

The first US troops in Soissons station,
February 4, 1918. FONDS VALOIS - BDIC



1917-1918

AISNE

The Americans from the Chemin des Dames to the Marne

America's entry into WORLD WAR I Psychology and numbers

Grand Cerf crossroads, Villers-Cotterêts forest, July 19 1918. American supply base. Trucks unloading supplies. FONDS VALOIS - BDIC

In the months preceding America's entry into WW1, the prospective involvement of American soldiers in the fighting on French soil greatly influenced the calculations of German and Allied strategists alike. Though it was inexperienced and faced organizational problems, the American Army numbered 200,000 men and its troops were fresh, unlike war-weary allied forces who had been fighting for three years already and had experienced the horrors of trench warfare. American support was then crucial and likely to influence the outcome of the war.

Mark MEIGS, in 1918. *De guerre lasse*, Dép.de l'Aisne, 2008. Translated from the French.



A bivouac in Jaulgonne. American soldiers resting. September 1, 1918. FONDS VALOIS - BDIC

THE USA ENTERED THE WAR in the spring of 1917, two years and eight months after the fighting had begun. American troops did not make it to the front lines until the winter of 1917-1918 and did not engage in major actions until the spring of 1918. The time lag explains why American soldiers' memories and interpretations of WW1 are different from other soldiers'. American soldiers lived in the same mud in the same trenches as other soldiers, smelled the same smells, suffered the same wounds inflicted by the same weapons... but they felt things differently. Despite the incompetence of some officers who did not have time to assimilate the rules of trench warfare, despite their unpreparedness and lack of equipment, their testimonies tend to be positive. Their words convey the feeling that the nightmare was about to be over and that they only had to arrive to transform difficulties into victory and peace treaties. In a sense, German and allied strategists

alike shared that point of view. After the war against Russia was over on the Eastern front, the Germans quickly saw that they would only have a limited period of numerical superiority on the Western front when a victorious outcome was possible for them. The British and the French realized that they had to maintain their positions until they got the support of American troops that would reverse the logic of numbers. The strategy of the American Army consisted in keeping defensive positions until they were ready to engage in major actions and in waiting until 1918 before launching decisive offensives with a strong and experienced army. That is the reason why, when historians

examine the various actions of the American Army, they do not deem them decisive, and hardly proportional to the number of American soldiers on French soil at the end of the war, namely two million. American actions did not decide the outcome of the war but the sheer presence of their troops did, as all parties felt that behind each soldier on the front line there were numerous others at the rear, ready to fight.

The delayed arrival of the Americans was due to their unpreparedness, on various levels. It was difficult for Woodrow Wilson to join the allies in warfare when he had just won the 1916 election with a slogan reminding the Americans that he had kept them out of that terrible war. While France was fighting protracted battles in Verdun and on the Somme, Wilson was campaigning to organize a peace conference between the fighting parties. As for the American Army, it was being reformed, the ones campaigning for its centralization, the others to preserve the privileges of the States against the hegemony of Washington D.C.

Some members of Congress, jealous of their local prerogatives and distrustful of the power of the President, had almost succeeded in putting an end to the setting up of a central Army Staff that could plan and coordinate the human, material and strategic resources of a modern army.

At the start of the young republic, each State had set up a militia (or national guard) recruited unit by unit, State by State, among volunteers (with very light training). The States thus resisted standardization and the inclusion of militias in the logic of a national army, professional and centralized. When President Wilson was convinced after German submarines attacks on Ame-

If numbers were so important, how to count ?

rican ships in the first months of 1917 that the USA could not avoid entering the war, there were a central Army Staff and national army officers able to implement such effort but there were inevitable blunders due to lack of coordination and to the new conditions of organization and recruitment.

Besides, American officers ignored some of the lessons of the ongoing war that would seem obvious to us. In professional newspapers they argued in favor of offensive actions and showed scorn for defensive positions.

The Americans then entered the conflict without having totally solved their organizational problems and with a preference for offensive tactics, though they had led to the disasters on the Somme in 1916 and on the Chemin des Dames in 1917. But they joined the warfare in order to drive the Germans out of France and their shared interests and alliance with the French explain their preference for offensive tactics.

If numbers were so important, how to count? Was a German soldier better than an American soldier? The French anguished over the matter and the Germans, arrogantly, expressed some scorn for American soldiers. However the actions of American units on the Chemin des Dames showed the Germans that they could not underestimate the Americans and that the psychological element confirmed the mathematical element. While taking the organizational problems and useless losses into account, allied forces and adversaries alike were bound to acknowledge sheer gallantry, a quality that had become rare in the other armies so late in the war. American numerical superiority was a decisive advantage for the allied forces in the outcome of the war.



IN MARCH 1918, the 26th Division was in charge of a sector close to the Chemin des Dames. Like the 1st, 2nd and 42nd Divisions, the 26th spent the winter of 1917-1918 in "quiet" sectors so as to be trained by the

PUT TO THE TEST ON THE CHEMIN DES DAMES

French Army. The 26th presented some of the characteristics of an American Army in transition. Recruited in the New England States, the "Yankee Division", as it was nicknamed, was proud of its achieve-

ments in the American Revolution and the War for Independence. The troops arrived in France in the fall of 1917 and hit the road before they had received their marching orders, an initiative Pershing did not much like. The commander of the 26th, General Clarence R. Edwards, nicknamed "Daddy" by his men, had a reputation for lack of discipline and for being often at odds with his superiors. How such a unit would perform on the field was of utmost interest to Allied and German strategists. The Germans soon put it to the test with three raids in Bois Brûlé. The Yankees gallantly fought hand-to-hand and cleverly used their artillery, which led the Germans to put an end to the hostilities on April 10 after taking one prisoner and losing 40 men. The French showed their appreciation by giving decorations to 117 men and officers. The Germans put the Division to the test again further east, on 20 April. Better prepared with artillery and elite soldiers, the attack decimated two American companies whose men "fell dead in their ranks out of the trenches".



Front cover of *L'illustration* dated March 2, 1918 after a successful action by the Americans on the Chemin des Dames. CAVERNE DU DRAGON, MUSEE DU CHEMIN DES DAMES

FEBRUARY-MARCH 1918 The Americans

on the Chemin des Dames

UNCLE SAM'S SOLDIERS

The USA was unprepared when President Wilson declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917. The American Army numbered only 200,000 and its experience was limited to operations against Indians and a war against Spain in 1898.

General Pershing (1860-1948) was appointed commander-in-chief of the American Expeditionary Force and landed in Boulogne on June 13, 1917. The first troops arrived in Saint-Nazaire on June 26 and paraded in Paris on July 14 but US involvement remained largely symbolic. On January 1, 1918 there were only 150,000 American soldiers in France. Then at the rate of 60,000 and soon 200,000 a month, American soldiers (called "Sammies" in France and "Doughboys" in the US) arrived in the French harbors of Saint-Nazaire, Bordeaux, Le Havre, Brest, Marseille and La Rochelle. By the end of the war in November 1918, the number of American troops had swelled to 2 million. American troops saw their first offensive action on May 28, 1918, in Cantigny in the Somme (First US Division). From June 6 onward the Third Division and Marine Corps defended Château-Thierry and gallantly fought in Belleau Wood. On August 10, Pershing, who was leading the First Army, was given responsibility for the Saint-Mihiel area and launched a major offensive in the sector. On November 11, 1918, American troops had reached Sedan. American casualties numbered 116,000 in Europe. 53,000 men died in combat and others lost their lives through disease. Most bodies were repatriated but 30,000 soldiers are buried in six cemeteries maintained by the American Battle Monuments Commission. Three of them are located in the Aisne region, in Bony, Seringes-et-Nesles and Belleau.

The walls of the quarries still retain traces of the passage of 20,000 American soldiers who came to the plateau to get acquainted with trench warfare.

Guy MARIVAL, in *La lettre du Chemin des Dames* n°13, 2008. Translated from the French.

LED BY GENERAL Clarence Edwards and numbering more than 20,000 men, the 26th Infantry Division was the first American full Division to arrive in France. It was formed in August 1917 and comprised National Guard units from six States in the north east of the United States: Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont. As all the units were from New England, the commander chose the name "Yankee Division" for the 26th Division. The Yankee Division left the US on September 7, 1917 and arrived in Saint-Nazaire. Other troops arrived until the end of October in the harbors of Le Havre and Liverpool. After preliminary training in the Neufchâteau area, the 26th Division was placed under the command of the 11th French Army Corps that was then engaged on the Chemin des Dames.

THE DRAWINGS, graffiti and sculptures illustrating this article as well as those on the front cover were photographed in the Froidmont, Rouge-Maison and Nanteuil-la-Fosse quarries. To visit the Rouge-Maison quarry please contact the tourist office in Vailly-sur-Aisne. Tel 03 23 24 62 47.

To visit the quarry in Braye-en-Laonnois, please contact the Chemin des Dames association. E-mail: cdd1418@aol.fr



"Welcome to the 26th!"

From February 1918 onward, the different units of the Yankee Division were moved to a sector encompassing Pinon forest and Braye-en-Laonnois, on a three-day rota basis: reserve in the Aisne valley, support in Vailly, first line on the Chemin des Dames. Troops took shelter in the quarries that had been recaptured the previous year: Froidmont, Rouge-Maison, Le Panthéon, Montparnasse. Section after section, company after company, the different units of the 26th,



supervised by French troops (64th RI in Braye-en-Laonnois), got acquainted with the harsh realities of trench warfare. The sector was comparatively quiet but things began to change. The Germans soon wanted to show the newcomers that life would not be so easy. Signs bearing the words "Welcome to the 26th!" even appeared in the German trenches.

On February 5 at 3.45 p.m., the first shot at the Germans was fired by the 101st Field Artillery regiment. The casing of the first shell is kept to this day in Massachusetts as a memento.

There was no major offensive during their stay on the plateau but the Americans got acquainted with all aspects of the war, from the search for cantonment areas at the rear to the ceaseless movements to and from the front lines under heavy shelling. They had to keep the sectors they had been assigned, carry out reconnaissance missions through No Man's Land

with French comrades, launch raids and counterattacks.

From March 18 to March 21, the 26th Division left the Chemin des Dames to go to the Toul sector. The men had spent 46 days on the plateau with equipment that

"The French were first amused, and then alarmed by the inordinate curiosity of the Yankees."

Frank P. Sibley, *With the Yankee Division in France*, (Boston, 1919)

was ill-suited to winter conditions. In all the quarries, always located very close to the front line, the Sammies carved and drew into and on the limestone. Those patriotic, religious or cultural traces are visible to this day.

The 26th Division came back to the Aisne area to take part in the Château-Thierry counter-offensive in June and July. General Jean Degoutte, who commanded the 6th French Army, then gave the Division two new nicknames: "Sacrifice Division" and "Saviors of Paris". During the year 1918 the casualties numbered 13,664: 1,587 killed and more than 12,000 wounded.

Sources

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John Nelson, "26th Division", *The Worcester Evening Gazette* 1919 (reprint 1998).

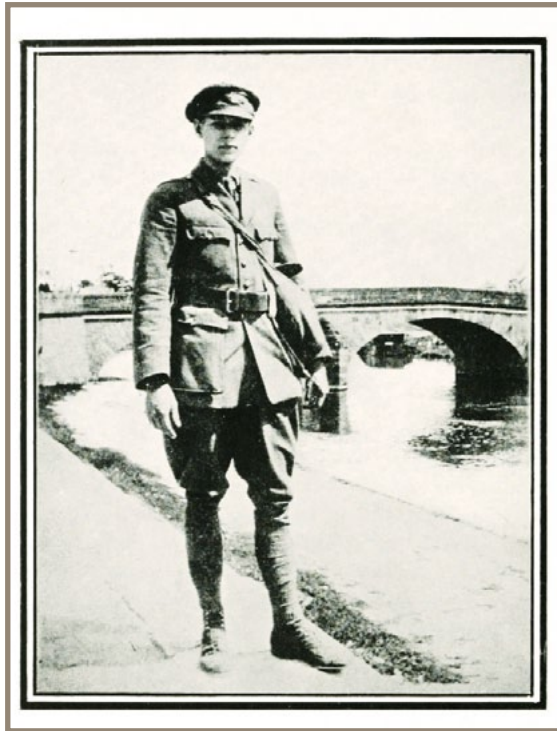


IN THE SERINGES-ET-NESELES CEMETERY, THE HEADSTONE OF CORPORAL HOMER J. WHEATON

Born on November 11, 1885 in the State of New York, Homer J. Wheaton read law at the Syracuse University. Captain of the American football team in his school, he was a sports journalist in the *Worcester Gazette* when he was drafted into the National Guard in 1916. He was one of the first Americans to get killed on the Chemin des Dames. Homer J. Wheaton was fatally wounded on February 27, 1918 in the Chavignon sector when a grenade exploded and he tried to protect his comrades in his trench. He received a citation for his gallantry and spirit of sacrifice. He was the first American soldier of the American Expeditionary Force to be awarded, posthumously, the Distinguished Service Cross.



An American ambulance driver at Dead Man's Curve



Paul Cody Bentley in 1917. All rights reserved.

War seen through the eyes of an American Harvard student who graduated in Literature and volunteered in the Ambulance Field Service. In his letters to his parents Paul Cody Bentley, serving in the Chemin des Dames sector in the summer of 1917, described the sleepless nights, the driving of vehicles overloaded with wounded soldiers to hospitals, and the gas. On September 13, 1917 Bentley's ambulance was hit by a shell south of Craonnelle. Himself wounded, the young man died a few days later in a French hospital.

6 Yves FOHLEN, in *La lettre du Chemin des Dames* n° 28, 2013. Translated from the French. Based on Wolfe Mark Anthony, *Memoirs of the Harvard dead in the War against Germany*, 1920, Cambridge, Harvard University, Vol.2.

PAUL CODY BENTLEY was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on September 22, 1895. His mother was a cousin of Colonel William F. Cody, better known as "Buffalo Bill". His father was the son of one of the first gold diggers in California.

In 1913, after studying at the University of Chicago, Paul Cody Bentley became a Harvard student and in 1917 graduated in Literature. He was one of the first Harvard students to go through military training and became a corporal in the Harvard Regiment. On April 6, 1917 the USA entered the war. Paul decided to enlist but eye troubles ruined his prospects of a military career.

He then joined the Ambulance Field Service¹ and arrived in France on July 4, 1917, Independence Day. Paul Cody Bentley went to the front on the Chemin des Dames with Section 65, attached to the French 121st Infantry Division.

The duty of ambulance drivers is to fetch wounded soldiers from casualty clearing sections at the back of second line

trenches and drive them to hospitals at the rear.

On August 6, 1917 Paul Cody Bentley wrote the following letter to his parents:

"Our two last days at the front were undoubtedly the most terrible any of us in this ambulance section will ever experience.

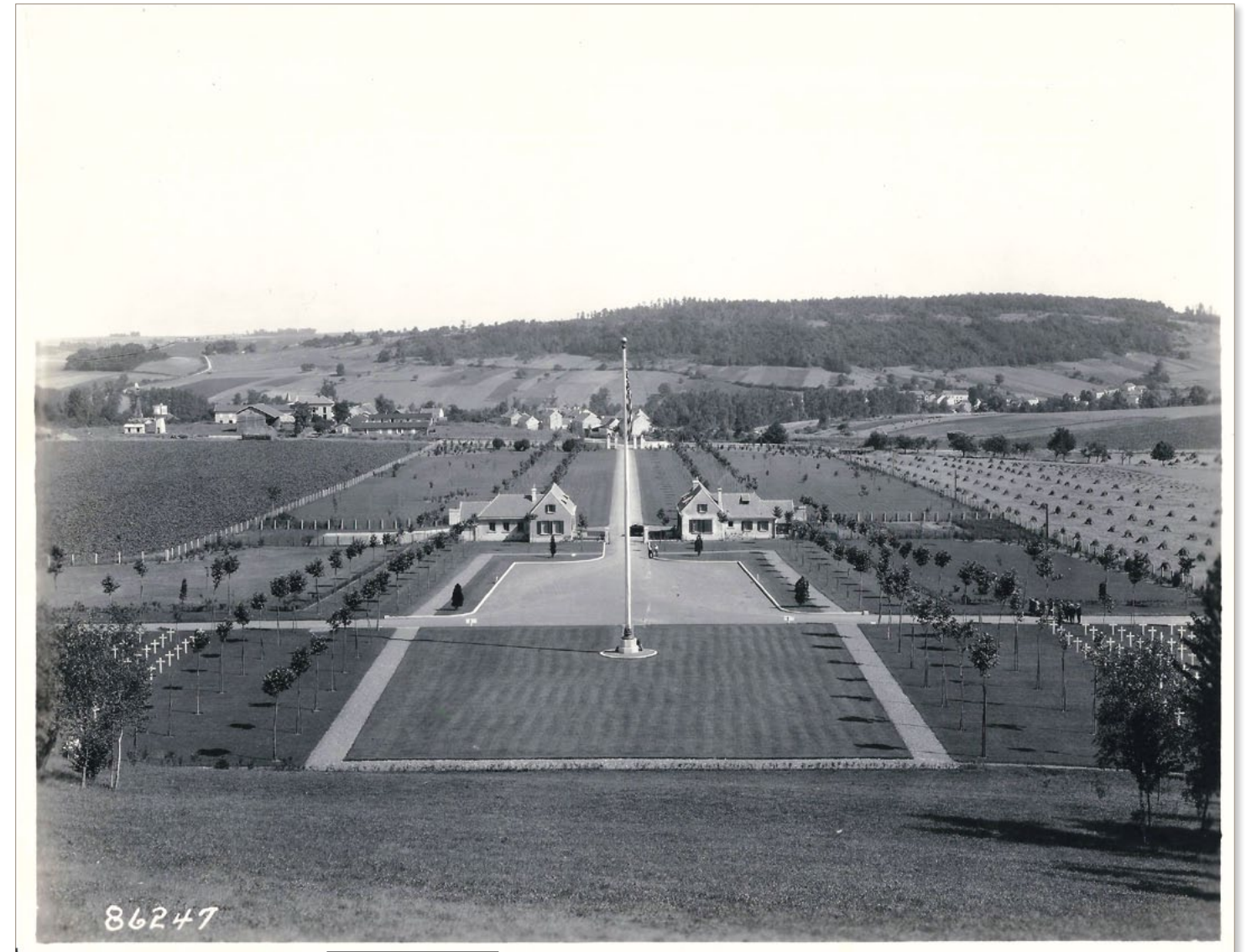
I happened to be stationed during most of the time with three other cars at the big tent hospital evacuating the wounded to other more permanent hospitals as fast as they poured in from the *poste de secours*. All the other cars in the section were called to work from the *poste*. Thus, as I only made a few trips to the *poste*, I missed most of the danger; but, on the other hand, I had for sixty-four hours the most continuous, heavy, and nerve-racking work imaginable.

It was raining all the time, and the mud was very deep and the roads were very bad, and as for the *blessés*, they were in a horrible condition. A deadly new kind of gas and liquid fire had been employed in our sector with great profusion and horrible effects. As there were so many in the hospital waiting to be evacuated we hardly ever rolled without a full load, — six *couchés*, or three *couchés* on one side and six *assis* on the other, or twelve *assis*. Sometimes, even, we crowded one

of these horribly bloody specimens, with his head completely swathed in a white cloth and the rest of his person covered with mud and rags, on the front seat with us. The runs were all quite long, from ten to sixteen kilometers each way, — that is, from six to ten miles. It is not level country, but one hill after another all the way, so that one has great difficulty climbing in the mud even on second speed, and in descending one must keep both brakes on as hard as possible for a mile at a time.

And thus we worked (our four cars) in relay night and day. Every time we returned we found that the other cars of our section were on the road, and they would be waiting at the hospital for us to carry another load. Several times we did not even have a chance to eat our meals, but they often gave us warm coffee at the

¹ The American Field Service, a unit of civilians volunteering as ambulance drivers, was founded at the outbreak of the war by Americans living in Paris. From 1914 to 1917, the different units operated on all fronts. When America entered the war, the service was absorbed by the American Army. One of the American ambulance drivers on the Italian front was Ernest Hemingway.



The American cemetery of Belleau near Château-Thierry in the 1930's. Fonds photographique du secrétariat d'Etat aux anciens combattants, ministère de la Défense.

hospitals while the *brancardiers* were unloading, and we had also been supplied with a ration of sweet chocolate. As a rule a round trip took us three or four hours. It was very weird traveling at night, in particular because we always went without any light and passed endless convoys of every description, cannons, caissons, camions and *ravitaillement* trucks which run on the roads, although propelled like a steam engine. In all these two days I had only two hours sleep, an hour at a time. Once when I woke up I found they had laid a dead man on a stretcher beside mine, less than a yard away, and the stench was horrible."

On September 11, 1917 Paul Cody Bentley wrote another letter:

"I am still very uncertain as to what I shall do next. But uncertainty is the main characteristic of war. Everything is uncertain. In the first place the section may go *en repos* today or tomorrow, and it may not. The

"It was very weird traveling at night, in particular because we always went without any light and passed endless convoys"

order has not come yet and we have been expecting it for a week."

On September 13, 1917 the German artillery launched a gas attack on French lines. Bentley and a partner, Carson Ricks, were ordered to roll five Frenchmen who had been gassed to a hospital in Beurieux. When their ambulance reached the Dead Man's Curve south of Craonnelle, the vehicle was hit by a shell. Paul was wounded in a lung. He managed to run the car out of the danger zone then collapsed with exhaustion. Though he had received

seven wounds, Ricks carried his friend to a *poste de secours*. On September 19, 1917, Paul Cody Bentley died in a French hospital. Just before he died he was awarded the Croix de Guerre. His citation runs as follows:

"Since he arrived at the front, he has been noted for his courage. During an evacuation, his car was hit by a shell. Very badly wounded, he continued to drive until his forces were expended."

The young American civilian, who dreamed of becoming a soldier, now rests in the American cemetery of Seringes-et-Nesle, near Fère-en-Tardenois.

THE BATTLE OF BELLEAU WOOD

Near Soissons. American soldiers among the ruins.
February 7, 1918. FONDS VALOIS - BDIC



The first trenches dug by the Americans near Lucy-le-Bocage. L'ILLUSTRATION.



In June 1918, the German Spring offensive threatened Paris. For the first time since the USA entered the war, an American Division comprising Marines and Infantry soldiers was engaged in a major action. The Belleau Wood victory, in a sector located west of Château-Thierry, was hailed as a great success across the Atlantic. It has become a key battle for the United States Marine Corps.

Damien BECQUART, in 1918. De guerre lasse, Dép.de l'Aisne, 2008. Translated from the French.

MAPS were to show “the wood of the Marine Brigade”. That was what General De-goutte had ordered on June 30, 1918. But they always showed “le Bois de Belleau” or “Belleau Wood”. The order given by the 6th Army commander has been forgotten, but history recalls the role played by the Marine unit in the fierce battle that took place in June 1918 west of Château-Thierry.

Still at the foot of the Chemin des Dames five days earlier, the Germans reached the Marne River on May 31st. Paris was threatened, French troops were driven back, Château-Thierry fell on June 1st: the situation was alarming. The High Command asked for fresh troops. That is why the 2nd US Infantry Division, that numbered 28,000 men, comprising the 4th Marine Brigade, under the command of General Harbord, and the 3rd Infantry Brigade, took position in Belleau Wood, above the Clignon valley, between Lucy-le-Bocage, south, Bouresches, west, and Belleau, north, to support the French troops fighting the Germans. The Germans had captured the wood and set up their machine guns behind the numerous exposed rocks. On June 3rd, the Von Conta group (4th reserve corps) drove back the French and came into contact with the troops of the 2nd US Infantry Division who stopped them near Lucy le Bocage. After the first engagement, both sides began to organize.

The Allied forces wanted to avoid giving the Germans time to reinforce. With the support of French artillery, a unit of the American Army was then to engage in a major operation for the first time. The Germans, whose troops were exhausted and now under-equipped, understood the impact a successful American operation would have on public opinion and on the outcome of the war. The fierce battle in Belleau Wood lasted a month. After fierce fighting on June 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 16, and two failed efforts to capture the wood on June 20 and 21, the Americans were finally victorious on June 25. They held the ground until July, when the 26th Division relieved them. On July 1, the 3rd Brigade of the 2nd US Infantry Division captured Vaux.

Machine-guns, hand-to-hand combat, gas attacks... the 2nd US Infantry Division lost 7,876 soldiers and officers in the Belleau Wood battle.

Source : André Golaz. “Le bois de Belleau”. *Revue Historique de l'Armée*. 1957.

Belleau Wood necropolis in 1930. Fonds photographique du secrétariat d'Etat aux anciens combattants, ministère de la Défense.

THE JUNE 1918 fighting in Belleau Wood has become a legend for the Marines. To this day, all along the year, Marines and their families visit the American Memorial in Belleau. A large number of Marines of the 4th Brigade are laid in

“DEVIL DOGS”

the cemetery. With soldiers of the 2nd US Division, they played a decisive role in the fierce battle that took place west of Château-Thierry. Their graves are part of the graves of 2,289 American soldiers who lost their lives during the second battle of the Marne. The names of 1060 soldiers whose bodies were not recovered are etched on the walls of the monument.

Soldiers on leave or recovering in Europe and veterans visit the necropolis erected in the wood where the events of June 1918 took place. They all communicate on an equal footing on the site of a battle whose recollection brings cohesion to the Corps and enhances its prestige. Retiring soldiers love leaving with star-spangled banners that flew in the cemetery.

In the wood behind the cemetery “the devil dogs” fought their key battle. Not the first one, but the one that forged their reputation. “The action in



which they suffered the highest number of fatal casualties”, in the words of David Atkinson, who runs the memorial. This is where the Germans nicknamed them “devil dogs”, as a reference to the kind of dogs that bite and do not let go. A name that in a sense echoes their official motto “semper fidelis” “always faithful”.

A retired American officer says: “The history of the Marines began in Belleau. When it took position on the Château-Thierry/Paris road at the end of May 1918, the 4th Marine Brigade, within the 2nd US Infantry Division, was fully aware that it was protecting the capital¹. Adding to the importance of the Belleau Wood Battle is the fact that for the first time on such a scale the Germans fought the American *avant-garde* in France.

This kind of test has deep impact on morale and opinion, whether it ends in defeat or victory. The Marines are remembered as the main if not the only contributors to victory in Belleau Wood. And yet they fought with the 3rd brigade of the US Division. “More than any other corps in the United States, the Marines have known how to use the psychological impact of the press, which the rest of the army was unable to do”, says the retired American officer.

¹ André Golaz. Le Bois de Belleau. *Revue Historique de l'Armée*. 1957.

The fable of the fountain

It is a fountain on a village property. The Marines going through Belleau have adopted it.

If you drink the water, you are supposed to live a year longer. Some soldiers even ask to be presented with their decorations near the fountain. For these soldiers, the place is part and parcel of the aura attached to Belleau. The clear water gushes out of a dog's head that bears some resemblance to a bulldog. And the bulldog has been a mascot for the Marines since the Germans nicknamed them “Teufelshunden”, “devil dogs”.

In fact the dog is a bullmastiff and it has been here since the 19th century. The owner of what then was Belleau Château had brought the ornament back from Germany. In the Belleau Wood battle in June 1918, the Marines took the whole wood but did not reach the village where the fountain is located. It was the 26th Division that a few weeks later liberated Belleau village, discovered the ornament, made of German metal, and drank the water. End of a myth. History does not say how the fountain became part of the lore of the Marines.



The famous fountain where Marines come to drink.

The ornament is not the head of a bulldog but a bullmastiff. D. BECQUART.

In 2003, on a mission of preventive excavations on the plateau south of Soissons, archeologists exhumed fragments of teeth and bone, and scraps of a boot and wallet. These remains enabled the Pentagon to formally identify Francis Z. Lupo, a soldier of the US 1st Infantry Division, reported missing in action in the second Battle of the Marne.

Damien BECQUART, in 1918. *De guerre lasse*, Dép.de l'Aisne, 2008. Translated from the French.

Private Lupo IS NO LONGER MISSING

Francis Lupo's Grave at Arlington National Cemetery. D.R.



FRANCIS Z. LUPO. A name among the 1,060 engraved on the Tablets of the Missing in the American memorial in Belleau. Until 2003, it was the only trace remaining, with some information about his unit and the fighting it was involved in. Lupo, 18th R.I., US 1st Infantry Division, fell on July 21, 1918 during the American counteroffensive in the Soissons area. He was 23 and a native of Cincinnati, Ohio. His body was not found and he was reported "missing in action".

After the war, his mother Anna Lupo traveled to Belleau, a journey that did nothing

to assuage her grief, and went back home, having only seen this endless list of missing soldiers. But 88 years later, in 2006, Rachel Kleisinger, 73, a niece of Francis Z. Lupo, was informed that the remains of her uncle had been formally identified by the scientists of the Military Laboratory. "My uncle died 100 years ago and they tell me they have found him? I just could not believe it." The old lady, incredulous at first, finally believed in a story that seemed to be the stuff of Hollywood fantasy. The DNA had confirmed the pieces of evidence that had been gathered.

Let us go back three years earlier. In July 2003, archeologists carried out excavations in the Ploisy sector, not far from Soissons. One of them unearthed fragments of teeth and bone, as well as scraps of a boot and a wallet bearing the name Lupo. The service record of Private Lupo states that he was 5 feet tall, weighed 60 kg and that his shoe-size was 7. The size of the boot was 7,5. The DNA dispelled the doubts that could remain. The remains were those of Private Francis Z. Lupo. The military archives gave another piece of information: when the soldier was reported missing, his unit was fighting in the sector where archeologists operated 85 years later.

On September 22, 2006, the Department of Defense published a communiqué related to "the first identification by the Pentagon of an American soldier missing in action during WW1." An official funeral service was organized on September 26. Private Lupo was repatriated and now rests in Arlington National cemetery where he was buried with honors in the presence of his niece Rachel who had never met him but knew his Sicilian-born mother. The Washington Post, Associated Press, ABC and other American media recounted the story of the soldier from Cincinnati and reminded the public that 8,300 men of the 1st D.I. (numbering 12,228 men) lost their lives, were wounded, taken prisoner or missing during the 2nd Battle of the Marne.

Sources : website of Arlington Cemetery and the Washington Post.

GERMAN OVERCONFIDENCE WHEN THE USA ENTERED THE WAR

When the USA entered the war, Germany was looking east. Its leaders' optimism as to the outcome of the conflict was then reinforced by the positive perspectives, on a military and political level, opened up by the first convulsions of the Russian Revolution. Probably underestimating the impact of the American involvement on the evolution of the war, German diplomatic efforts were too tentative and delayed to change the course of the war.

Wilhelm II in Marle on July 16, 1918. In 1917, the Kaiser had decided to resume unrestricted submarine warfare, which allowed the sinking of all ships, be they allied or neutral, in order to secure final victory. PRIVATE COLLECTION



Elise JULIEN, in 1918. *De guerre lasse*, Dép.de l'Aisne, 2008. Translated from the French.

ON APRIL 6, 1917 the American Congress voted the declaration of war on Germany. In Berlin the serenity of the population matched the politicians': the German Foreign Minister reacted after three weeks only and stated that no direct military involvement of the USA was to be expected. As surprising as they now may seem, such reactions deserve some explanation. On the one hand, the context of a degradation of relations between Germany and the United States must be taken into account. On the other hand, they reveal an underestimation of the gravity of the situation, which was to have dire consequences. At the beginning of the war, the Germans expected the USA to maintain a neutral position. But the realization that Wilson had chosen the Entente soon sobered them. Moreover, submarine warfare launched by the Germans in February 1915 to thwart the British blockade was against the interests of the USA whose ships were regularly sunk.

Unrestricted submarine warfare

The diplomatic crisis culminated with the sinking of the Lusitania on May 7, 1915 that resulted in the deaths of 1,198 people, among whom 128 American civilians. The German leaders were torn between the wish to maintain diplomatic relations with the USA and their reluctance to abandon a weapon that was deemed very effective. Though they refused to endorse responsibility for the disaster, they nevertheless agreed to suspend unrestricted submarine warfare. The issue arose again in 1916,

when the Germans realized that war was not about to end soon. In 1917 the Kaiser decided to resume unrestricted submarine warfare, thus allowing the sinking of all ships, be they allied or neutral. In February, President Wilson went before Congress to announce that he had severed diplomatic relations with Germany and in April, the USA declared war on Germany. The American declaration of war was not a surprise in Germany. It was not even considered as a major issue as the ongoing Russian revolution opened up perspectives for peace on the Eastern front and for political reforms that could bolster the war effort.

In fact, Many Germans did not fear the American involvement in the war, as they believed that it came too late and that a victory of the Central Powers was assured.

Yet, the situation was far from good: submarine warfare had fallen far short of giving the expected results and the troops added to Germany's strength from the Eastern front had only allowed an offensive which came too late and was foiled in the second battle of the Marne. Meanwhile hundreds of thousands of Americans were arriving in Europe, reinforcing the victorious perspectives of the Allies.

Thus German decisions were marked by excessive optimism, reinforced by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The various German attempts to seek a negotiated peace came too late. A Peace Resolution was passed by the Reichstag in July 1917, at a time when the Americans, who were about to win, had abandoned the idea of a stalemate and preferred to take Wilson's 14 points as the basis of negotiations to end the war in October 1918. Even though the American troops did not have time to show their full potential, the German lack of knowledge about the real military and diplomatic issues led them to delay the necessary decisions until they had become tragically invalid.



The American cemetery of Seringes-et-Nesles. PHOTO F.-X. DESSIRIER

Joyce Kilmer rests in Seringes-et-Nesles

The poet and volunteer Joyce Kilmer, born on December 6, 1886, was shot dead on July 30, 1918 near Meurcy farm. Attached to Major Donovan in the 42nd Division, he was on an observation mission. Just like Oliver Ames, who fell the day before under the same circumstances. They both rest in the American cemetery in Seringes-et-Nesles near Meurcy. Seringes-et-Nesles contains the remains of 6,012 American soldiers, 547 of whom are unidentified. Created on the very spot where the 42nd Division fought, Seringes is the second largest American cemetery of the WW1 in Europe, in the words of Jeffrey Aarnio, who runs the cemetery.

PIONEERS OF HUMANITARIAN AID

In March 1917 Anne Morgan, Anne Murray Dike and seventeen compatriots arrived in the Aisne region. For seven years those wealthy American ladies put their talents and skills at the service of local populations in need.



Jean-Yves DUPAIN, in 1918. *De guerre lasse*, Dép.de l'Aisne, 2008. Translated from the French.

“THE WAR is not only military fighting, it is also a struggle for civilians.” With this in mind, at the end of 1916, within the American Fund for French Wounded, Anne Morgan and Anne Murray Dike founded the Committee for Devastated France (Comité américain pour les régions dévastées) (C.A.R.D.). A few months later, the two women and seventeen American compatriots settled in the remains of the Château de Blérancourt that had been abandoned after the German retreat in March 1917. Their first decision was to put up wooden barracks to serve as office and warehouse. They also built a dispensary, a school and a poultry yard. The aim was not only to give free food but also to help the inhabitants to regain their autonomy. Of course C.A.R.D. provided assistance, answering the calls for help of families as- king for shelter and the bare necessities:



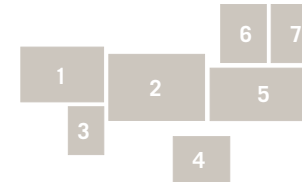
“No sooner had their cry for help reached the Committee than a van, driven by young girls, took what was urgently needed. When they had reached their destination, the girls unloaded the van and transported what they had brought into the house. While one of them cleaned the place, the other installed a bed, a stove, lit it and prepared a meal. They



1. Anne Morgan and Anne Murray Dike, founders of AFFW's Civilian Division and of CARD, around 1917. MUSEE NATIONAL DE BLERANCOURT
2. American Committee visiting nurses at Soissons (Aisne), undated. MUSEE NATIONAL DE BLERANCOURT
3. Young girl holding a chicken, Vic-sur-Aisne 1919. MUSEE NATIONAL DE BLERANCOURT

4. A child in Chavignon looks at shells found on the battlefield. In the early 1920's, the food for France Fund, an American charity raising funds to get supplies for devastated regions, produced documentary footage to make the American public aware of the plight of populations in need. ARCHIVES DEPARTEMENTALES DE L' AISNE

(2 Fi Chavignon 4)



did not leave the house until they had set the table, served a hot meal, made the bed, put flowers in a vase and welcomed with a smile the tears of gratitude of those poor people,” relates Gaston Héricault in his book *Terres assassinées, devant les dévastations*. (1934). But the C.A.R.D also aimed to provide training. As early as 1917, girls were taught domestic skills, boys were taught D.I.Y. and in Blérancourt, a gardener taught children to grow vegetables and fruit. Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime...

They took part in the reconstruction In 1918, Anne Morgan and her compatriots had to flee the German offensive. From Blérancourt to Vic-sur Aisne, from Vic-sur-Aisne to Coyolles, they had to re-

locate several times... But wherever they were, despite the nomadic life they had to lead, they carried out their mission, setting up mobile canteens and dispen-



saries, and organizing the evacuation of villages. After building a new warehouse in Paris in May 1918, they stayed in contact with refugees and set up agricultural cooperatives in Seine-et-Marne and Eure-et-Loir to provide work for the displaced. In the Chateau de Boullay-Thierry (Eure-et-Loir)

5. Chavignon around 1920, a group of children. To the right, a pile of shells. ARCHIVES DEPARTEMENTALES DE L' AISNE
6. Distributing livestock at Blérancourt (Aisne), 1919. MUSEE NATIONAL DE BLERANCOURT
7. D' Edna Ward and D' Mary Goodwin, undated. MUSEE NATIONAL DE BLERANCOURT

they took care of numerous children whose parents had been taken prisoner. When war had ended, the American ladies stayed on and took part in the reconstruction in the Soissons area. They set up medical units in Blérancourt and Vic-sur-Aisne. They also took an interest in the teaching of children, contributing to the setting up of 65 schools until March 1920. They also set up libraries and library buses delivering reading materials to villages and hamlets. The C.A.R.D. was dissolved on April 1, 1924. On July 30 of the same year, General Pétain awarded Anne Morgan and Anne Murray Dike the Legion of Honor in the Château de Blérancourt that had by then been turned into a museum... the last achievement of those remarkable ladies.

CHARLIE, A UNANIMOUSLY POPULAR SOLDIER



14 Charlie Chaplin in *Shoulder Arms*, 1918.
J. WILLIS SAYRE PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

Laurent VERAY, in 1918. *De guerre lasse*,
Dép.de l'Aisne, 2008. Translated from the
French.

HIS FAME and popularity had reached an all-time high on both sides of the Atlantic when Charlie Chaplin, in 1918, made *Shoulder Arms*, a medium-length film produced by the First National Company that was seen as a contribution of the US to the war effort. Released in France by Pathé in April 1919, *Shoulder Arms*, a satirical film, gives a realistic, as well as funny and touching view of the conflict. It is the story of an American soldier who falls asleep and dreams of glory after he has trained all day long. Spectators follow his imaginary peregrinations in the war that rages in Europe. The setting is sober and realistic but Charlie does not skimp

The frail silhouette of Charlie, discovered by the Parisian public in 1915, reappeared four years later in the uniform of a soldier. *Shoulder Arms – Charlot Soldat* in the French version, is an atypical movie among the various American war films released in France from 1917 onward. With this satirical work of art, combining comedy and tragedy, Charlie Chaplin enabled many real soldiers to identify with a fictional character.

on the details about his military gear. He carries various utensils that take on an amusing dimension, like the cheese grater he uses to scratch his back. His funny facial expressions, his hyperactivity, the peculiar way he moves and his extreme vitality come as a kind of provocation when set against the vulnerability of fighting men. The film does not dwell on horror but humorously testifies to the harsh realities of trench warfare: promiscuity, cold, rain, mud, attacks and violence.

One of the most effective episodes in the representation of reality is the delivery of letters, so important for soldiers' morale. Charlie, who does not receive anything, sneaks behind a comrade to read his letter over his shoulder and intensely reacts to the news from home as if it was intended for him. This sequence is emblematic of the profound humanity of the filmmaker and actor. It also shows that his humor is often tinged with sadness. *Shoulder Arms* aptly depicts the mixture of small joys and huge grief characterizing the experience of soldiers on the front line, which explains why many soldiers identified with the fictional character. A feeling well conveyed in a text by Dominique Braga in *Le Crapouillot*: "Charlie Chaplin made the first real film depicting the war though he had not gone to war himself". For his part, Louis Delluc said that the film was "a masterpiece in humor" and Charlie Chaplin "a Shakespearean actor".

One of the distinctive features of the bellicose rhetoric of the Allies was hatred of the "Boche". Unqualified hatred that is also shown in *Shoulder Arms*, as the enemy is constantly ridiculed if not simply reduced to the status of barbarians.

Some situations in the film, in keeping with Chaplin's comical vein, nevertheless echo the deep anti-German sentiment that was a favorite feature of American propaganda.

An involuntary volunteer

Though not refractory, Charlie, almost in spite of himself, resists the fundamentals of military organization. And though the training he gets fails to make him conform and toe the line, he never shirks his duty. Like most Doughboys he is artless and resourceful.

When he "involuntarily volunteers" for a dangerous mission, he becomes a hero, just by chance, "like so many others!" in the words of writer Jean-Galtier Boissière in May 1919.

Eschewing the glorifying tone that characterized propaganda at the time, the film nevertheless extols heroic feats. The association of the two positions is probably one of the reasons why the film was so popular with soldiers. If Chaplin's comical vein had no equivalent in the French cinema of the time, its irony and derision mirrored the tone of satirical reviews written by artists and soldiers, such as *La Baïonnette* and *Le Canard Enchaîné*. Charlie's adventures made spectators forget the pain and suffering they had experienced during the war. The film brilliantly and hilariously synthesizes the huge human cataclysm of WWI. A few years later Blaise Cendrars jokingly said: "The Germans lost the war because they did not meet Charlie on time!"

Having fought alongside the Allies, Wilson's America, in the aftermath of the conflict, was bound to have its say in world affairs. But despite reinforced economic influence, it failed to convince France or Britain to share its views on relations between States based on International Law. The two victorious powers preferred the traditional balance-of-power system of which the Treaty of Versailles, which the USA did not ratify, was the incarnation.



A group of American Representatives in front of the Grand Cerf Hotel in Villers-Cotterêts, November 3, 1918. FONDS VALOIS - BDIC

The USA: essential but reticent

Mark MEIGS, in 1918. *De guerre lasse*,
Dép.de l'Aisne, 2008. Translated from the French.

AFTER THE WAR, the domination of the USA as an industrial and financial power became obvious. France and Britain were deeply indebted and their efforts to reimburse their debts, and French pressure on Germany to oblige it to pay financial reparations, destabilized Europe until WWII. However, the new power of the US was not military. The importance of the US Army during WWI was numerical but not based on victories or occupied territories. The USA depended on French and British firms for equipment (tanks, machine-guns, guns...). Americans suffered more than one hundred thousand fatal casualties, who were eclipsed by the millions suffered by the French and the British.



Chamery (Aisne). A funeral service for airman Quentin Roosevelt, a son of former American President Theodore Roosevelt, whose plane was shot down by the Germans on July 14, 1918. LE MIROIR

When President Wilson came to Paris for peace negotiations in 1919, he did not succeed in imposing his vision of a new diplomacy based on the self-determination of peoples, International Law, and the League of Nations as an organization that could allow nations to find negotiated solutions to their conflicts instead of resorting to arms. Georges Clemenceau, French Premier, and Lloyd George, British Prime Minister, favored other solutions: the balance of powers, the assurance for France to have the upper hand over Germany and the assurance for Britain to renew links with the Empire.

American disappointment

The losses suffered by both countries and the necessity to cripple Germany heavily weighed on the calculations of the French and the British who did not much care for

the idealism and moralizing stance of Wilson, the President of a country that had come to their assistance, but so late in the war. Wilson went back to the US with a treaty in which sanctions against Germany prevailed over the ideal of peace he had sought even before the entry of his country into war.

American disappointment was general, all the more so as American propaganda during the war had promised reform and democratization of the world order. Yet, except for the provisions relative to the League of Nations, the Treaty of Versailles reflected the old balance-of-power system. Moreover, American conservatives objected to the League of Nations. Henry Cabot Lodge, Senator for Massachusetts and Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, spearheaded the attack on the Treaty of Versailles that was never ratified by the United States.

At a time when the USA was becoming a key player, the country, officially at least, distanced itself from the international peacekeeping system.

THE AISNE

We first saw fire on the tragic slopes
Where the flood-tide of France's early gain,
Big with wrecked promise and abandoned hopes,
Broke in a surf of blood along the Aisne.

The charge her heroes left us, we assumed,
What, dying, they reconquered, we preserved,
In the chill trenches, harried, shelled, entombed,
Winter came down on us, but no man swerved.

Winter came down on us. The low clouds, torn
In the stark branches of the riven pines,
Blurred the white rockets that from dusk till morn
Traced the wide curve of the close-grappling
lines.

In rain, and fog that on the withered hill
Froze before dawn, the lurking foe drew down;
Or light snows fell that made forlorn still
The ravaged country and the ruined town;

Or the long clouds would end. Intensely fair,
The winter constellations blazing forth --
Perseus, the Twins, Orion, the Great Bear --
Gleamed on our bayonets pointing to the north.

And the lone sentinel would start and soar
On wings of strong emotion as he knew
That kinship with the stars that only War
Is great enough to lift man's spirit to.

And ever down the curving front, aglow
With the pale rockets' intermittent light,
He heard, like distant thunder, growl and grow
The rumble of far battles in the night, --

Rumors, reverberant, indistinct, remote,
Borne from red fields whose martial names have
won
The power to thrill like a far trumpet-note, --
Vic, Vailly, Soupir, Hurtebise, Craonne . . .

Craonne, before thy cannon-swept plateau,
Where like sere leaves lay strewn September's
dead,
I found for all dear things I forfeited
A recompense I would not now forego.

For that high fellowship was ours then
With those who, championing another's good,
More than dull Peace or its poor votaries could,
Taught us the dignity of being men.

There we drained deeper the deep cup of life,
And on sublime summits came to learn,
After soft things, the terrible and stern,
After sweet Love, the majesty of Strife;

There where we faced under those frowning
heights
The blast that maims, the hurricane that kills;
There where the watchlights on the winter hills
Flickered like balefire through inclement nights;

There where, firm links in the unyielding chain,
Where fell the long-planned blow and fell in vain --

Hearts worthy of the honor and the trial,
We helped to hold the lines along the Aisne.

Alan Seeger (in 1914-1915)

A SHORT CHRONOLOGY

HISTORY

- LATE 1914-EARLY 1915** Americans, like the poet Alan Seeger, fight with the 2nd Regiment in the French Foreign Legion.
- OCTOBER 1914** Creation of the Commission for Relief in Belgium by Herbert Hoover.
- 1917**
- APRIL 6** The USA enters the war.
- APRIL** Creation of the American Committee for Devastated France (Anne Morgan).
- APRIL-JUNE** The Franco-American "La Fayette" esquadron is based in Chaudun (Aisne).
- JUNE 13** A first contingent of the American Expeditionary Force commanded by General Pershing arrives in Boulogne-sur-Mer.
- JUNE 28** The 1st Infantry Division arrives in Saint-Nazaire.
- END OF OCTOBER** G^{al} John Pershing witnesses the shelling of La Malmaison Fort.
- NOVEMBER 2-3** First major American engagement in the Lunéville sector.

1918

- FEBRUARY-MARCH** The 26th Infantry Division holds the Chavignon-Pargny-Filain sector with the 21st French Infantry Division.
- APRIL AND SEPTEMBER** Fighting in the Saint-Mihiel salient.
- MAY** Fighting in the Montdidier sector.
- JUNE-JULY** Fighting around Château-Thierry.
- JUNE** Battle of Belleau Wood (near Château-Thierry).
- NOVEMBER 11, 1918** Nearly 2 million American troops are in France, within 42 divisions.
- JANUARY 8, 1919** Wilson's 14 points.



The American cemetery of Belleau near Château-Thierry in 2009.
PHOTO
F.-X. DESSIRIER

MEMORY

- 1920'S** Creation of the Franco-American museum in Blérancourt (Aisne).
- 1923** Creation of the American Battle Monuments Commission.
- 1933** Inauguration of Château-Thierry Memorial (Cote 204).
- 2008** Inauguration of the memorial to the 26th American Division in Froidmont near Bray-en-Laonnois.
- 2011-2012** Inauguration of the memorial to the 42nd American Division in Fère-en-Tardenois and creation of Croix Rouge Farm Memorial.

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