weapon held seven rounds in a detachable box magazine, and for a single-action weapon was very safe, being equipped with both a grip safety and a lever safety. The main drawback the gun had was that it required a good amount of training in how to handle it and keep it clean. The revolver in service was the Smith and Wesson M1917, sometimes referred to as the “Victory” model. Holding six rounds in a central cylinder, it used the same .45 caliber bullet as the Colt. However, unlike most revolver ammunition, the .45 is rimless. This resulted in the gun being loaded with three round “clips.” These half-moon-shaped devices each held three cartridges in the chambers, as a kind of a sabot around the rear of the round. German pistols were coveted as souvenirs, in particular the '08 Luger, and were carried into action by those owning them.

One last weapon carried by the Americans deserves to be examined, as it caused some controversy during the war, yet ended up remaining, in different forms, in US military usage throughout the century. The shotgun was a sensible weapon for trench warfare, as it was very effective as a “Trench Broom.” Naturally the German military was not as enthusiastic about American use of shotguns, and complaints were leveled that the weapon violated the rules of war. Of course, it should be noted that many other armies, including the British during the Malayan Emergency, have made extensive use of “scatterguns.” The most common shotgun used by the army (and marines) was the Model 12 Winchester, a further development of the Model 1897 used in the Philippines. A 12-gauge weapon using a pump action in combination with a tubular magazine, the Winchester could spray loads of .32 caliber pellets over an area with deadly speed. These guns were even equipped with a bayonet lug to take the 1917 Enfield bayonet, making “the combat trombone” a truly formidable weapon. The main drawback to the shotgun was the shells. These were made of cardboard and were susceptible to damp. Given the muddy conditions on the Western Front,



**May 21, 1918. Company G, 7th Infantry, 3d Division, take a breather in San Martin, France. A good impression of a US company's appearance at this stage of the war.**

they were often reduced to a soggy mass that was useless for action. Brass-cased rounds were eventually developed, but did not see use before the end of the war.

## MOBILITY

Kurt shipped over to France in a requisitioned heavily modified ocean liner. He and his comrades left Hoboken, New Jersey, on May 10, 1918 for a 13-day cruise to Brest. The enlisted men were confined to the lower decks and the officers had the upper berths. There were constant complaints about the quality of the food and the lack of decent drinking water. However, for most, including Kurt, the two-week voyage was uneventful. Thanks to the adoption of the convoy system and the addition of the US Navy to the war against the U-boats, no transports in Kurt's convoy were lost. Several men on Kurt's ship did die on the trip though, mainly from influenza, which was starting to make inroads.

The issue of transport was to cause serious headaches for the American high command. There was never enough transportation available. In addition to the strain of shipping an entire army to Europe, the combined merchant marines were also bringing in food to the British and Italian civilian populations, a serious rival to the needs of the US Army. As a result of these other efforts, the British took a somewhat proprietary attitude towards the use of British shipping for the American effort. This manifested itself in the idea that US troops transported in British hulls should be at the disposal of the British Army, a policy which ran in direct contradiction to Pershing's desire for a unified American army in Europe.

After arriving in France, the infantry component of Kurt's division was moved up to Huppy and Martainneville in Picardy for additional training. Much of the training was focused on cooperation between infantry and artillery, as well as on how to function with tanks on the battlefield. This was done by British troops – while most US soldiers were

**St. Nazaire, a sight seen by hundreds of thousands of American eyes. The gentlemen holding up the sign, despite the uniforms, are probably not military personnel but rather "Y-Men" from the YMCA, an organization that eventually earned the loathing of many doughboys.**



taught by the French, the US 27th, 30th and 33d Divisions all went into the British sector. The 33d was eventually withdrawn and returned to the control of II Corps, but the other two divisions fought alongside the British in the battles to break through the Hindenburg Line.

Movement from the ports, and it should be noted that some doughboys were shipped to Great Britain and from there to France, was usually by rail. As was common with other armies, the men were shipped in boxcars, the famous (or infamous) “forty and eights.” This moniker arose from the markings on the side of the cars that they were for “40 hommes ou 8 chevaux”. The cramped conditions aboard the trains led one officer to comment that he had his 40 men on board, but if they tried to fit in some horses someone was going to get trampled. The French railroad officials closely monitored the number of troops who were transported this way, and a bill was submitted to the AEF for their fares. Railroads were also used to send the men from the training camps to the front lines, although it was not uncommon for the troops to be marched these distances. Motor transport was supplied when available, usually to assist machine-gun companies and other formations that had to move heavier equipment. This system broke down during the shift of troops from the St. Mihiel to the Argonne fronts, resulting in some divisions having their infantry regiments arrive, and then having to wait some time before their supporting artillery and other services arrived.

The initial troops sent to France contained a high percentage of regulars, although it should be noted that they were not all regulars – the 1st Division contained a large number of raw troops transferred in at the last minute to bring up numbers. The majority of doughboys being trained in France had instructors from the Chasseurs Alpins, the “Blue Devils.” The Americans quickly built a good relationship with the French, based in a large part on the consumption of alcohol. The Americans, receiving better pay than the French, often paid. This had an effect on the cost of liquor, which at the time of the Yanks’ arrival was the equivalent of seventy cents for a quart of champagne or \$1 for a fifth of cognac. As soon as US pay standards were figured out by the local merchants, champagne soared in price to \$5 a quart and cognac went up to \$10 a fifth. The situation was probably not helped by early arrivals paying for their alcohol in Mexican money and United Cigar coupons, taking advantage of the average Frenchman’s limited knowledge of US currency!



**April 6, 1918. The 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry head off to help stop the Kaiserschlacht, Maron, France. “I’ve got my 40 men on board, but if you try to fit in eight horses, someone is going to get trampled ...”. The French boxcars that the doughboys traveled on became one of the enduring memories of the war.**



While the troops shown here are actually from the USMC, this image was repeated with all US troops arriving in France. Here French instructors teach the Yanks grenade-throwing technique. Of interest is the use of Adrian helmets by the students.



## INTO COMBAT

On July 4, 1918, Kurt saw combat for the first time in what proved to be a controversial action, not from the tactical but the political perspective. Four companies of the 33d Division supported an Australian attack on Hamel. The action was just the type of use of American troops that Pershing had feared, and finding out about it in advance he prohibited the use of the doughboys. General Sir John Monash, the Australian commander, realized that the withdrawal of US elements from the attack would tarnish relations between the troops of the two nations and insisted on using four companies instead of the original ten, pulled from the 131st and 132d Regiments. The manner of their use fulfilled Pershing's worst nightmares. Rather than being used as a composite battalion, the companies were each attached to an Australian battalion. However, fresh, full-strength American companies were enormous when compared to their battle-depleted Australian counterparts. Rather than use the American companies as tactical groupings, each company was broken down into platoons. These platoons were then directly attached to Australian companies.

There is some evidence that the platoons themselves were broken down into squads and integrated into Australian platoons. This of course was the scenario that Pershing was trying to avoid at all costs – the dispersal of US fighting forces as replacements in Allied formations. The attack went extremely well. Despite Pershing's fears that the US troops would be mishandled, they acquitted themselves well. Australians themselves were complimenting the American participation. At the same time though, the amateurish enthusiasm of the doughboys was commented on, it being obvious that the Yanks had much to learn about modern war. The important benefit was that US troops were seen by their allies to be taking a proactive part in the war. The debit column was outside of the perspective of the average fighting man – an enhanced distrust of the British commander Haig by Pershing.

The Hamel incident was not completely isolated, although future occasions would not be such a surprise to the American high command. The two other divisions training with the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) would remain with the British for the balance of the war, taking



**Chasseurs Alpins with the USMC on the rifle range. Reflecting Pershing's obsession with "open" warfare, marksmanship was stressed in the US Army. In the center of the photograph is someone determined to make their point using a pistol. Also clearly shown is the manner of attaching the bayonet scabbard to the sides of the pack.**

part in the attacks that broke the Hindenburg Line. The Illinois boys of Kurt's sister regiment, the 131st, did their part in these offensives as well, jumping off on August 8, the black day of the German Army. Under operational control of the British 58th Division, the prairie regiment would stay in the line until the 16th, taking several German positions but losing 750 men in the process. Kurt's 33d would return to American control, but would serve under French command in the future, as did several other American divisions. In this the 33d was unique in having been controlled operationally by the Americans, the British, and the French. It should also be noted that in these later operations the American formations acted as divisions; the troops were not broken down into small elements attached directly to foreign organizations.<sup>4</sup>



**Another view of the rifle ranges. The dark blue trousers of the Chasseurs Alpins stand out against the horizon bleu of their greatcoats.**

### **The American combat experience**

World War I battlefields have an unfortunate image in the collective memory of being a persistent meat-grinder devoid of any real leadership from above. While there is an element of truth in this, the reality is that by 1918 all the major players were sophisticated in a tactical sense. In fact, the criticism which is made of the Americans desiring "open warfare" is slightly hypocritical. The development of "stormtroop" tactics, complicated artillery plans such as the rolling barrage and the use of technology (tanks, airplanes, chemical weapons) all point to the fact that serious thought was given to the problems of stalemated war and the desire to break free. Gone were the methods of 1914, and even those of 1916. No longer was a first day of the Somme likely. While heavy casualties were accepted, those being caused by faulty tactics were not. It was into this evolving form of warfare that the AEF entered.

While the Americans had accepted British and French training, the policy of "open warfare" always lingered. As a result, the lessons of the war were not always digested, and the doughboys went into action

<sup>4</sup> Elements of the 6th US Engineer Regiment had been used in March 1918 to help stop the German offensive and no complaint was made due to the emergency situation and the fact that the troops were in the line of the German advance.

Many American units moved into the line in the winter of 1918. Here a doughboy from the 101st Infantry, 26th Division, formerly the 5th, 6th, and 9th Massachusetts National Guard, takes aim at the Germans, January 1918.



September 14, 1918, Le Claire, Meuse. A supply mule and skinner of the 132d Infantry. Extensive use was made of mules in World War I.

imbued with the spirit of 1914. The problem with the American desire for open warfare was aggravated by the backward state of the army in 1917. The army was neither physically nor materially ready for war. Efforts were made to quickly adapt to the new reality of war, but, ironically, these were undermined by a certain belief that the American army was already mentally equipped for modern war. This is not to imply that nothing had been learned. The army made use of the latest in French artillery techniques and ample use was made of machine-gun support (in fact the Americans in their tables of organization provided more machine guns at the divisional level than any other combatant). The heavy issuance of automatic weapons extended to the platoon level. This can be illustrated by the fact that in the 1st Division the average night patrol in no-man's land was of 20 men armed with

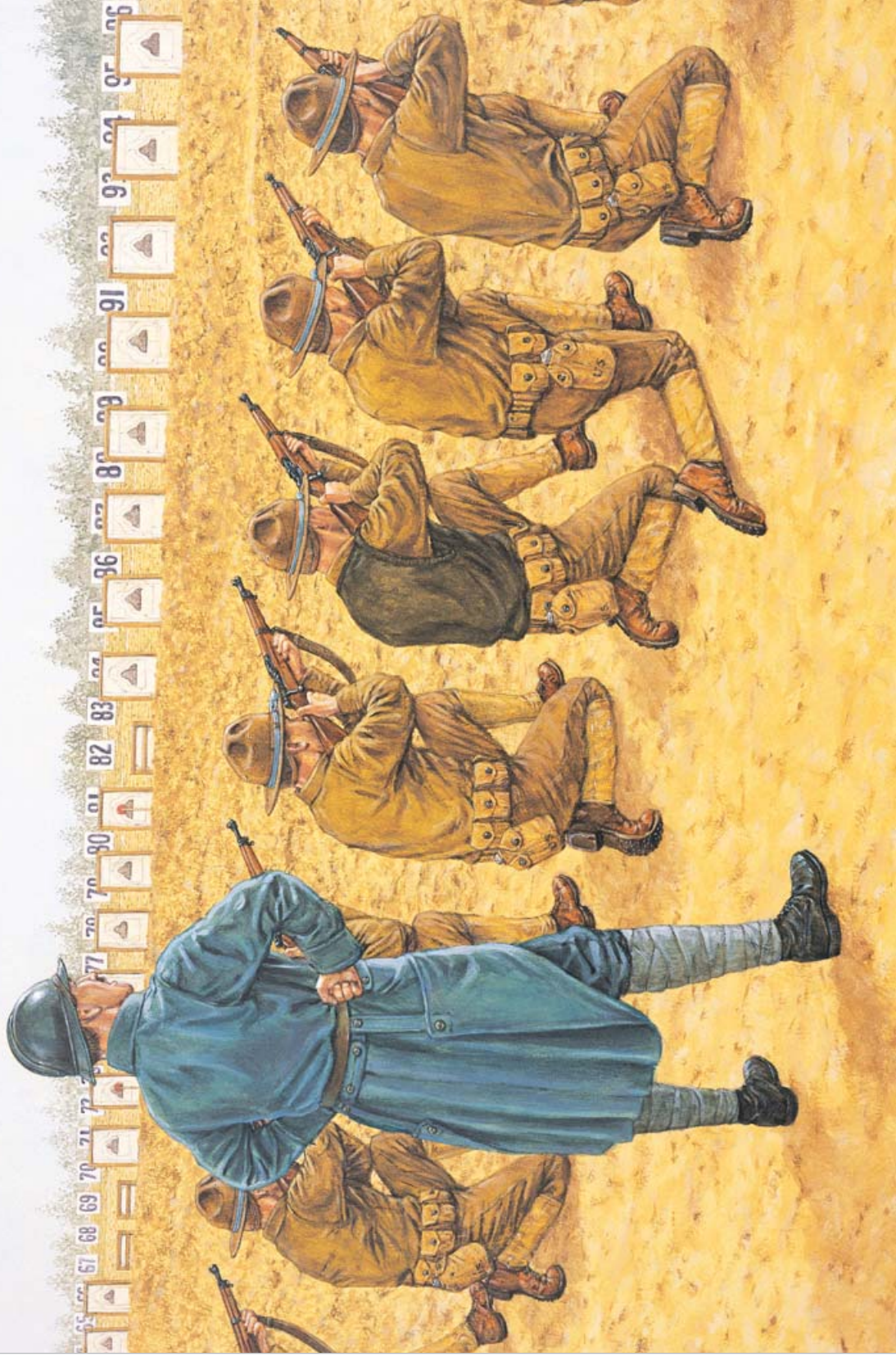
pistols, knives, and hand grenades, along with two automatic riflemen.

In the attack on Hamel, and subsequent offensive operations, the troops would have lightened their burden. Greatcoats, blankets, and any excess equipment were usually dumped together, and two men from each company were left to guard it. There were several good reasons for this, one being the physical condition of the men. Ration parties often had difficulty getting food to the line during periods of intense fighting, and as Capt Evarts of the 18th Infantry pointed out in his memoirs, attempting to march at double time in full gear on one meal a day was difficult at best. A very common theme in the memoirs and diaries of soldiers is the breakdown of supply services in getting food, which was moved up at night, to the troops in combat. In one 1st Division soldier's journal, every page out of the first 17 makes reference to such incidents. Food, when it did arrive, was often what the troops called "slumgullion," a type of stew made with poor quality beef, referred to as "monkey meat," and whatever else was lying about. After several days of living on hardtack, it was appreciated none the less. One veteran recalled finally getting cold steaks brought up by the mess sergeant after five days





Tronville-en-Barrois, August 1918



Weapons and equipment







Ravin du Rapilleaux, Bois de Forges, September 26, 1918





Forges, September 28, 1918



Consenvoye, October 9, 1918





Somewhere near Doncourt-aux-Templiers, late October, 1918





Marcheville, November 11, 1918



2



3



4



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1a



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7



8





**While some troops were on Long Island getting gassed by their own side, these members of Company M, 102d Infantry, are moving forward rations. The food was prepared, then put into large tins and brought up to the front lines. The figure to the right of the picture is descending into a communication trench. Note the fact that the men are wearing wading boots as a method of compensating for the waterlogged terrain and resultant deep mud. March 5, 1918.**

without getting rations. He had brought up enough for the entire unit, but due to casualties everyone got double rations.<sup>5</sup>

One anecdote revolved around the fact that the ration parties had been blown up by artillery fire, resulting in an additional 14 hours of hunger. A sergeant, looking into no-man's land, observes a line of 20 dead Moroccans, killed weeks before by machine-gun fire. The NCO then crawls out 200 yards to the corpses, searches six and recovers two cans of corned beef that he brings back to his section.<sup>6</sup> While seeming extreme, the fight against hunger was a day-to-day battle, and not one fought by the Americans alone.

In addition to problems with food and supply, being in the combat zone had other risks. Lingering gas was a problem faced by many troops, and arsenic poisoning acquired in the bottom of shell holes was known to occur (arsenic poisoning came as a by-product of the explosives burned in detonations). Mustard gas, which would eat into flesh like lye, particularly in damp or moist areas, was known to destroy the testicles of those who took shelter in holes where the gas lingered. Being a persistent gas, this could be for some time. It should be noted that mustard gas injury often had a long-term effect for returning doughboys. Many wounds were so disfiguring, particularly those from chemical agents, that many American cities in 1919 and into the 1920s passed laws about being seen in public, lest women and children be frightened. The disfigured veteran was required to be hooded or masked. If not he faced criminal prosecution for "Being Ugly on the Public Way," which is how the law was titled in Chicago.

To a certain degree Kurt would have enacted Pershing's desire for "open warfare." A great deal of the time that US forces were in the line,



**After being brought up through the communications trench, the men of Company M, 102d Infantry, enjoy, or at least eat, the food out of the bacon can.**

<sup>5</sup> John Gilbertie, quoted in Henry Berry, *Make the Kaiser Dance*, p.23

<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah Evarts, *Cantigny: A Corner of the War*, privately printed, 1938

**A Steinburn Rolling Kitchen of the 7th Infantry, 3d Division. While a good idea for open warfare, their mobility was limited in regions like the Argonne.**



**GAS! Amongst the various methods used by different armies to warn of a gas attack were whistles, clackers etc. The Americans used a hand-cranked Klaxon, of the type shown here.**

they were involved in various offensives. While much of the fighting can be seen as an attempt to break out of trench warfare, it takes on the flavor of a transition to open warfare. As the fighting progressed through the Argonne Forest the extent of fortifications dug by the Americans fell off. It was not unusual to have front-line trenches that were only 4ft deep. Furthermore, it should not be assumed that the trench lines were all connected. Often a battalion would find its companies holding supporting but separate trenches. This could even happen within the company, becoming more frequent with the expansion into the German lines. Barbed wire was to be

strung five strands tall, but due to shortages it was often less.

The trenches themselves were no guarantee of being safe from enemy fire. Many of the sectors occupied by the Americans had trenches cut out of chalk. Chalk being very hard, shell splinters would often ricochet off the walls and cause mayhem down the line as chunks of chalk were added to the shrapnel. Due to the difficulty of digging in these conditions, 4ft deep was sometimes rare for trenches, and orders were issued that for a trench to be placed on a map it had to be deeper than 2ft. It should always be remembered that World War I took on the form of trench warfare for a very definite reason: the killing power of modern weaponry. Dominated by artillery and machine-gun fire, the common infantryman had very little in the way of personal protection. The trenches bogged the war down and lead to great bloodbaths as both sides looked to break through, but on a daily basis they provided protection for the fighting man. As the Americans lost the ability to dig in, so they lost significant protection.

The reduction in defensive works had much to do with the terrain that Kurt and his comrades were fighting over. The Argonne is heavily wooded and quite hilly. This landscape would curtail the laying out of



**When the lines ran through particularly difficult terrain, such as swamps, instead of digging trenches the soldiers would construct barricades. This is an example of one of those barriers.**

defenses to the extent that was seen in more open areas like Flanders. Fields of vision were greatly restricted and the ability to direct artillery fire diminished. Command and control would also be hampered, and much of the fighting would be hard to direct at any level higher than the company. The restricted terrain had other malevolent side effects as well. Unlike open areas, a high-explosive shell exploding in the woods would shower its target not only with metal, but also with splinters of wood gouged out of the trees. These could prove as fatal as shell fragments. Luckily, the quality of German shells was not always high. According to Capt Evarts, a quarter of all German 77mm rounds fired at his company were duds, the problem was that the “155mm shells were always good!” Evarts also related that an attempt to move forward to relieve another company during the Soissons offensive led to 50 percent casualties in just 100 yards of movement over open ground. Quite clearly, even with a certain amount of “duds,” artillery dominated the battlefield.

After Hamel the 33d Division was moved from the British sector, Kurt and his comrades being shipped to the area of Verdun, relieving French troops on Hill 304 and in the Cumieres-le-Mort-Homme sector. As this sector passed from French to American control, the 33d became part of the US III Corps. As part of this formation, Kurt found a shift in his role, from warrior to instructor. Having seen combat experience, the men of the 33d were now cast into a teaching role, helping to acclimate the US 4th Division to the front lines. Not part of the St. Mihiel operation, the Division prepared itself for its role in the Meuse–Argonne offensive.

The plan called for III Corps to advance along the left bank of the Meuse, and to push on towards two objectives. Forming up during an artillery barrage on the night of the 25th, the 66th Brigade, which contained the 131st and Kurt’s regiment, the 132d, prepared to go over the top. The sector of the Hindenburg Line that they were to attack had seen off many assaults earlier in the war, and was considered to be well fortified. In addition to the German fortifications, the terrain was cut by a series of ridges, which were for the most part solid. The problem was the depressions in between; these areas were marshy in nature. Additional hazards were the Forges Brook, and the closed terrain of the



**Kurt's regiment. The 132d Infantry in a front-line trench towards Alexandre, Meuse, September 17, 1918. Note that the position is both narrow and fairly shallow. Some accounts of the fighting mention that front-line trenches were often only 4ft deep at this stage of the war.**

Bois de Forge, occupied by German troops. For Kurt this meant that he would have to traverse difficult terrain that featured obstructed lines of vision, complicating his ability to locate his objectives. Furthermore, in an era where much of a commander's ability to control his troops depended on being seen, it limited Kurt's ability to respond to his officers and NCOs. One way to counteract these problems was to keep closer together, but this ran the risk of higher casualties from artillery fire and automatic weapons.

Under cover of the artillery bombardment, the 108th Engineer Battalion prepared approaches over the water obstacle to assist the attack. The assault that morning jumped off at 0530 hours, partially concealed by a heavy fog, and the 66th Brigade advanced toward the German positions. It took nearly an hour to cross the brook and re-form, and then, supported by a

rolling barrage, the attack recommenced. The brigade, and in particular Kurt's regiment, were in an important position for the entire battle plan. Being at the right of the US line north of the Meuse River, they were the door-hinge on which the American front was swinging. With this important task, the 132d could not afford to be delayed. Taking fire from the village of Forges itself, Kurt's company was detailed to capture the town quickly. Fighting in a built-up area led to many of the same difficulties as fighting in woods.

The town itself was in a fairly destroyed state, as was common with most formerly inhabited places along the line. This gave the German defenders a certain advantage, as they had some cellars and the remains of other buildings to anchor their defense on. These localities could be connected with trenches to provide an integrated system. Furthermore,



**167th Infantry, 42d Division, bring Pershing's dream of open warfare to life at St. Bonat on the Meuse, September 15, 1918.**





**The HQ of the pioneer platoon, 317th Infantry, Osches Woods. Lt M.G. Thomas commanding. Note the branches across the top of the tent for concealment.**

the ruins of the town could be used for concealment, and the broken nature of the area would disrupt any attackers. As had been shown in earlier fighting in towns such as Fleury near Verdun, these “strongholds” could become deathtraps. The time needed to reduce these positions could also be disruptive to the battle plans devised by the high command.

To take Forges, the company broke down into smaller groups, the platoons becoming reliant on their sections as fighting teams. In a like manner, the 132d’s sister regiment was setting about removing the threat of German machine-gun positions in the Bois de Forges. While the village could be defined as a built-up position, the training for “open warfare” was now to come into practice. To storm the German positions the Americans fell back on the principle of Fire + Maneuver = Offense. As defensive positions were identified the automatic-rifle and rifle-grenadier sections would lay down suppressive fire. This was designed to prevent the Germans from responding to the assault teams. Hopefully, the fire would force them to remain in shelter, and away from a firing position, or at least disrupt their ability to shoot accurately at the attacking squads. While this was taking place, the “bomber section” and the riflemen, with bayonets attached, would move to a position close to the defenders, and preferably sheltered from them. Once they were close enough, the bombers would throw grenades into the objective, and the riflemen would quickly follow up before any survivors could recover. If any of the defenders fled, the riflemen would be in a position to pick them off. Once the position was captured, the automatic riflemen and the rifle grenadiers would move forward and the cycle would begin anew.

Often, if the objective were a village or other fortified area more advanced than the usual entrenchments, specialized assault engineers would accompany the troops. In American operations, these men were often French. Equipped with flame-throwers and explosive charges, they could help the infantrymen quickly overcome hardened defenses.



**According to the caption in the National Archives, these men took a German machine-gun position without a shot being fired – the crew had been taking a nap. The soldiers may be from Company E, 359th Infantry.**



French tanks often supported US troops until the American Army had developed a strong enough armor force. At Cantigny, in May 1918, both French engineers and Schneider tanks accompanied the 1st Division. Eventually the Americans developed their own armor corps to assist in these operations. While having some British heavy tanks, most of the American armor consisted of Renault FT-17s.

The defenders would, of course, try to make the attackers' job as difficult as possible. Fighting positions would not be isolated, but rather be sited so as to support each other with interlocking fire. This put an additional burden on the US fire element, in that they would have to suppress several locations to protect the maneuver element. Depending on the terrain, the squads might be broken down further, so as to provide more direct support for the assault. Luckily for Kurt and his comrades, the attack on the 26th went swiftly and the town was cleared with a minimum of loss. Prisoners were taken, and the company had to hustle to catch up to the rest of the battalion and the main assault on the woods. The US troops kept up at a rapid pace, and within four hours the entire brigade had achieved the assigned objectives, with a penetration of four miles into the German positions. By the standards of World War I, this was a significant advance. Moreover, the casualties had been extremely light, again by the standards of the day. Only 36 men out of a total of 241 casualties were dead. The defenders had suffered heavily in comparison, relinquishing over 1,400 prisoners in addition to their casualties. Twenty-six artillery pieces and roughly 100 machine guns were captured as well. It was fortunate that the Germans were in a state of collapse. During an earlier attack at St. Mihiel, one officer reported the Germans walking out with their hands up crying "kinder" to signify that they were older men with children at home in the hope of not being shot out of hand.<sup>7</sup>

All things considered it was a fantastic success for the Chicago boys. This is not to imply that the attack had been easy. Kurt would have been hard pressed to stay in communication with the rest of his platoon, and



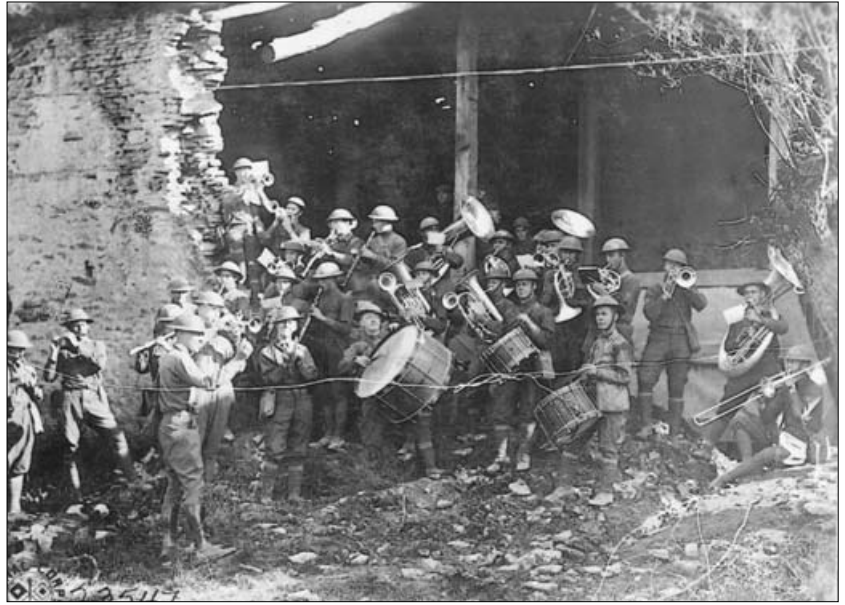
**Jubilant doughboys on the way to Montsec. Note the absence of backpacks.**

often, in the broken terrain, he would feel isolated from his squadmates. With the overwhelming noise of artillery fire and the constant rattle of machine-gun fire voice contact would be difficult. In woods and gullies, with the impairments of gas and smoke, visual relay of orders would suffer as well.

On a grander level, the plan for the capture of the Bois de Forges was to follow the principles of pinning fire and maneuver. Rather than attack directly into the German defenses in the forest, it was planned to use the two regiments of the brigade to encircle the woods, and then attack from an unexpected direction. To keep the defenders in place, the supporting artillery often fired on areas that would not be attacked in an effort to mislead the Germans, and more importantly, prevent them from shifting troops to meet the real hazard. The attack itself was distinctive from many similar operations. The two regiments attacked in a standard formation, two battalions forward and one in reserve. What was odd was the frontage the regiments attacked over. The 132d had a frontage of nearly 2,000 yards. Given maneuver room between the assault battalions, each was covering a frontage of 800 yards. By the standards of World War I tactics, that was an incredible frontage more appropriate for a regiment than a battalion.

After this assault, the focus of the attack shifted away from the 33d Division, and the troops had the time to consolidate their positions and prepare new defenses. The divisional artillery was not given a rest, as they were added to the fire plan of other formations, but the infantry would not attack again until mid-October. This pause was not a rest period. The division held its place in the line, and was subjected to all sorts of "hate mail" or harassing fire, from the Germans, usually in the form of heavy artillery bombardments on different trench sectors. Patrol actions, both for security and to gather intelligence about the opposition, continued. Such actions could be dangerous, adding to a growing casualty list even in quiet sectors. Invariably sent out at night, Kurt and his comrades would head off

**The band of the 132d Infantry, Germonville, Meuse, September 15, 1918. Like mules, a band may seem an incongruity in a combat zone during the modern era, but they did provide morale behind the lines.**



**MPs bringing in German prisoners, Mesnil-St. Firmin, May 28, 1918. Note the two different ways of wearing the box respirator bag, the man on the left of the photograph having his at the ready position.**

to determine the condition of German wire entanglements and assess the strength of the enemy line. Often the Germans would be doing the same, and the two parties would stumble across each other in no-man's land. These patrols could be quite large in size, up to a platoon of 40 or so men. On occasion a trench raid would be organized that would involve up to a battalion. The object of these would be to occupy temporarily part of the German line, take prisoners and gather intelligence.

Life in the trenches was never "restful." In addition to patrols there would be fatigue parties to rebuild damaged sections of trench and parties to bring forward the supplies: sandbags, barbed wire, "pig tails" (the iron rods that the barbed wire attached to) and other tools. Other details would include bringing up rations, and

bringing out the wounded and the dead. Even on quiet days casualties would be incurred from artillery and snipers. When Kurt's unit was pulled out of the line, the time was used to repair equipment, acclimate new equipment, absorb replacements for the men lost, and train for the next offensive.

Then, on October 9, the push against the Germans began anew. For this "stunt," as Kurt and his comrades would refer to an attack, there was a change. Instead of attacking as part of the US III Corps, Kurt found himself under French control as part of the French XVII Corps. The Prairie Division was unusual in this – they were the only formation to serve under the command of the Americans, the British, and the French. As part of this French attack the mission was to drive across the



**The first US offensive – an attack on Cantigny by the 1st Division on May 28, 1918 – resulted in these fatalities. Owing to heavy German artillery fire there was a delay in their being buried.**

Meuse and on to Highway 64. The offensive ran until October 13, and then dug in on new defensive positions. Kurt stayed in the line until the 18th, and then was relieved by French colonial troops. While unaware of it at the time, the war for him was effectively over, although other troops from the 33d would be involved in minor fighting on November 11, the day of the armistice.

## **DAILY LIFE AND ROUTINE**

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Artillery was dreadful under any circumstances. The primary killer of the war, artillery bombardment disrupted communications and movement as well. The psychological strain of being under prolonged shelling was debilitating. “Shell shock,” sometimes referred to as “neurasthenia,” became a recognized problem during the war. A mental breakdown brought about by the stress of living and fighting in the trenches, it was originally thought to derive from the anxiety of being under bombardment with no way to retaliate and no control of one’s surroundings. Later the condition was understood to be broadly based, a cumulative effect of the various stresses of life in the front lines. Treatment of this phenomenon varied from country to country, but early in the war could be brutal, sometimes including execution for cowardice. By the time the United States entered the war, shell shock was better understood, and psychologists in all the warring countries were examining the condition. The US Army was very forward thinking in this regard, and psychologists were included in the medical staff deployed to France. This inclusion is not as surprising as it may seem, as the early 20th century was a time of great social reform with progressivism penetrating all strata of American society including the military. That the army, already inclined towards a more “modern” outlook of the world, should continue this trend is only natural.

Doughboys were not shy about frequenting taverns and brothels in France, and venereal disease became a problem. This had been

anticipated, and the men inducted into the military had been given a battery of lectures on the dangers of sexually transmitted disease. The matter was taken so seriously that the informational pamphlets given out were translated into different languages, so that soldiers who had been born in Poland, Russia, Italy, or several other countries could have the material in their native tongue.

As was inevitable considering the AEF attitude towards prostitutes, treatment of those with venereal diseases was designed to be as painful and unpleasant as possible. In light of the fact that Pershing himself had twice contracted gonorrhea while stationed in the Philippines, his attitude does appear a little hypocritical. Of course, it can also be argued that as a result of his experience, he was aware of how disruptive the disease could be. Sexually transmitted diseases did in fact become a considerable problem within some units of the US Army at the time. It became even more notorious among the Americans in the expeditionary forces serving in Russia. A US contingent began arriving at Archangel in September 1918; within six months of service they had accumulated 129 incidents of gonorrhea and 54 of syphilis.

Kurt was fortunate in having never been wounded; his division lost 993

men killed in battle out of total of 7,255 casualties. Kurt participated in the removal of casualties, as the number of stretcher-bearers was never adequate for the task. When a man was wounded it was not always possible to recover him immediately due to the demands of the fighting. This was part of the rationale of having each man carry a first-aid kit on his belt – if he was able to, he could dress his own wound. If unable, with a little luck a nearby comrade would be available to do immediate first aid. Ideally a medic would attend to the wounded man, but they could be in short supply during battle. When the time came to evacuate the wounded, teams of stretcher-bearers would carry them out. The ideal ratio was to have four bearers per casualty, but this was not always practicable. Trying to maneuver a wounded man down a communication trench could be awkward with only two bearers. The fatigue factor would be very high, and relief for the bearers would often mean coercing infantrymen into helping.

The casualty evacuation route would be as follows: first the injured soldier was brought to an aid station, either at the battalion or regimental level. He may have been carried in by stretcher, his friends, or walked on his own two feet. From the aid station he would be taken to a dressing station. This is where the wounded man

**Hygiene enters modern warfare. Maj John Claypool M.C., Asst. Division Surgeon for the 80th Division, is breaking a tube of chloride into a cup to chlorinate a "Lyster" bag of water, September 20, 1918, Osches, Meuse.**



**The 28th Infantry, 1st Division, evacuates a casualty from the fighting at Cantigny on a rolling stretcher. May 28, 1918.**



would be loaded into an ambulance and driven to a field hospital. A division had four of these hospitals, but only two were brought forward and used at a time. By standing down two of these facilities they would be prepared to move forward if needed, and in a condition to deal with any changes on the front.

While at the field hospital, triage would be performed as well as any additional immediate aid needed. At this point the direction a patient would go in depended on his wound. There were separate hospitals established for the treatment of gas casualties, and a special ambulance was even devised for these men. Nearly a third of the casualties treated in US hospitals were gas casualties. Wherever possible, field hospitals were situated along rail lines, so that further evacuation could be done by railroad. This was usually the case as France had an established rail network, and US railway engineer companies were aggressively repairing the lines and refurbishing the rolling stock. The trains that would transport the wounded from the field hospitals were not equipped with the “forty and eights” but were dedicated medical trains staffed and run by the Sanitary Corps.

The base hospitals were planned to be 500-bed facilities, although they would often have up to 1,000 beds. The AEF high command desired enough hospital space for 15 percent of the troops deployed to France. The rapid expansion of the army had caused a crisis for the medical corps, and much of the needed manpower to staff these hospitals was obtained by taking the American Red Cross into the military wholesale. Doctors received reserve commissions, the nurses went into the Army Nurse Corps and the balance of the personnel went into the Regular Army.

Following the armistice, the army did not immediately return to the United States, much to the disappointment of many. The army, slowly following the retreating Germans up to the Rhine, began to take over occupational duties. Many units were hit hard by influenza, the pandemic

**Field apothecary, 317th Infantry, 80th Division, September 19, 1918. Attached to the regiment's headquarters, this would be an important component of the regimental aid post system.**



**A Special Surgical Ambulance designed by a French officer, 2d Lt Julian A. Gehrung, for use by the Red Cross of the Allied armies. It was equipped for the treatment of gas victims, or for those suffering from eye, ear, nose, or throat troubles.**



killing more people around the world than the war had. Kurt was one of those struck low. Due to the strain on the medical establishment, room in military hospitals was quickly used up. Kurt found himself staying with an elderly German couple who had lost a son in the war. The influenza, or “La Grippe” as it was often known, was a particularly efficient killer. Death on the same day as becoming symptomatic was not uncommon. Ill for three days with a high fever Kurt was fortunate that he recovered, thanks to the constant care of the family he was staying with, perhaps because they saw him less as an occupier and more as a proxy for a lost son. Of course, fraternization, even in this manner, was forbidden, but carried on openly nonetheless. For those like Kurt, it couldn't be avoided.



Treatment was for the symptoms, not the cause. The victim manifested mahogany-colored splotches over the cheekbones which quickly spread across the face. The lungs rapidly filled with liquid, as the “flu” was a type of pneumonia, and the patient could die. Although the disease was not always fatal, some 20 percent of the world’s population suffered from the flu in 1918–1919, including 25 percent of the American population. The US Army had 43,000 flu fatalities during this period, the hospital at Camp Devens, Massachusetts, reporting over 100 a day during the height of the epidemic.

After his recovery, Kurt remained with his company. In April 1919 the division began to redeploy to the United States, sailing from the same port they had arrived at: Brest. Prior to their departure from Europe a new group arose among the soldiers – the American Legion. Inspired by Teddy Roosevelt, the organization was to become a political powerhouse during the 1920s. The group, ostensibly for all those who had served, became a bastion of white, middle-class values. Those suspected of having ties to radical labor or bolshevist leanings were excluded. This in particular affected those who served in Siberia, many of whom were considered tainted by the experience. The American Legion was to take umbrage with groups such as the International Workers of the World, also known as the “wobblies,” conscientious objectors, and anyone deemed a “slacker.” With this attitude the Legion played a role in the “Red Scare” of 1924.

### **Doughboys and the YMCA**

The YMCA or Young Men’s Christian Association had an unusual role during the Great War. A development of the “progressive” movement in the United States, the “Y” offered its services to the government during the war. This in itself is not strange: the Catholic “Knights of Columbus” and the Jewish Relief Board did the same, and were employed in helping to acclimate Catholic and Jewish soldiers into the military. The YMCA did much the same type of work, providing library and other services to the men in the training camps. The role for the “Y” did, however, expand greatly beyond that of the other organizations.

The YMCA went to France in great numbers, establishing offices in most US Army facilities. These were often in the nature of welcome centers, such as that found in St. Nazaire. Due to their ubiquity, the “Y” became a pseudo branch of the military. The federal government gave them the concession to provide cigarettes and other sundries to the troops, much in the way of a 19th-century sutler. This led to a certain



**Casualty evacuation in the Toulon sector, March 22, 1918. Note the French advisor in the background.**





**The Toulon sector on March 22, 1918. A “Y” man serves hot chocolate. The trench construction is very French, an impression reinforced by the Poilu standing by the entrance to the dugout.**

amount of resentment from the troops. One of the items they provided was a pea-green sleeveless sweater which was approved to be part of the uniform (see accompanying photograph of a YMCA man distributing hot chocolate.)

The hostility stemmed from the sale of items to the ranks. Objects such as cigarettes were viewed as staples, not luxuries, and the men objected to paying for them. As many of the cigarettes had been donated there was just cause for the resentment. The image of the “Y” man, close to the front but out of danger, selling cigarettes and hot chocolate to the wounded became a negative stereotype. In post-war literature, such as John Dos Passos’ *Three Soldiers*, the “Y” man becomes the embodiment of corruption. Veterans often spoke with hostility about the YMCA, particularly when compared to the American Red Cross, which did give away cigarettes and other items to the men.

A further cause of resentment was the fact that many “Y” men were seen as slackers. They were in France, they were in a variation of official army uniform but they were not seen as taking all the risks that the men did. Coupled with the “mercenary” behavior, the YMCA staff was often viewed as slackers of the most noxious type. As a result, the soldiers often took out their frustration in the YMCA’s direction. It would not be out of place if one night while out of the line Kurt and a couple of his friends broke into the

YMCA’s wagon or hut and made off with a lot of the cigarettes. Their NCOs and junior officers, who shared their attitude, would be likely to look the other way.

In mitigation it should be pointed out that the “Y” did provide free stationery for the soldier to write home with. A US Army manual on the management of soldiers stressed that writing home regularly was an important part of the life of the troops. At a YMCA hall not only could Kurt write to his relatives, but also help would be given to illiterate soldiers so that they could stay in communication with their families.

To give an example of the extent of YMCA influence, by the end of the war there was even a “Y” hall in Fort Douamont, Verdun. It should be noted that the YMCA, following the lead of the US Army, had separate, and usually inferior, facilities for black soldiers. In addition to these functions, the YMCA also helped provide entertainment to the doughboys, much as the USO would for their sons in another war. Elsie Janis, one of the more popular performers of the day, who had made



her name in musical comedy, was sponsored by the YMCA on a tour of the front.

In marked contrast to the relationship with the YMCA was that between the average doughboy and the Salvation Army. Where the “Y” man was often seen as a slacker, lurking in the rear and taking the doughboys’ money while spewing hypocritical “moral” advice, the Salvation Army made a different impression. Stateside their activities were in line with other organizations. They maintained a presence in training camps and provided “comfort” services. The Salvationists would also go to the homes of soldiers serving overseas and make sure their families’ needs were being met. This in itself earned them a great deal of good will. The positive attitude among the servicemen was reinforced by Salvation Army activity in France. While having nowhere near the numbers deployed by the YMCA, the Salvation Army became an important symbol to the average soldier. Far from staying in the rear, they brought their mission into the front lines, and it was not unheard of for the “lassies” to give doughnuts and coffee to doughboys within range of the German guns. Out of the line, the canteens run by the Salvation Army seemed devoid of the hypocrisy so often found in other similar establishments. This difference was often noted upon in letters home from the men in the trenches.

And of the doughnuts? It was decided to serve them in France as they were easy to make under difficult conditions, and were not something that had been done before. The Salvation Army had decided that to make the troops as comfortable as possible fresh baked goods would be served, and the doughnut was very suitable. It became such a strong image with the AEF that it had wartime associations well into the succeeding decades.

**A common enough sight behind the lines: a narrow-gauge railway with a supply train bringing up equipment for the trenches – ladders, barbed wire, etc. The locomotives on these trains were armored for protection.**

This wild pig was caught between the first and second lines of trenches. Luckily for him, instead of the cook pot he was promoted to Divisional Mascot. The picture was taken in the 2d Field Battalion, Signal Corps, 1st Division on May 27, 1918, the day before the attack on Cantigny. Note the leather leggings worn by the signal corpsman, an article usually reserved for mounted troops.



## MUSEUMS AND REENACTING

Many historical museums across the United States will, if catering to military history, have some relics of the doughboy era on display. Inevitably, these items are overshadowed by displays on the American Civil War, or World War II. This is only natural as both of these events hold a more central spot in the national consciousness. There are two museums that the author is aware of that both have superb displays of World War I memorabilia. One of these, the Wisconsin Veteran's Museum in Madison, Wisconsin, has a wonderful interpretive display of life in France for the average soldier.

More limited in focus, but broader in execution, is Cantigny, located in Wheaton, Illinois. This Chicago suburb is home to the 1st Division's Museum ([www.rmtf.org/firstdivision/](http://www.rmtf.org/firstdivision/)). Named after the town fought over in the first American offensive of the war, the museum has an extensive collection of Great War artifacts. The museum is on the grounds of the McCormick estate, the endower having served as an artillery officer in the division during the war. In line with the museum's mission statement, the focus of the display is on the 1st Division, but much of what is shown can be extrapolated to encompass the entire doughboy experience. What is most striking about the presentation is that the patron winds his or her way down a trench in the middle of the destroyed town. The detritus of battle is everywhere, including a reproduction of a ditched Schneider tank. The trench leads into a dugout, and the patron is given a good view of what life was like for the front-line soldier. Having mentioned these two locations, it should be reiterated that doughboy items are on display in numerous collections. Unlikely locations such as the Arsenal Museums in Vienna and the



Bavarian Army's World War I Museum in Ingolstadt have nice displays of American uniforms and equipment.

**Clean clothes being issued at  
Camp de Gerard on July 6, 1918.**

Just as we have looked at two museums, so two locations for the reenactor stand out. One of these is in Jack Rabbit Trails, California, the other in Newville, Pennsylvania. The Great War Association, an umbrella group for many recreated World War I units, owns the location in Newville. Naturally the AEF is very well represented, but there are also French, British, Commonwealth, Russian, German, and Austrian units as well. The association owns a site, the Caesar Krauss Memorial, on which there are dug two opposing trench lines with a recreated no-man's land in between. There are two to three events held there each year, and they are geared toward the historian. Notably absent are any spectators, and participants for the most part maintain "first person" throughout the weekend. For more information go to [www.great-war-assoc.org](http://www.great-war-assoc.org).

Outside of the United States it is also possible to find recreated AEF units, one such being "Pershing's Doughboys," a group located in the United Kingdom. Their site is [www.pershingsdoughboys.org.uk](http://www.pershingsdoughboys.org.uk). All of these organizations may be contacted via the internet. In addition, there are several businesses that supply uniforms and equipment to the reenacting population; the two mentioned below are also on the internet. Great War Militaria ([www.greatwar.com](http://www.greatwar.com)), located in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, manufactures reproduction uniforms and equipment for all the major powers represented within the Great War Association. They can also provide original pieces for collectors. A

company that is dedicated solely to the American soldier is AEF Supply ([www.aefsupply.com](http://www.aefsupply.com)). Alan Crane, the proprietor, offers a very complete line of equipment and uniforms for the reenactor. It should be noted that both of these companies take care to mark their products in a historically correct manner, but in a way that lets the collector know that these are reproductions rather than original items.

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There are also some outstanding sites on the internet for those interested in the AEF. “Trenches on the Web” ([www.worldwar1.com](http://www.worldwar1.com)) and “Hellfire Corner” ([www.fylde.demon.co.uk](http://www.fylde.demon.co.uk)) both serve as good connections to find a wide variety of different World War I sites.



The “cootie” truck. Clothing would be put into the chambers and heated and fumigated in an effort to kill the seam squirrels, i.e. “cooties” or lice.

# GLOSSARY

<b>Bull Moose</b>	Political followers of Theodore Roosevelt.	<b>Pigtails</b>	The metal bars to which barbed wire was attached.
<b>Forty and Eights</b>	French boxcars, marked to carry “40 Hommes ou 8 Chevaux” (40 men or 8 horses).	<b>Poilu</b>	A French soldier, meaning literally “a hairy one.”
<b>Hayburners</b>	Animals used by the army, horses and mules.	<b>Sammies</b>	The original French and British nickname for the doughboys.
<b>Holy Joe</b>	The chaplain.	<b>Slacker</b>	Draft-dodger or other person not supporting the war effort.
<b>Huns</b>	The Germans, often described as being “the filthy Hun.”	<b>Slumgullion</b>	A stew made from beef, hardtack, and anything else.
<b>Joe Latrinsky</b>	The source of a rumor.	<b>Stunt</b>	Attack or raid.
<b>Lou/Louie/Louis</b>	A lieutenant.	<b>Tin Pan Alley</b>	The mythical location from which popular music comes.
<b>Monkey meat</b>	The canned rations. French troops called it “ <i>singe</i> ,” monkey, as well.		

# COLOR PLATE COMMENTARY

## A: CAMP LOGAN, HOUSTON, TEXAS, NOVEMBER 11, 1917

This is what an American doughboy would have looked like in 1917 (1), whether he was in training or already in France. He is carrying the 1903 Springfield (1a), the official rifle of the US Army at the start of World War I. However, there were never enough of them, and many troops found themselves carrying the “Eddystone,” also known as the P17, an Enfield already in production in the United States. For domestic training, the venerable 1898 Springfield, commonly known as “the Krag,” was pressed into service. Behind our man sits his duffel bag (1b), for the storage and transport of his personal items. It is identical to later bags except for its color. The doughboy’s look would change radically over the next few months. Here he wears “semi-breeches,” tapered to fit into canvas leggings, with reinforcement at the knees. There are two slanting front hip pockets, two rear hip pockets, and a watch pocket to the right at the front. The breeches have loops around the waist to accommodate a fabric belt. Also destined to disappear were the canvas leggings. A legacy

from the Spanish–American War, they were found to be impractical in the wet conditions of the Western Front; for active service puttees would replace them. Rough-side-out “Pershing boots” later replaced his smooth brown boots.

The most notable disappearance over the coming months would be the campaign hat (2). Made of rabbitskin, it was sometimes referred to as the “Montana” hat. There are four eyelets at the peak for ventilation, and it was supplied with a leather sweatband and chinstrap. The chinstrap was commonly worn around the back of the head.

The sleeveless vest (3) was not an actual item of army issue, but was made available through the YMCA. The doughboy’s collar is held closed by two hooks, and features two discs (4), the US to the right, the arm of service on the left. An early variant of the arm of service disc would have the unit number below and the state initials superimposed on the symbol, for example crossed rifles.

Kurt would have carried an M1910 canteen (5) – the same canteen carried by later generations of GIs, distinguishable by the aluminum cap, secured to the neck by a short chain.

The canteen, or water bottle, sits inside an aluminum cup, both fitting into the carrier. Two pairs of underpants were issued, the short pair (6) being for warm weather. The long pair (7) was popular even in warm weather due to the coarseness of the issue breeches.

The back of the 1910 pack (8) shows the placement of the “meat can” or mess tin pouch over the entrenching tool carrier. The bayonet hooks to the side of the pack in the same manner that it would hook to the cartridge belt. A cloth loop holds the lower portion of

**Some of the congestion that accompanied the US offensive in the St. Mihiel salient. The incredible traffic snarl-ups can be attributed to poor staff work by the inexperienced American army. Note the bicycle lashed to the back of the center wagon.**





**Sgt Edwin Wickliffe with his wireless, 80th Division HQ, Ippecourt, Meuse, September 16, 1918. Bulky and fragile, and therefore best left static, wireless communication was used to connect division to corps and army HQs. While not perfect, it was not susceptible to line breakage by artillery fire.**

the scabbard to the pack and a “carrier” is attached to the lower portion, allowing more possessions to be hauled. The cartridge belt (9) shows detail of the flaps as well as the arrangement of the grommets. These allowed equipment such as the canteen, bayonet, wire clippers, and first-aid pouch (10) to be arranged on the belt to the wearer’s comfort.

With the sudden expansion of the army contracts were made with a wide variety of manufacturers. As a result, exact color shades varied from one batch of clothing to another.

#### **B: TRONVILLE-EN-BARROIS, AUGUST 1918**

Emphasis in the US Army continued to be on “open warfare,” with marksmanship being stressed. In the late summer of 1918, prior to St. Mihiel and the big push of the Meuse–Argonne, the luxury to indulge in this training was embraced. A scant month later the training schedule would be derailed as manpower needs at the front took precedence. Heavy casualties from the Germans and influenza cut deeply into the ability to spend time training soldiers and many young men found themselves sent into battle with only a fortnight’s instruction. This deficit in training had serious consequences, as US soldiers took unnecessary casualties and had difficulty overcoming opposition due to poor application of firepower.

Watching our marksmen is a French officer. As American formations would find themselves fighting alongside French

divisions, and on occasion having French engineer and artillery units attached for various operations, this would prove beneficial. Just as American officers detailed to French units were able to appraise and evaluate the French method of making war, French officers could develop an understanding of what the Americans were capable of, and where they fell short. Many French soldiers were detailed to train the Americans in how to fight a modern war, and were amazed at the initial overwhelming importance laid on marksmanship.

The line of riflemen is firing at a series of targets rising from a ditch. Inside the ditch itself are a group of soldiers watching the targets. Equipped with sticks mounting large colored swatches, they can raise the stick after a round is fired to let the shooter know how far his aim is off. The doughboys are in a more relaxed dress order for training. Tunics are off, and only a minimum of personal equipment is worn.

#### **C: WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT**

- 1 The M1903 Springfield rifle, caliber .30-06.
- 2 The P17 Enfield Rifle, a .30-06 version of the British P14 which was chambered for .303.
- 3 The M1917 bayonet for the P17 and Winchester 1897 shotgun, similar to the M1905 bayonet for the Springfield. The scabbards for both bayonets were covered by a canvas and leather sheath.
- 4 The pistol belt without any attachments. Adjustable, the series of grommets allowed various items of equipment to be hooked to the belt.
- 5 The M1911 Colt semi-automatic pistol, chambered in .45 caliber.





**Communications often broke down to the level of runners, and to the use of homing pigeons. This bird displays the carrying case for messages on the left leg.**

- 6 The M1917 Smith and Wesson revolver, also in .45 caliber.
- 7 A grenade vest. The cloth tapes on the sides wrapped around the wearer's body to prevent excess movement.
- 8 The cartridge belt. Each pouch contained two five-round stripper clips of rifle ammunition. Similar grommets to the pistol belt allowed equipment to be carried.

**D: RAVIN DU RAPILLEAUX, BOIS DE FORGES, SEPTEMBER 26, 1918**

The attack on the Hindenburg Line saw the 33d Division participate in forest and street fighting. Due to the broken nature of the countryside, the 132d Infantry found themselves splintered into small groups, moving forward and clearing German positions. Along with the 131st, they captured over 1,400 Germans, as well as several batteries of artillery and 100 heavy machine guns. The brigade losses were only 36 killed and 205 wounded.

The central figures in the plate represent an automatic rifle team. One section in each platoon was equipped with the Chauchat, although some of the newer divisions entering combat in October would have the Browning Automatic Rifle. The gunner has as a personal weapon an M1917 Smith and Wesson revolver, firing the same round as the M1911 Colt. The .45 round had a reputation as a "man stopper." The army had reverted to .45 after .38 caliber handguns carried in the Philippines were deemed to be underpowered when trying to kill Moro swordsmen. The army would continue to rely on .45 caliber handguns until the late 1980s when the switch was made to 9mm.

As he does not need to carry rifle ammunition, he wears a pistol belt instead of the regular cartridge belt. This belt, made of webbing, was equipped with the same grommets found on the cartridge belt, allowing the first-aid pack, pliers,



**How pigeons were marked – the bird's identification number was stenciled on the wing.**

and other equipment designed to fasten to the cartridge belt, to be carried by the pistol belt as well. His number two also wears a pistol belt.

In the background, three doughboys are taking advantage of the Chauchat team's covering fire. Rushing forward in an attempt to flank or contact a German position, they illustrate the concept of fire and maneuver. They carry the P17 Enfield, with bayonets fixed. If possible they will pick a spot where they have a clear shot at the Germans, who will hopefully be focused on the Chauchat team to their front. If need be they will close and clear out the enemy at bayonet point, or with a few well-placed grenades. Platoon tactics would work in this manner, with the automatic rifles and rifle grenadiers laying down a base of fire, and the rifle and grenadier squads working into a position to assault the enemy. The objective taken, the auto-rifles and rifle grenadiers would then move up, and the process would repeat.

**E: FORGES, SEPTEMBER 28, 1918**

Gathered around a recently liberated piano are four doughboys. Finding someone who could play the piano in any given group was highly likely. "Tin Pan Alley," as the song-writing population of New York City was known, helped the war effort by churning out patriotic music. Even "schmaltzy" love songs like "K-K-K-Katie" would reference the war, with the singer seeing if he could "make the Kaiser dance." Musicals like *Yip Yip Yaphank* by Irving Berlin gave Americans songs like "Mr. Zip Zip Zip" and "Oh How I Hate





**Tours, France, May 30, 1918. The doughboy in regulation kit. The same figure from the rear, wearing all the regulation equipment.**

to Get Up in the Morning,” tunes which would re-emerge as popular music during World War II.

Despite the momentary relaxation, our men have not forgotten that they are within range of the German guns, and all have their gasmasks ready to wear. Being in a strategic center like a town had its hazards. As an easily identifiable part of the road network, towns were a clear target for harassing fire. It was not unusual for gas to be part of these bombardments. As protection in the form of different types

of masks improved, gas became a weapon of annoyance. By firing gas shells into artillery positions (gas being an important counter-battery tool) or into transit areas, one’s opponent could be seriously inconvenienced. Troops attempting to work in gasmasks fatigued faster, and the rate at which tasks were accomplished was significantly lengthened. Gasmasks were difficult to breathe in, and the wearer had a restricted field of vision. Using gas in this manner, for harassment and counter-battery bombardments, could be very effective, causing lines of communication to be disrupted and aggressive actions hindered.

A tin of biscuits, also known as “hardtack,” lies on the piano. Food was a major preoccupation for the doughboys.

The US Army suffered from poor staff work, and during the Argonne offensive breakdowns in the supply system were endemic. Transportation was in short supply, and combat units like machine-gun battalions had priority weapons and ammunition that were moved up to the front.

#### **F: CONSENVOYE, OCTOBER 9, 1918**

As trench warfare gave way to a struggle of maneuver, villages and farms became the center-points of German resistance. Crossing the Meuse River, the Prairie Division found themselves fighting to take the small town of Consenvoye. Here we see a handful of American soldiers from that division mopping up resistance in the town. All are dressed for the deteriorating weather. While the greatcoat was of comfort in cold weather, for wet conditions the army had both ponchos and raincoats. The poncho, essentially the same since the Civil War, was found to be impractical in modern war. By its very design it inhibited access to equipment carried on the person, most importantly to the gasmask. It was virtually impossible to get the mask out of its bag and onto the wearer's head without first taking off the poncho. On the plus side, being worn over any equipment it did provide protection to the doughboy's property.

The poncho was replaced by a raincoat made of the same material. Secured with metal fasteners, the treated material would keep the wearer dry. In addition, it helped to block wind, keeping the wearer warmer. The army also issued leather jerkins, copied from a British design, as a substitute for the greatcoat.

In many respects street fighting would mimic forest fighting, with combat groups breaking down into small numbers of men. Fire-and-maneuver groups would clear one position after another. In this kind of fighting the rifle grenade was indispensable. As NCOs and junior officers would direct this style of fighting, the rifle grenadier sections served as the platoons' "in-house artillery." Being fairly accurate with a small bursting radius, the rifle grenade could be used for very close support with minimal danger to friendly forces.

#### **G: SOMEWHERE NEAR DONCOURT-AUX-TEMPLIERS, LATE OCTOBER, 1918**

An end to offensive action does not mean an end to casualties, and here one of the victims of the "daily hate," as harassment fire was termed, is being evacuated to an aid station. The casualty is not wearing his tunic – he was probably engaged in a work detail when hit, and had taken it off to facilitate movement. He is wearing two shirts, a common practice to provide an extra layer of warmth. Initial treatment of his wounds would have been by a medic or by other members of his platoon. Each man carried a field dressing in a pouch attached to his cartridge belt to be used in these circumstances. At the company level there was a handful of medics, with another half dozen available at the battalion level. A doctor might be also be found at the battalion aid post.

The injured soldier is being carried by two other doughboys. Stretcher-bearers were originally to come from the regimental band, but with heavy casualties other sources of manpower were soon tapped. Those detailed to carry were to have worn either the red cross armband worn by medics, or a blue band with "LB" in white. This stood for "litter bearer." It was common to have neither.

The stretcher, under ideal conditions, would be carried by four men. In the confines of a communication trench this could be awkward, and two would have to suffice. This would accelerate the fatigue of these men, a situation aggravated by moving through mud and shell holes. After arriving at the battalion aid post, the casualty would be evacuated to a hospital facility in the rear by ambulance.

#### **H: MARCHEVILLE, NOVEMBER 11, 1918**

There were significant changes in the doughboy's uniform from 1917 to 1918 (1). The Americans quickly converted from the canvas legging to the puttee (1a) – a wrap of wool worn around the lower leg, it gave both support and an additional layer of warmth. US troops committed to the fighting around Belleau Wood were in many cases given puttees from British stocks, the color of the material being noticeably different to the rest of their uniform. Trousers changed in style and functionality too; the original trousers in the M1912 uniform were tapered cut below the knee. Laces closed the material tight around the calf, which led to circulatory problems in some wearers. In addition, this feature added to production costs. As the war progressed, straight leg trousers of the British service dress pattern were introduced.

The M1917 or "Kelly" steel helmet (2) remained in service into the early days of World War II. It differed from the British model in the suspension of its liner.

No longer were soldiers in the lighter order of the pre-war army. The 1910 pack, shown in exploded view (3), (4), (5), would be festooned with what was needed in actual campaigning. Entrenching tools, additional packs containing his mess tin (known as the "meat can"), even his bayonet could be attached to it. The pick, shown disassembled as well as in its carrier (3), could be attached to the cartridge belt in the same manner as the bayonet. The entrenching tool and its carrier (5) were attached to the pack beneath the "meat can" pouch. The color of equipment did not always match, early manufacture having a greener tone.

The "campaign" or "Montana" hat has been replaced by the overseas cap (6). While not offering the same protection as the brimmed campaign hat, the overseas cap was more practical for active duty. When not being worn, the cap folded neatly, and could be put in a pocket, under a belt, or through an epaulette for storage. The overseas cap came in several forms, and it was not unusual to see them mixed in a unit. One version was cut like the British equivalent, another like the French *bonnet de police*. The crown of the British style cap was folded in the center and issued unstitched, but the individual could have the two peaks sewn together, giving a neater, tighter appearance. If left unfinished the cap took on a "Serbian" appearance. It was often worn with a US disc, such as that found on the right collar of the tunic.

Fighting on a chemical battlefield required new protection, such as the gasmask (7). Carried inside the bag is the filtering unit, contained within a yellow painted tin. The "Corrected English" respirator would become, along with his steel helmet – another American adaptation of a British item – a lasting image of the doughboy in the Great War. The doughboy's footwear had also changed by this stage of the war: the newly introduced "Pershing boot" (8) was manufactured rough side out, so did not shine as well as the earlier shoe, but withstood trench warfare much better. In style it was very similar to the French ankle boots issued later in the war.

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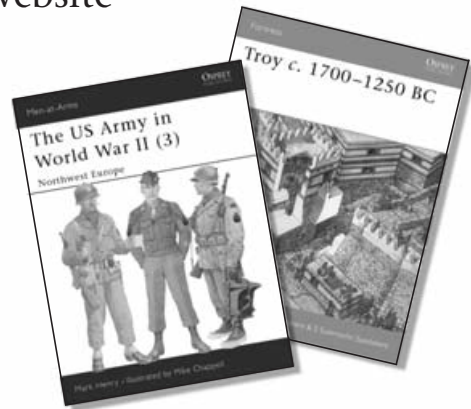
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To my father, Allen Hoff, a mathematician who encouraged his son to go into the arts.

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