

US MARINE IN WORLD WAR I



**ED & CATHERINE
GILBERT**

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHNNY SHUMATE

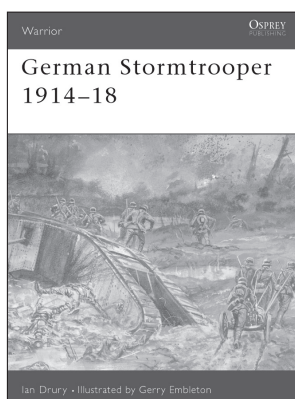
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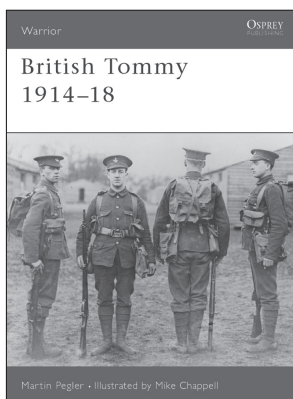
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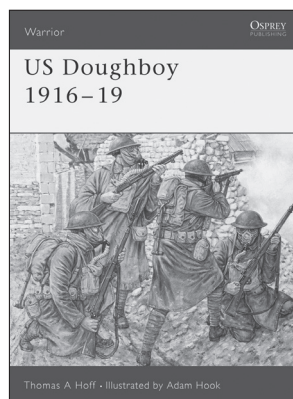
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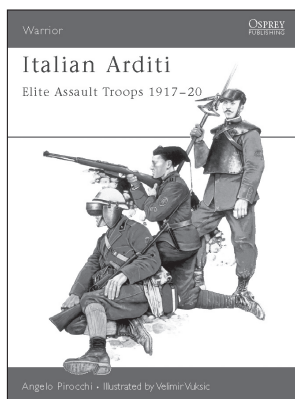
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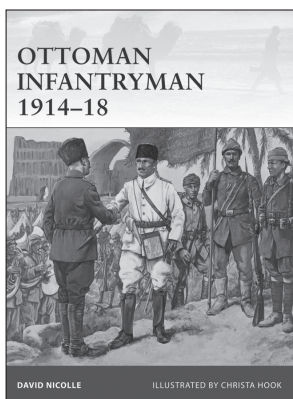
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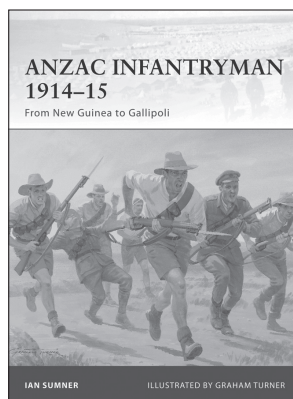
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ED AND CATHERINE GILBERT
ILLUSTRATED BY JOHNNY SHUMATE

Series Editor Marcus Cowper

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DEDICATION

For Private James Donald Rittmann, 1895–1939.

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US MARINE IN WORLD WAR I

INTRODUCTION

“Whenever a Marine is talking about being a Marine, he will always talk about Belleau Wood.”

American-remembrance.com

Conceived as a naval security and littoral raiding force patterned after the British Royal Marines, from its inception the US Marine Corps conducted amphibious raids like those on New Providence (March 3, 1776), and John Paul Jones’ small but strategically significant raid on the English port of Whitehaven (April 22, 1778). Small Marine forces also engaged in land campaigns, winning some repute as one of the few units to stand against a British attack at Bladensburg (August 24, 1814), and played an important role in a night action preceding the battle of New Orleans (December 23, 1814). However most of these actions were conducted by small ad hoc formations, the largest being the 1st Marine Battalion (Reinforced), known as Huntington’s Battalion, at Guantanamo Bay during the Spanish–American War of 1898. The Great War marked the debut of the Corps as a full-scale land combat force, and forever changed its role in the American military.

When America declared war against the Central Powers on April 17, 1917 the Marine Corps was probably the American service best prepared for war, sadly not an impressive recommendation. Under insistent prodding from Navy leadership the Corps had long struggled to establish a brigade-scale Advanced Base Force capable of the capture and defense of naval bases, but a stingy Congress and continuing commitments – in China, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Cuba, and Panama – thwarted that goal. Companies and smaller

Prior to the Great War the Corps struggled to establish the Advanced Base Force for amphibious warfare, like this 1916 experiment in landing a King armored car. Note the child, and the use of civilian overalls as work clothing. (USMCHD)



detachments were scattered from the Caribbean to China, with sizable detachments aboard capital ships or guarding Navy shore facilities. Nevertheless, Commandant George Barnett and Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels quickly met with Secretary of the Army Newton Baker, and convinced him that the Corps could raise badly needed land combat troops for European service. No one, however, consulted Army General John J. Pershing, and Pershing's protégés – men like Omar Bradley and Dwight Eisenhower – came to feel that Pershing was pressured into accepting the Marines as a “second army.”

The Marines combed out Marines from other duties, fleshing out the 5th Marines with trainees. The numbers remained insufficient, so the new 6th Marines was created primarily from new recruits.

REHEARSAL FOR WAR

In early 1913, in the midst of civil war, General Victoriano Huerta murdered revolutionary leader Francisco Madero and established himself as dictator of Mexico. Newly inaugurated American President Woodrow Wilson, outraged by Huerta's brutality and butchery, came to see Huerta's ousting as something of a moral crusade. Naval forces and a battalion of Marines were stationed off Vera Cruz in January 1914 and other naval and Marine Corps forces diverted to American Gulf Coast ports after completing maneuvers in the Caribbean and Cuba. In April a party of American sailors was briefly detained by Mexican authorities in Tampico; the sailors were soon released but tensions remained high.

When Wilson learned of a German freighter scheduled to deliver 200 modern machine guns and 15 million rounds of ammunition to Vera Cruz, he ordered the Navy and Marines to seize the customs house. The Marines were accustomed to this sort of fighting, not so the sailors of the landing force. The operation was botched, and Marine Captain Frederick M. “Fritz” Wise observed, “If ever an outfit shot up a town, they did Vera Cruz. I heard a lot of shooting there, but never a shot I knew to be Mexican ... most of the American casualties were due to wild shooting by our own people.” Understandably, violent protests erupted all over Latin America.

A force of 300 Marines of the 2nd Advanced Base Regiment moved into position off Vera Cruz on March 15, absorbing units already there to create an ad hoc expeditionary force. Nearly 1,000 Marines were en route aboard Navy battleships from Atlantic coast bases. In April Colonel John Lejeune's¹ headquarters staff of the Advanced Base Force Brigade, and the 1st Regiment, were dispatched from New Orleans, where they had been waiting since the Caribbean maneuvers in anticipation of a commitment in Mexico. Significantly, the Marines were ordered to leave behind advanced base equipment like tractors and heavy artillery. Captain Wise acidly observed, “All the Advanced Base business in which we had been drilling and maneuvering for months had been dropped. We were plain infantry now.” The Marines did deploy mule-drawn light artillery.

In keeping with contemporary practices of “gunboat diplomacy,” President Wilson hesitated and did not deploy Army troops to Vera Cruz until April 29, after fighting had almost ceased. (By the international standards of the era the

1 A general and famous commandant, Lejeune's name is consistently mispronounced as “LeJune”; the correct Louisiana Cajun pronunciation is “LeJern.”

insertion of “temporary” naval landing forces was a diplomatic prerogative; dispatching regular Army troops could be construed as an act of war.) The Marines continued to assemble forces; the 3rd Regiment was formed in Philadelphia of troops from ten shore facilities and one battleship.

An end to the crisis was arbitrated by Argentina, Brazil, and Chile; American forces withdrew but relations between the US and revolutionary Mexico remained tense. The attention of the US public was distracted by war in Europe, but Pancho Villa’s March 8, 1916 raid on Columbus, New Mexico, prompted longer and more serious Army intervention in Mexico, ending in February 1917.

For the US Army the Mexican affairs provided early operational and combat experience for future American Expeditionary Force (AEF) luminaries. For the Marines Mexico had provided a different experience. While the Army actually operated a larger fleet of dedicated troop transport ships, the Navy and Marine Corps demonstrated a capability for rapid strategic transport, albeit using capital ships and improvised transports like the collier USS *Jupiter* (AC-3).² The adventure emphasized continuing shortcomings in logistics that would not be rectified for decades. Most of all it demonstrated the capacity to mobilize a sizable – if extemporized – land combat force on short notice.

These lessons would soon prove useful.

CHRONOLOGY

April–November 1914	in a crisis with Mexico the Marine Corps hastily mobilizes a brigade and seizes the strategic port of Vera Cruz.
April 6, 1917	US declares war on Germany.
May 16	the Secretary of the Navy requests a regiment for service in France; the 5th Marines based in Philadelphia is selected.
June 14	the 5th Marines sails from New York on USS <i>Henderson</i> , USS <i>DeKalb</i> , and USS <i>Hancock</i> .
July 2	the 5th Marines arrives in France and is attached to 1st Division, US Army.
July 16	1st and 2nd Battalions begin trench warfare training at Gondrecourt under the French <i>Chasseurs alpins</i> , the “Blue Devils.”
August	decision is made to form Army 2nd Division; 6th Marines formed at Quantico.
October 5	first elements of the 6th Marines arrive in France.
December	all Marine units are reorganized creating the 4th Brigade, the largest Marine Corps force in its history.
March 10, 1918	the Brigade and the parent 2nd Division are assembled under Army Major-General Omar Bundy, and assigned to X Corps, 2nd French Army.
March 17 to May 9	Marines occupy a section of front and engage in small actions; on May 9 move into reserve for training.
May 27	a major German offensive begins, pushing the French back to Chateau-Thierry, within 50 miles (80km) of Paris.

2 The *Jupiter* was later converted to the USS *Langley*, the US Navy’s first aircraft carrier.

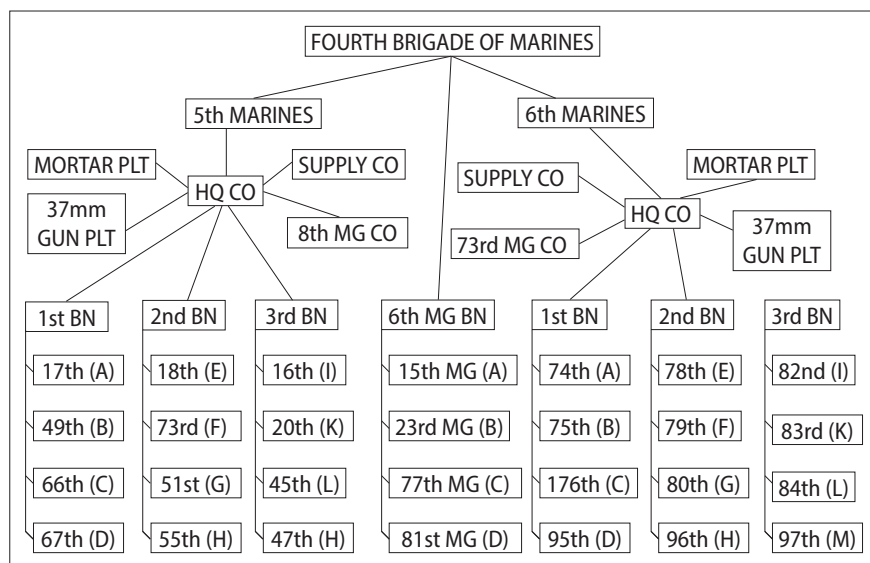
May 30	9th Infantry and 5th Marines are moved to Chateau-Thierry, but spread across 11 miles (about 18km) of front to plug the hole left by the collapse of the French XXI Corps.
June 4	most French units are withdrawn, the frontage shortened to 9,000 yards (8km). The Germans resume their advance, faltering in the face of long-range rifle fire from the Marines.
June 6	the Marines begin a 20-day attack on two German divisions entrenched in Belleau Wood.
June 26	“Woods now U.S. Marine Corps entirely”; on July 4, 2nd Division is relieved by 26th Division.
July 18–20	2nd Division and the 1st Moroccan Division attack German positions on Soissons–Chateau-Thierry Highway, forcing the beginning of a German retreat.
July 10 to August 12	the 2nd Division undergoes recuperation and occupies a quiet sector at Pont-à-Mousson.
September 12–15	the 2nd Division attacks the St-Mihiel sector as part of the new American I Corps.
October 3–10	4th Brigade leads the attack on the Blanc Mont sector; the Germans resist fiercely, defending crucial railway facilities.
November 1–10	2nd Division attacks in the Argonne Forest sector, breaking and pursuing the German Army.
November 11	an armistice ends fighting.
December 1918 to July 1919	4th Brigade serves in army of occupation in the Rhineland.
July 1919	the Brigade returns through the Port of New York, is reviewed by President Wilson in Washington, and formally disbanded at Quantico.

BRIGADE ORGANIZATION

For most of its history the Marine Corps seldom fielded units larger than companies formed by combining several ships’ detachments or hastily cannibalizing shore establishments. The basic Marine Corps unit was the numbered company, an artifact of this history.

In 1917 each company headquarters section was led by a captain, a first lieutenant, and a first sergeant, with 28 enlisted men and eight more men in the combat and field trains (supply) groups. Each of its four platoons consisted of a second lieutenant as platoon leader, a gunnery sergeant, and six squads consisting of a sergeant and eight men. This organization was quickly superseded by a revised – and more cumbersome – organization depicted in accompanying figures.

These companies were combined to form three “square” battalions of four rifle companies in each three-battalion regiment. In France the companies were assigned letters to conform to Army organization, with each company designated by a letter A through M, with no J. Most Marines simply ignored this system. Company numbers were extensively used in period records, and the individual Marine identified with his numbered company. Numbered machine-gun companies (172 men with 12 guns and four spares) were formed and assigned to rifle regiments or to machine-gun battalions.



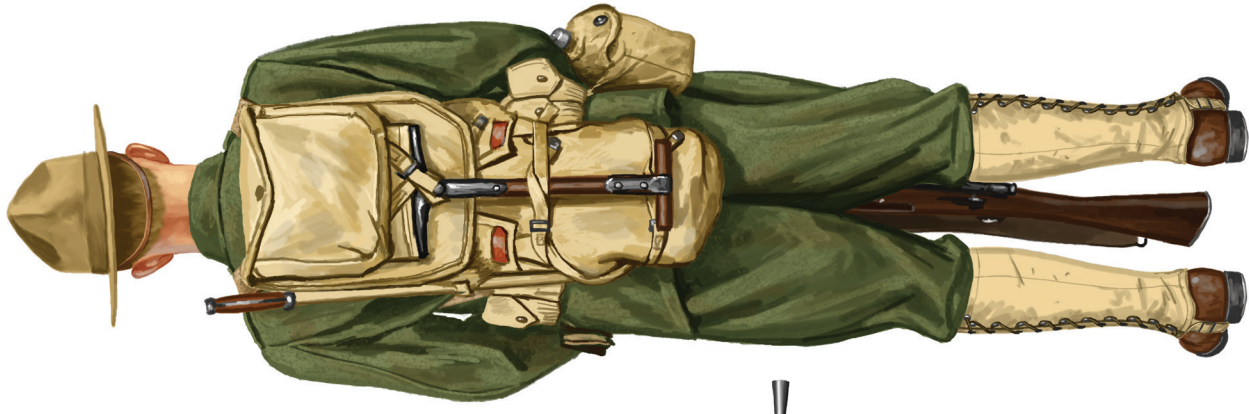
As a naval expeditionary force the Marine Corps was logistically weak, relying upon improvisation with local resources and transport. Many non-combat supporting services such as dental, medical, and chaplaincy were (and are) provided by the Navy. When the Marine regiments were incorporated into the AEF the US Army assumed responsibility for logistics and transportation, as well as artillery and most radio and telephonic communications support.

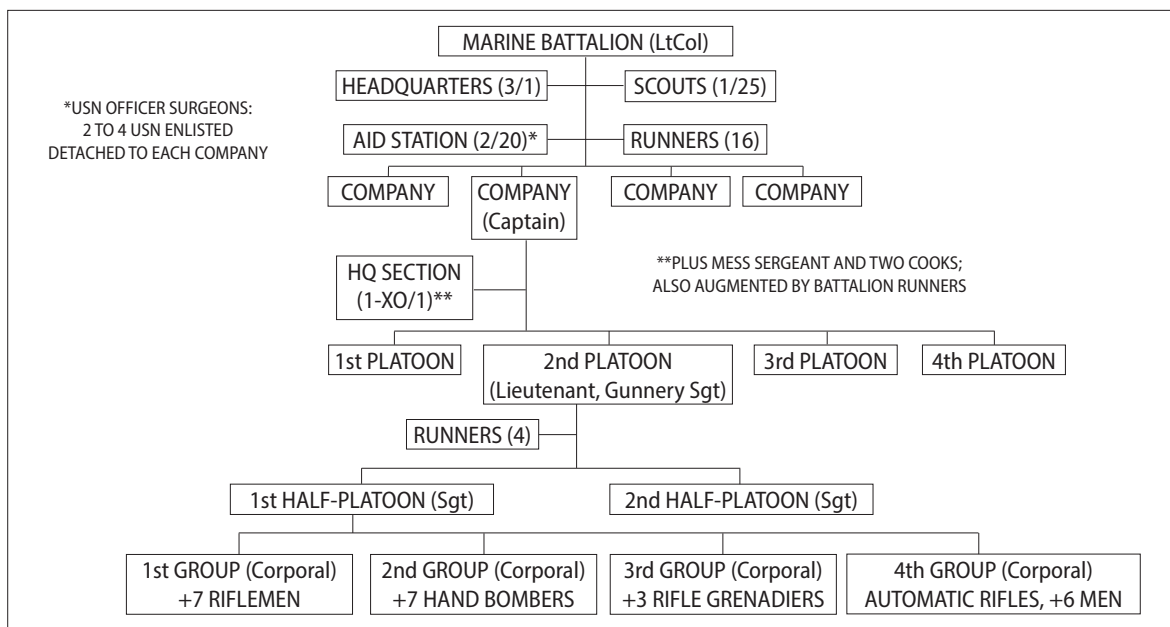
Interestingly, some Marines reported the use of an early version of the code-talking that later became commonplace in World War II (Warrior 127: *Native American Code Talker in World War II*, Ed Gilbert, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, 2008). It was common for both sides to tap into each other's

A

EARLY WAR UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

The distinctive forest-green color with red felt backing for enlisted rank badges, high-quality fabric, and better tailoring of the prewar Marine Corps uniform set Marines apart from their Army counterparts, and the uniform was a source of considerable pride. The web gear, made to Marine Corps specifications, was a very light-colored canvas, and the traditional lace-up leggings were unique. Marines did not wear helmets prior to the Great War, but the distinctive felt campaign hat, most typically with a four-cornered "Montana" peak. The rear view shows the configuration of the field-marching or "long" pack with the blanket and tent strapped on as a lower extension, the entrenching shovel, and the mess-kit carrier pouch conveniently located at the top. The primary weapon was the M1903 rifle (A), with the small cleaning kit carried inside the hollowed-out butt; ammunition came in five-round stripper clips. Some carried the M97 12-gauge military shotgun (B), with leather sling and bayonet; brass-cased ammunition was introduced later in the war. Upon arrival in France the Marines were forced to replace their Lewis light machine guns with the heavy, crudely made, and inaccurate French Chauchat automatic rifle (C). The .45-cal. M1917 revolver (D) was issued in small numbers, and many officers used privately purchased sidearms. The usual sidearm for officers, message runners, and heavy-weapons crews was the M1911 pistol (E). The heavy M1917 trench knife (F) was also issued in small numbers. Hardtack biscuits were delivered in bulk packages (G), but were usually repackaged into a daily allotment wrapped in paper, supplemented by canned beef like the French Madagascar brand "monkey meat." The bulky French M1914 Hotchkiss heavy machine gun (H) equipped machine-gun companies. Changing the awkward stripper clip resulted in a slow sustained rate of fire.





telephone lines, so many career officers and senior NCOs who had previously served in China communicated in Mandarin Chinese.

The 4th Marine Brigade saw considerable combat service. The 5th Marine Brigade (11th and 13th Marines, 5th Brigade Machine Gun Battalion) was utilized in rear-area services, training, and as a replacement pool.

Total 4th Brigade combat casualties included 2,292 killed in action or died of wounds, 161 missing, and 9,515 wounded or gassed.³ Duty-related casualties in the aviation arm were minimal: three killed or died of wounds, 12 killed in accidents, and five wounded.

BELIEF AND BELONGING

During its early institutional history the Marine Corps served, like the Royal Marines, as an adjunct to the US Navy. Sailors seldom loved the “Navy’s policemen” who guarded shore facilities and protected naval officers from their own crews. In the aftermath of the Spanish–American War of 1898 the Corps found itself thrust into new and unwelcome prominence as America’s “colonial infantry,” or “the State Department’s troops.” Ruthless intervention in foreign affairs in the Caribbean and Latin America, and particularly the Corps’ role in suppressing resistance movements in the Philippines, prompted vocal criticism in less jingoistic sectors of American society. But the Corps generally remained a minor part of America’s puny post-Civil War defense establishment.

Internal competition fostered a combative rivalry at all levels from half-platoon to battalion. Some like Corporal – later Gunnery Sergeant – Don Paradis thought the competitive spirit later stood the Marines in good stead.

The absorption of a few Marines into the American Expeditionary Force in 1917 should have been uneventful, although as members of a minority

3 Some received multiple wounds; no further breakdown available.

within the AEF, and products of harsh recruit training, ordinary Marines already saw themselves as unlike ordinary doughboys. Then a few German bullets forever changed America's – and the world's – image of US Marines.

General Pershing instituted a rigorous publicity policy that the American effort was a communal effort. No individual AEF unit was to be singled out for praise, or mentioned by name in the press. Then Floyd Gibbons, a civilian correspondent from

the *Chicago Tribune* attached to the 5th Marines, was wounded at Belleau Wood, and reported killed. An AEF censor passed along his "final dispatch" mentioning the Marine Brigade by name.

Literally overnight the Marine Brigade became the symbol of American valor in the tenacious struggle to blunt the German offensive around Chateau-Thierry. For three days the Marine Brigade remained the symbol of Americans going toe to toe with Germany's elite troops until the press censors regained control. But the image remained, and suddenly being a Marine meant something special. The Marines gained recognition – deserved or not – as the troops who saved Paris. Certainly the grateful French public and politicians thought so; Belleau Wood was renamed "*Bois de la Brigade Marine*."

In coming months and years Marine Corps public relations experts skillfully built upon this newfound fame, burnishing it with pithy quotes as the Corps struggled to maintain its existence in a gutted postwar defense establishment.



The Marine Corps' most recent combat experience was the 1914 intervention in Mexico. Note the summer uniforms, and the mix of campaign hats with Montana and fore-and-aft peaks. (USMCHD)

ENLISTMENT AND TRAINING

The Corps traditionally exercised a very limited recruitment system, operating primarily by individual selection. Officer billets were filled by promotion from the ranks, and by Naval Academy or selected university graduates. Officers and enlisted recruits were trained at the home of the Corps, the Philadelphia Navy Yard. A great deal of Marine training, particularly in such arts as naval gunnery, was conducted within units stationed at naval shore facilities or aboard ship.

Massive prewar growth of the Corps necessitated a change in the recruiting system; recruiting centers were established to funnel men from local post offices, and recruiting stations were established in cities. The euphoria that greeted the declaration of war resulted in mass enlistments, like that at the University of Minnesota where over 500 students enlisted at once. In general, enlistees reflected national demographics, with most enlistees from populous states or states with at least some tie to marine or freshwater



In 1917 the Corps already had a well-established recruiting system, with offices in major cities and applications taken through post offices. The dress blue uniform and opportunity for service in exotic lands were major attractions to potential recruits. (Artist Leon A. Shafer, Anne S. K. Brown Collection, Brown University Library)

navigation; in the 20 months of the war period about 60 percent of the 57,144 enlistees came from just nine states.⁴

The well-orchestrated recruiting program paid off, and when the United States joined the war, recruiting stations were swamped with applicants. As a result the Corps could be choosy in its recruiting. Slightly over three-quarters were rejected, the vast majority for medical reasons. The result was one of the most physically and mentally fit forces ever fielded. Unlike the Army, the Corps had limited need for technical specialists and the vast majority of this select group ended up as infantry. There was the usual assortment of indigents, alcoholics, and others seeking “three hots and a cot,” but an astonishing 60 percent of the 6th Marines had at least some post-secondary education, at a time when about 3 percent of the male population was college-educated.

On August 18, 1918, a Presidential order suspended Marine Corps recruiting, in part because the Corps was siphoning off so many intelligent and highly educated men who would qualify as badly needed specialists for the Army. The Corps’ last 5,000 recruits were drawn

from the draftee pool, but the inductees had to volunteer for Marine Corps service. None of these “voluntary inductees” saw service in France.

The traditional recruiting system simply could not provide all the officers needed. A desperate Commandant George Barnett wrote to the presidents of universities, state, and private military colleges, offering to enlist the top ten recommended seniors from each school. The officer corps was also expanded by re-enlistment of men with prior experience such as the National Guard. Officer training was unfortunately as naive as enlisted training, and Second Lieutenant and future Commandant Clifton Cates thought, “Half of it wasn’t worth a hoorah.” Those who failed to complete officer training were given options: discharge or service as enlisted men.

4 In order: New York, Ohio, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Minnesota, California, Texas, and Michigan. There were odd statistical anomalies, such as Florida (a paltry 110 recruits) versus Montana (1,205 recruits). Numbers do not include Reserves, women, and officer candidates.

B

RECRUIT TRAINING, PARRIS ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA

Marine boot camp emphasized close-order drill, physical fitness, and rifle marksmanship, though long-range rifle marksmanship was considered an archaic skill in European armies of the era. These recruits at the new Parris Island Recruit Depot are learning to fire the M1903 rifle accurately at ranges up to 500 yards (457m) under the close eye of a rifle instructor wearing a padded shooting jacket and blue denim “fatigue” trousers. The Marine received a monthly pay supplement, “beer money,” dependent upon his skill with the rifle – Expert (\$5), Sharpshooter (\$3), or Marksman (\$2). Recruits in the background wear running clothing with boots and hats. The recruit emerged from boot camp highly disciplined, in superb physical condition, and a highly skilled rifleman, but woefully unprepared in many of the skills needed for survival on the Western Front.



The greatest training emphasis by far was on rifle marksmanship, firing at ranges up to 500 yards. These Marines are firing at an improvised range in France. (USMCHD)



Don V. Paradis worked in Detroit and, after war was declared in early April 1917, went with a childhood friend to enlist. They first tried Army and Navy recruiters, but were disillusioned by the confusion and the number of drunken applicants. By chance they stumbled across a recruiting tent set up in a public park. Like many others, they were attracted by the dress blue uniform, and signed up immediately. After passing a physical at the recruiting office, Paradis was given two weeks to set his affairs in order.⁵

The enormous expansion clearly required a more efficient and standardized training system. Unlike the traditional Army model, in which enlisted men were trained by the NCOs who would lead them into battle, the Corps established a centralized boot camp system.

With no larger facilities available the first batches of enlisted recruits were sent to Navy Yards in Philadelphia and Norfolk Virginia. Dedicated Recruit Depots were established at Parris Island, South Carolina (an abandoned quarantine station) and Mare Island, California (actually a swampy peninsula in San Pablo Bay, northeast of San Francisco); in theory the boots received eight weeks of training at Parris Island, 12 weeks at Mare Island. Boot camp was never intended for combat training, only to instill discipline, improve physical fitness, develop aggression through bayonet training, and to develop rifle marksmanship.

Second only to the rifle, the bayonet was a mainstay of Marine weapons training. The bayonet is above all a weapon of intimidation, and training in its use would be intense and continual. Numerous Marines later commented that the Germans had little stomach for bayonet fighting, surprising given the brutality of World War I warfare.

Upon completion of boot camp most were assigned to advanced infantry training at Quantico. All together the average enlisted Marine received a fraction of the training time of his Army counterpart, but it was harsh and intensive training.

⁵ His friend, a college student, later decided to enlist as an officer.



Advanced trench warfare training, in this case the use of grenades, was conducted by the French. (USMCHD)

Officers, who had no centralized training facilities, reported to various stations in California, South Carolina and Maryland until the new base at Quantico, Virginia became operational.

Paradis went by train to the new Parris Island depot. After a period of quarantine the recruits were housed in tents. His senior drill instructor, Gunnery Sergeant Skoda, gave Paradis his first taste of the harsh discipline borne by generations of Marines; he decided Paradis's clean, wet clothing was not clean enough, dumping it into the dirt to be rewashed. Other punishments included running with a rifle for stepping on an arbitrarily defined patch of grass.

Another frequent punishment involved hauling heavy buckets of oyster shells – used to pave the company streets – from the beach a mile (1.6km) away. When insufficient miscreants existed to fill out labor gangs, it became routine duty. Recruits also provided a labor pool for construction, grading streets, even acting as gangs of “human cranes” to move heavy steel beams.⁶

Many recruits came from farms or impoverished city slums, but the greatest source of complaint was still food. Recruit Levi Hemrick despised the typical breakfast of eggs, unpeeled boiled potatoes, fried fat-back pork, and black coffee, but eventually realized that fat pork and strong coffee were Marine staples.

The bulk of recruit training consisted of close order drill, designed to induce instinctive obedience to orders. Physical fitness training included innumerable hikes of up to 12 miles (19km), running, and rifle calisthenics with the nine-pound rifle. This type of drill is surprisingly brutal, and one recruit noted that he heard men sobbing and crying through gritted teeth.

From this purgatory the recruit emerged more disciplined and a more skilled rifleman than his Army counterparts, but remained woefully unprepared for the Western Front. As the war devoured more and more men, training was shortened. Author William Manchester's father, William Sr., received four weeks' training, most of that spent building a road.

Advanced training was conducted at the new base at Quantico, Virginia. James Sellers recalled it looking like a mining boom town, with unpainted

⁶ Some things never change. The senior author was one of several dozen recruits who relocated a large steel structure by brute force in 1969.

wood and tarpaper buildings, muddy streets, and a tent city that housed most troops. The men were moved into wooden barracks as they were constructed.

The men were formed into numbered companies (see section on organization). Paradis was assigned to the 80th Company, destined to become George Company, 2nd Battalion, 6th Marines. The trainees lived in new barracks, and for the first time were allowed liberty (see Glossary for unfamiliar terms). Training emphasis was on weapons proficiency, bayonet drills, digging trenches, and hiking.

As fully fledged Marines, the Quantico garrison performed other duties such as provost guards (military police) in nearby cities. Quantico Town, surrounded by the base, became a boom town with saloons and numerous civilians skilled at separating Marines from their pay. Military authorities finally conducted a morning roundup of prostitutes and gamblers, and provided the miscreants with one-way train tickets to Washington.

Many officers and enlisted men knew that field training was inadequate, with too much emphasis on outdated, linear combat formations. There was little emphasis on map reading, movement in defilade, artillery control, chemical warfare, and a host of other critical skills.

UNIT ORGANIZATION

The organizational structure defined at Quantico reflected the Corps' inexperience in land warfare. The company and battalion staffs, as assigned, were far too small effectively to manage the cumbersome, overly large companies or to efficiently coordinate artillery or other supporting arms. One solution was to break the 58-man platoon into more manageable half-platoons, but unit organization remained awkward. Basic functions such as food and supply were grossly inadequate, though the three-man company mess sections worked miracles, and somehow managed to feed 250 men each day.

GOING "OVER THERE"

The Army declined to transport Marines, so most were shipped to France aboard Navy warships and transports, from captured German liners to specially built troop transports like the USS *Henderson* (named for the longest-serving Commandant of the Marine Corps). As tradition dictated, the new Marines – few with any naval experience – shared shipboard duties with the sailors, and, of necessity, mastered new skills like climbing a swaying rope ladder for lookout duty, and gripping the sides of the bunk while asleep in a rolling ship. The shipboard tedium was alleviated by constant work



MESS LINE NEAR THE FRONT, FRANCE, 1918

Food is an overarching concern for most soldiers. Prepackaged rations would not be introduced until the eve of World War II, so Marines subsisted on food prepared by the handful of company cooks. Bread rolls and "slumgullion," a stew that incorporated whatever ingredients were locally available, was prepared at the mess wagon and if necessary taken to forward positions in large metal cans carried by men or pack animals. These Marines are lined up, folding mess kits in hand, for a meal dished out by mess attendants, junior enlisted men temporarily assigned from the ranks of the company. Marines traditionally line up for "chow" in reverse order of rank, so all the men first in line are privates.



details, calisthenics, and constant U-boat alarms. The faster transports were at less risk than slower vessels, but mishaps occurred. Lance Corporal William Manchester lost his equipment and personal belongings and was transferred to the USS *Von Steuben* when the *Henderson* caught fire in mid-Atlantic.

Despite their eagerness for American commitment, the Allies had no clear plan for utilizing American forces. The first units to arrive in France served as labor troops for nearly nine months. The diary of Corporal Joseph E. Rendinell (97th Company, 6th Marines) recorded that his camp at Lormont was a sea of mud, with barracks that had no floors, crude wooden bunks, and lacked stoves for heating or drying; everything was perpetually damp. Endless work details were the norm: guarding German prisoners, constructing stone docks, hauling horse manure, cleaning streets, and unloading coal and other cargo by hand.

Marines who experienced advanced training in France gave it mixed reviews. Clearly training provided by inexperienced American officers and NCOs was inadequate for troops about to face combat against German veterans. Before being committed, the Marines were nominally assigned to trench warfare training under French tutelage, followed by acclimation in a quieter sector. In practice few units received adequate supplementary instruction. Sometimes it was simply repetition of the Quantico curriculum, with little emphasis on the skills necessary for survival. Other units received better training. Private Martin G. Gulberg recalled intensive training in details of trench warfare: patrolling, signals, gas warfare, and relief of frontline units.

Corporal Don Paradis described maneuvering in outdated battle formation and evolutions like column-to-line-of-battle deployment as practiced in the Civil War, punctuated by an hour of daily bayonet drill. Later replacements often went direct from the US into frontline units without additional training.

The French mentors clung to traditional tactics, not yet mimicking the infiltration tactics developed by the Germans. Sergeant Merwin Silverthorn (45th Company, 3/5) described the only attack formation taught. A first wave of riflemen and “hand bombers” was followed at a 75-yard interval by a wave of riflemen and rifle-grenadiers, with the third and fourth waves duplicating the first two. The men were taught to advance at a steady walking pace – in theory behind a creeping barrage.

APPEARANCE AND EQUIPMENT

“Well, we just had chow and now we are going to draw some new uniforms and believe me, they are some swell. Got it all over any uniform I have ever seen. Can’t hardly wait till I get a chance to wear them on liberty. Forest green with patch pockets.” (Letter from Private Leonard D. Philo, 6th Marines)

This Lewis gun section represents a good example of the early-war uniform – campaign hat, dark forest-green wool uniform with red-piped rank badges, very light-colored canvas leggings, and pistol belt with suspender straps. (USMCHD)



The distinctive uniform of the Marines, unlike the drab Army uniform, remained a point of pride and a powerful recruiting tool.

Like all armies of the era the Marine's dress and field uniform were essentially the same: the individual simply added field gear and weapons to the basic uniform. The evolution and variety of Marine Corps uniforms over the course of the war was complex and is beyond the scope of this study; the reader should refer to *Men-at-Arms 327: US Marine Corps in World War I 1917–1918*, Mark Henry, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, 1999.

Marines of the era were issued a lightweight cotton summer/tropical service uniform – worn in the Caribbean and in the 1917 Mexican intervention – but in France wore the heavier woolen P1917 winter service uniform. This uniform was distinct from the US Army uniform, primarily in its forest-green color, a darker green with a bluish hue unlike the Army's more brownish olive-drab. Differing details included the buttons, bearing the older Marine Corps emblem, an eagle perched on a fouled anchor below an arc of stars. The blouse had four pockets, high standing collar, and distinctive pointed cuffs. Enlisted rank stripes were backed in distinctive red felt.

Enlisted men wore light tan canvas P1911 lace-up leggings, often scrubbed to produce a lighter “saltier” appearance; a leather strap under the instep kept the leggings in place. Officers typically wore stiff russet leather Stohwasser or “clamshell” leggings that closed with leather straps and buckles.

Other affectations that marked officers were the adoption of the Sam Browne belt, a leather belt worn diagonally across the chest (still part of the Marine officer's dress uniform), and walking sticks or canes.

The standard field headgear for both officers and enlisted men was the green felt flat-brimmed campaign hat with a four-cornered Montana peak. The enlisted man's hat had a plain sateen band, while officers wore an elaborate braided band. Both had a front grommet for attaching the familiar blackened metal eagle-globe-and-anchor (EGA) symbol. For formal occasions both officers and enlisted men typically wore the woolen fore-and-aft overseas cap that could be folded and tucked under the belt, with the EGA on the left front. This was a particular convenience, since Marines do not wear headgear (“covers”) indoors except on special duty. Officers wore their metal rank badge affixed to the right front of this cap.

The campaign hat was quickly replaced by the British Mark I Brodie “dishpan” helmet, and in turn the American-manufactured M1917 version was phased into service by early 1918. The M1917 had a sand-textured finish. In some cases the Marines brazed the EGA hat badge onto the front of the new helmets. Photos indicate some officers briefly wore the French M1915 Adrian helmet, but the extent of its use is not clear.



Simplification of AEF logistics, and the similarity of the forest-green Marine Corps uniform to German dress, prompted conversion to the Army uniform. Many Marines hated the poorly made uniform of rough wool. (USMCHD)

Major-General John Lejeune decorates young Marines. Note the pistol ammo pouches on the belts, and the field dressing pouch in an unusual position. Two service chevrons on the man second from right indicate 12 months' service in France. All wear the overseas cap with the EGA on the left side; note Lejeune's rank badge on the right side. (USMCHD)



In an effort to simplify logistics, the AEF forced the Marine Brigade to adopt the standard Army uniform, but against resistance. The forest-green uniform was also very similar in color to the German field uniform. Lieutenant Elliott D. Cooke recalled that before the fighting at Belleau Wood he was told to show some of his men to the French troops on his flank to avoid confusion, and that the French agreed that the forest-green uniforms were indistinguishable from German uniforms.

The Army uniforms were phased in as clothing became unserviceable, but Marines hated the Army M1912 uniform with its poor cut and rough wool. To retain their identity it was common for the Marines to transfer unique buttons and rank badges to the new clothing. Marine units continued to present a motley appearance as replacements arrived wearing the P1917 uniform. The transition to the Army uniform also marked the adoption of wrap puttees in place of canvas leggings.

FOOTWEAR

The lightweight leather ankle boots worn by the Marines proved unsuitable for the conditions in France, and were replaced by the M1917/1918 "Pershing boot," a heavier ankle boot made of rough-side-out russet-brown leather, heavily waterproofed. The heavy sole was hobnailed, the heel protected by a U-shaped steel plate. It was relatively common for men to obtain calf-high rubber boots for wear in the trenches.

WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT

The basic weapon of the Marine battalion was the .30-cal. M1903 rifle, generically known as the Springfield after the Army arsenal where it was originally designed and manufactured. Considered by many to be the most accurate general-issue rifle ever produced in America, later models remained in production and were the standard-issue rifle through the opening days of World War II. Most World War II American snipers used the '03.

OPPOSITE

The M1903 rifle is considered by many to be the most accurate standard military rifle ever produced, and it remained in service as a sniper rifle through World War II. Their proficiency with this weapon led General Pershing to remark, "The deadliest weapon in the world is a Marine and his rifle." (USMCHD)

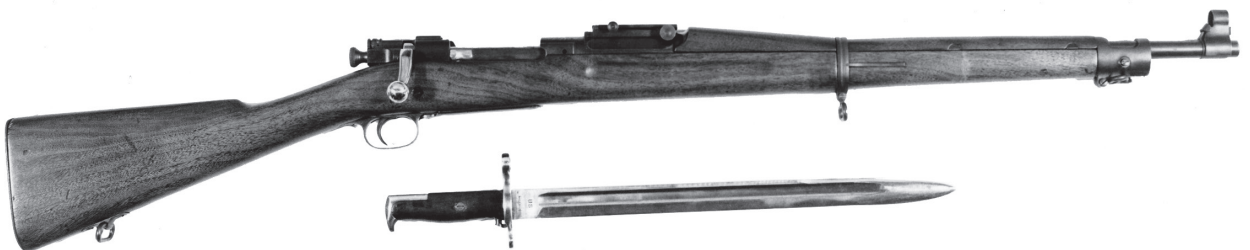
The bolt-action rifle was fed by a five-round clip, and a variety of ammunition was eventually available, including tracer, armor-piercing, and blank (for use with a grenade launcher), as well as standard ball. A heavy russet leather sling was standard, but was replaced by a light canvas sling better suited to trench conditions. Related gear included a small draw-through cleaning kit carried in the hollowed-out butt of the rifle, and the M1905 bayonet with a 16-inch (40.6cm) blade. The canvas scabbard for the bayonet could be attached to either the field pack or the web belt.

In August 1918 the Marines received the first M1917 trench guns, a militarized version of the 12-gauge pump-action Winchester M97 shotgun with a six-round tubular magazine. Modifications included a sling and a bayonet-mounting lug. The weapon had a devastating effect at short ranges, where the standard round sprayed nine 00 buckshot (.32-cal. balls). Despite the problem of cardboard-cased shotgun shells that swelled under wet conditions, causing jams, the weapon remained popular, and the problem was remedied by the introduction of brass shells in the final weeks of the war. The Germans considered this a terror weapon, and let it be known that anyone captured in possession of a shotgun would be summarily shot.

The platoon automatic weapon was the French Chauchat (pronounced “sho-sho”) automatic rifle, with its flimsy bipod and distinctive arc-shaped open magazine. These were much scorned by the Marines. Lieutenant James M. Sellers (78th Company, 2/6) reported that these weapons looked as if they were cobbled together from scrap, and were so heavy that he had an awful time making his men carry them. The Chauchat was also terribly inaccurate, a cardinal sin in Marine Corps eyes. Lieutenant (later Commandant) Clifton Cates complained that the weapon was heavy (20 pounds/9kg); so inaccurate



This photo of Army Major-General Omar Bundy (left) and Colonel Albertus W. Catlin of the 6th Marines illustrates the darker color and pointed pocket flaps of the early forest-green uniform. Note how Catlin has pulled his shirt collar out to reduce chafing by the tunic collar, a common practice, and the differing tunic designs. (NARA)



The Marines were not at all pleased with the inaccurate French-made Chauchat automatic rifle. Note the leather jerkins (adopted from the British), and the heavy ammunition bags that weighed up to 60 pounds (27kg). (NARA)



that even clamped in a vise it had a cone of dispersion 25 feet/7.6m in diameter at its woefully short effective range of 220 yards/200m; and ammo carriers had to lug 50–60-pound (23–27kg) bags of magazines.

Each half-platoon's automatic rifle group had two Chauchat gunners and four ammunition carriers. Deployment of the vastly superior American Browning automatic rifle (BAR) was delayed until the final month of the war for fear the Germans would copy captured weapons. The Marines used this weapon in limited numbers, at first loaned by the Army's 36th Division in October 1918 at Blanc Mont, and later issued in late October for the Meuse–Argonne Offensive. The BAR differed from the World War II model in lacking a bipod, and was equipped with a long sling and special attachment to the gunner's web belt to steady the weapon in "walking fire" mode, firing from the hip as suppressive fire during an assault.

The standard sidearm issued to officers, runners and communications men, and men assigned to crew-served weapons, was the .45-cal. M1911 semi-automatic pistol. With a seven-round magazine, it had enormous stopping power. The pistol was carried in several models of brown leather holsters with flap closures, of both Marine Corps and Army design. The most obvious difference was between the standard holster that rested directly on the web belt near the waist, and the "cavalry" holster with an extension that caused the weapon to hang lower on the leg. The latter type was affected by many officers. The six-round .45-cal. M1917 revolver was used in lesser numbers, and many officers used privately purchased pistols of various types and calibers.

Secondary weapons also included sheath knives of various sorts, including the Mark I Trench Knife. This brutal weapon incorporated a set of brass knuckles into the handle, and a conical extension on the end opposite the blade, designed to punch a hole in a man's skull. Knives must not have been a favored weapon, since few were issued and little mention is made of their use.

GRENADES

Grenades were largely supplied from Allied stocks: French OF (offensive) blast grenades and DF (defensive) fragmentation grenades with serrated cases, and British Mills bombs. Late in the war a variety of American-made devices were introduced, including the Mark I "pineapple" fragmentation grenade (the World War I version was cast with four rows of raised



This photo of a machine-gun section and its French advisers near Château-Thierry shows the heavy mount and awkward stripper clip of the Hotchkiss gun. Note how the gunners have driven stakes into the parapet to limit the arc of fire. (NARA)

fragmentation squares, versus the five of later models), gas, and smoke grenades. Hand grenades were a specialist weapon, used by an eight-man “hand bomber” group in each half-platoon. The Marines complained about grenade shortages, particularly while fighting in Belleau Wood.

Rifle grenades were another specialist weapon; the four-man rifle-grenadier group had two modified French Vivien-Bessièrès launchers that lobbed the 50mm, 3-pound (1.36kg) grenade up to 200 yards (183m).

HEAVY WEAPONS

Heavy weapons were vested in the 6th Machine Gun Battalion and the regimental machine-gun companies and 37mm gun platoons, and parceled out as needed to support the rifle battalions.

The Marines used the British 3-inch Stokes mortar in very limited numbers (six per regiment). Heavier firepower was provided by Army gunners of the 2nd Division, with 75mm guns, 155mm howitzers, and 6-inch mortars.

Upon arrival in France the Marines reluctantly relinquished their reliable Lewis machine guns for use by the US air services, and thereafter their standard heavy machine gun was the 8mm French M1914 Hotchkiss. Each machine-gun company had 16 guns. With its mount, the entire weapon weighed in at around 100 pounds (45kg) without ammunition, making it unpopular with gun crews. It used a 24- or 30-round rigid stripper clip that protruded from the side of the gun, but the 500-round/minute cyclic rate of fire required frequent replacement of clips that reduced the sustained rate of fire to a paltry 120 rounds per minute. Like the BAR, deployment of the better .30-cal. Browning M1917 machine gun – arguably the best such weapon of the war – was delayed until the final days of the war, for the same reason.

Being a machine-gunner was a more hazardous assignment. Most damage was inflicted on the infantry by artillery or machine-gun fire; the enemy infantry were fellow sufferers and the artillerymen were usually beyond



The French-designed 37mm M1918 trench gun was a valued direct-fire weapon despite its enormous weight. Note the padded shooting jackets, and the carrying pole lying under the gun; it fitted into the socket at the front of the mount. (USMCHD)

reach. But infantry often vented their anger on machine-gunners. Private Carl A. Brannen (80th Company, 2/6), like many others, said, “Machine gunners were never taken prisoner by either side.”

The M1916 trench gun was a portable 37mm cannon (the same as mounted in the Renault FT-17 tank) on a ground mount patterned after a split trail artillery carriage, with a small folding front leg in lieu of wheels. These weapons equipped each regiment’s 37mm gun platoon. The hefty 342-pound (155kg) weapon was carried into action by men holding the two trails and a steel pole that inserted into a socket on the front of the mount. Each 16-round ammunition chest weighed an additional 8 pounds (3.6kg). Heavy and clumsy though it was, the small cannon provided invaluable direct-fire support, firing

D

OVERNIGHT CAMP ON A ROUTE MARCH, FRANCE, 1918

On the march the Marine usually went on foot, carrying all his basic equipment on his back. The small two-man shelter tent consisted of two joined halves; each man carried half of the tent, one of the two poles, and half of the tent pegs. The open front and rear were closed by a rain cape or overcoat. Here one man rests while his tent mate carefully washes his feet after a long march. The man at right is a Salvation Army soldier. The Salvation Army is a religious denomination organized along military lines, and provided minor comforts and morale-building services as well as spiritual support to augment the unit’s own US Navy chaplains. His cap badge bears the inscription “Blood and Fire,” the motto of the organization. In the background are a horse-drawn mess-wagon and water tanker, called a “water buffalo” by Marines. Chemically treated water was distributed through Lister bags, folding canvas bags supported on tripods. Large trucks like that in the background were usually used only for heavy baggage like large tents. Through hard experience the Marines learned that a ride in a truck usually meant they were being rushed to the front and a desperate battle awaited them.



Radios were heavy, bulky, and unreliable so most communications were by runner or field telephone. Telephony was a technical specialty provided by attached Army Signal Corps personnel like this man in the Meuse–Argonne Offensive, 1918. (NARA)



high explosive or a canister round with 32 steel slugs. A gun shield and conical flash suppressor were rarely fitted, to avoid additional weight.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

The Great War will always be remembered as the “chemists’ war,” and the gas mask was a fundamental part of each man’s equipment. The French M2 gas mask was the first issued to American forces for protection against asphyxiating agents like chlorine and phosgene. A simple vapor-proofed canvas face mask with integral filters, it was carried in a small semicircular pouch. Before their first actions the British small box respirator (SBR) was issued, but the M2 was retained as a backup. In action the SBR was worn hanging on the chest for ready access. The user pulled the cloth mask out of the carrier; it was connected by a flexible hose to a sturdy metal filter canister that remained in the bag. An integral nose clip forced the wearer to breathe through a rubber mouthpiece.

The American-made corrected English (CE) mask was issued from mid-1918 on; the primary changes were that the mask came in a range of sizes for better fit, with a record card that could be used to indicate when filters needed replacement.

There was no protection against mustard gas, an oily blistering agent that caused irritation to any damp tissue. The mask provided protection against inhalation and to a great extent eye damage, but mustard gas was a persistent area-denial weapon, clinging to surfaces and particularly attacking sweaty areas like the armpits and groin. The only immediate treatment consisted of evacuation, removal of contaminated clothing, and thorough cleansing with soap and water – usually impossible.

The web gear used by Marines dated to 1910, and remained little changed throughout the war. The description provided here is brief, with more detailed information provided in *Osprey Men-at-Arms 327*, previously mentioned.

The Marine's basic baggage item was the large seabag, which has remained essentially unchanged to the present day. In it were packed items not immediately needed such as dress uniforms. It was typically carried as ships' baggage, or on land by wheeled transport.

The basic M1910 cartridge belt issued to riflemen had ten integral ammunition pouches, each holding two five-round stripper clips for the rifle. Rows of metal eyelets allowed the Marine to attach the bayonet, canteen pouch, field dressing pouch, and other items to the belt. The eyelets were also used to attach the M1907 belt suspender straps, which passed over the shoulders to help distribute weight. Although their primary function was to attach the backpack, the suspender straps were often worn without the pack. Despite the emphasis on aimed fire, the massive expenditures of ammunition meant that riflemen often went into action carrying one or more disposable 60-round cloth bandoliers. Chauchat ammunition carriers typically used a heavy, awkward bag with a narrow strap that dug into the shoulder under its considerable weight.

Officers, senior NCOs, crew-served weapons men, and medical corpsmen armed with the pistol wore the M1912 pistol belt, without the integral ammunition pouches; this became the standard belt in World War II.

When the Browning automatic rifle entered service in late 1918 the gunner and ammunition carriers were provided with specially-made belts. The most common model of the gunner's belt had five pouches for the 20-round magazines, with a metal brace on the right side for the butt when providing walking fire. The two models of the assistant gunner's belt had either three BAR magazine pouches on either side, or two pouches on either side plus a rifle ammunition pouch on either side of the front buckle for the assistant's personal weapon.

The M1910 one-quart (1.13 liter) aluminum canteen and cup with folding handle were carried in a cloth pouch that attached to the belt. As in World War II the Marines quickly found that a quart was insufficient water so that many men later carried two canteens. The M1910 field dressing pouch contained a single bandage packed in a watertight brass (later cloth) case; the individual Marine used the dressing only in extremis, since wound care was the corpsman's task. Wire cutters of various French and American types were carried attached to the belt by some Marines.

The M1910 haversack lacked its own straps and could be attached only to the web belt and suspender straps. Not actually a sack, it was essentially a flat cross-shaped cloth sheet that folded over and closed with numerous complex straps and buckles. Internally there were additional slots, elastic straps, and other spots to carry items in prescribed places. It was more suited to "junk on the bunk" inspections than to actual field practices and conditions, and the single biggest shortcoming of the pack was that it had to be fully opened to access the contents. In the haversack the Marine carried his belongings. The M1910 or M1918 mess kit had a two-piece meat can and a knife, fork, and spoon; the latter model had deeper pans more suited to serving up the omnipresent "slumgullion" stew. Additional items included spare clothing, housewife (sewing kit), emergency rations, toiletries and



Pigeons carried forward in backpack crates were often used for communication in lieu of runners. (NARA)



Bells, like this one, probably scavenged from a church, were often used as gas attack alarms. This man is striking the bell with a mattock head. Note the rolled-down thigh-high waders. (NARA)

personal care items like foot powder, luxuries like a towel, chewing or smoking tobacco, Sterno for cooking, and any personal items like a diary or mail and writing materials.

The entrenching tool, a small shovel with a T-shaped handle, was strapped to the outside of the haversack. The companion two-piece M1910 mattock, with a separate head and wooden handle, was supposed to be issued to every second man, but was apparently less common.

If needed, a blanket (Army olive-drab or Marine Corps green) could be rolled and fastened to the bottom of the pack, usually wrapped in the shelter half (half of a two-man tent), with tent pegs, a segmented single pole (each man carried one), and guy lines wrapped inside. In 1918 the AEF, and the Marine Brigade, adopted the practice of rolling the blanket and ancillary tent system parts inside the shelter half, attaching it across the top and sides of the haversack with special blanket roll straps.

Despite shortcomings, the pack system was somewhat flexible. In the attack the Marine pared down the contents, carrying only the essentials. Colonel Albertus W. Catlin of the 6th Marines recorded that the heavy marching order was used

in transport, but the light marching order pack used in combat contained no extra clothing or any blankets and weighed about 20 pounds (9kg), plus the weight of weapons and ammunition.

Rifle-grenadiers were provided with French-made pouches for the launcher cup and grenades. No provision was made for carrying hand grenades, so they were carried in pockets, sandbags or any convenient container.

The officer's equipment differed only in the type of packs and a few items of gear. Officers usually carried a musette bag, a large purse-like shoulder bag, adopted from the French. Officers were also authorized to wear a "Rebel



The Browning M1918 heavy machine gun was issued only in the final weeks of the war. The civilian is Floyd Gibbons, whose rumored death at Belleau Wood prompted press releases about the Marine Brigade. (USMCHD)

roll,” a rolled blanket containing personal items with the ends tied together, worn diagonally from the right shoulder across the chest and back. This anachronistic and impractical item figured in a well-known recruiting poster, but was otherwise rare to non-existent.

As in all armies the distinguishing marks of officers were map cases, belt compasses, and of course binoculars.

LIFE ON CAMPAIGN

Much of any soldier’s life centers on food, and Marines often ate better than their civilian counterparts. The main complaint was about the food when supplied by the French. Despite the French national reputation for good food, the cuisine consisted of “monkey meat,” watery punch, and occasionally potatoes.

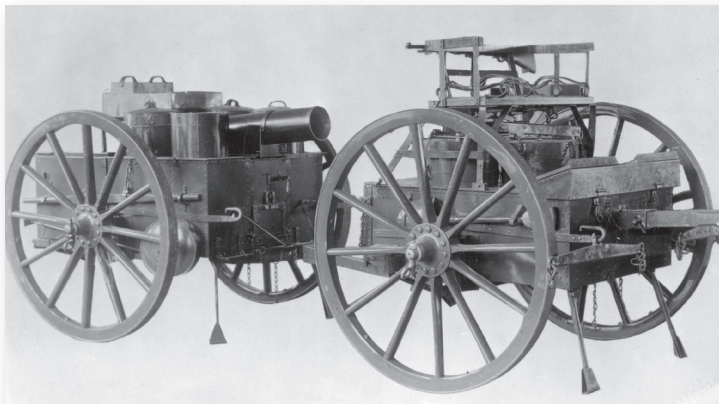
The company mess section managed a horse-drawn cook wagon that was little changed until after World War II. Firing up the wagon’s internal wood-burning stoves, the mess men could cook on the march if necessary. Staples were coffee, freshly baked bread, and slumgullion. Dessert was typically the trench donut, deep-fried sugarcoated bread balls.

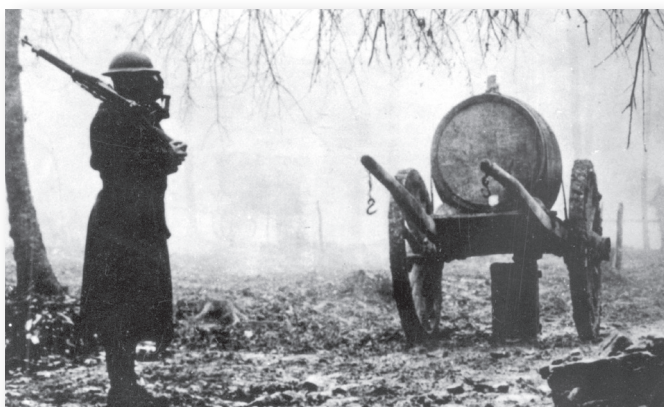
In combat or on prolonged marches all of that changed, and numerous diaries and interviews mentioned constant hunger. Private Onnie J. Cordes remembered that on the brutal march toward Belleau Wood he fell asleep and missed midnight chow. Rushing over to the company cook wagon he found that the mess men had dumped beans, applesauce, and coffee into a large garbage can. He shoved his mess pan deep into the gruel to get the solids and ate it because he thought it might be the last available hot food for some time. He was correct.

Cooked rations could be carried to forward positions only in large metal canisters. Hardtack and canned food were considered emergency rations to be eaten only when authorized. When carrying parties could not bring rations forward, men subsisted on hardtack, slabs of salty bacon carried in personal bacon-tins, or monkey meat. The meat could be fried in the mess tin, crumbled hardtack soaked in the grease to make “skillygalee.” Other preserved foods included canned hash (“Willy”) that was considered superior to monkey meat, canned salmon or sardines (“goldfish”), porkbelly, pork and beans, canned tomatoes (to allay scurvy), and occasionally jams or jellies. Water was provided from centralized purification plants in “water buffalos” – horse-drawn tank carts – or carried to frontline positions in bundles of canteens.

When hard pressed by the enemy it was often impossible to supply anything to forward positions. Private Martin G. Gulberg concluded that chow detail was one of the most dangerous jobs on the front. Men struggled forward with the bulky, shiny metal food canisters and if the enemy spotted them they

The horse-drawn company field kitchen staffed by three cooks was the Marine’s best friend. (NARA)





The water buffalo, any of several types of water carts, was used to haul purified water from central supplies. (NARA)

called down artillery or mortar fire. Lieutenant Samuel C. Cumming complained that the sniping was so intense that men in frontline positions often had to search the dead for food and ammunition and dig holes for water. It does not do to think too much about the purity of that water.

The soldier's other great comfort was tobacco, and cigarette-rolling papers and cans of Bull Durham brand shredded tobacco were issued like rations. Pre-rolled cigarettes could be purchased through the YMCA and Red Cross. The

troops quickly found another use for cigarettes; the heat of a lighted cigarette, run along the seams of the uniform, was an effective way to reduce the population of the omnipresent cooties (body lice). The use of chewing tobacco was widespread, and had the added advantage that it could be used when enemy observation of a match or glowing cigarette might prove fatal.

Organizations including the Red Cross, Salvation Army, and YMCA occasionally provided niceties like actual donuts and hot chocolate, but it was not their primary function. The YMCA acted as a commissary service for the Army, selling small luxuries like cigarettes, candles, and sweets, and the Red Cross also sold minor luxury goods.

In rest areas the Marines caroused, fueled whenever possible by alcohol. Marines developed a taste for French wines, although wartime censors apparently prohibited photos of Marines drinking wine like the "degenerate" French. Private Martin G. Gulberg recorded that in an inspection called before departing for the front, his lieutenant found that the men had filled canteens with wine, and made them pour it out. Later the same officer heard that wine was better than water for quenching thirst, and allowed his men to carry it.

Each Marine was issued a shelter half, part of a two-man tent, seldom used in practice. Wherever possible, men were housed in existing structures: abandoned houses, barns, and chicken coops. In rear areas troops struck up relationships with French civilians who provided food, wine, and



A typical camp on an extended march. Visible are field kitchens and larger water buffaloes. The tripods support Lister bags filled with chemically treated water. (NARA)

companionship. More practical shelter from the elements was provided by overcoats, rain ponchos, slickers, or waterproof sheets.

In that era, infantry brigades generally moved by marching or rail transport. The Marine Brigade initially had no organic transport of its own except for man-drawn machine-gun and equipment carts. The 6th Marines possessed a single Ford Model T truck donated by Mrs Elizabeth Pearce, Mrs Charles Childs, and a Miss Willard. Known in the regiment as the Elizabeth Ford, the truck carried desperately needed supplies forward under fire at Belleau Wood. This truck went

down in history as Tin Lizzie, a name that later became generic for the Model T. In France the Brigade acquired motorcycles (some with sidecars) and a variety of staff cars. With limited transport, Marines did a lot of walking, and utilized locally acquired horses as officers' mounts, mules and donkeys as animal transport, and requisitioned farm carts and wagons to carry supplies and heavy gear. Each man made do with one quart (about one liter) of water per day on the march, struggling along in hot summer weather in his woolen uniform. Long-distance transport was mostly by rail in the fabled *quarante hommes ou huit chevaux* (40 men or eight horses) boxcars of the French rail system. The cars were extraordinarily uncomfortable: cold and drafty in winter, malodorous and stiflingly hot in summer.

MEDICAL CARE

As in previous wars, combat was not the greatest risk Marines faced. Despite inoculations contagious diseases like influenza were commonplace, and cramped conditions, poor hygiene, and the cold and wet made disease



More commonly, troops were housed in whatever buildings survived, and fended as best they could. These Marines at Sommevieue in April 1918 have scavenged a tattered bed. (USMCHD)



Mess kits in hand, Marines line up for chow at a headquarters in Sommevieue. (NARA)



Hot food was transported to the front lines by pack animals or human carriers, but the slumgullion stew often arrived cold and congealed into a greasy goo. Note the cavalry-style holster and cane affected by the officer. (NARA)

Characterized by numbness, inflammation, and loss of circulation, advanced cases could develop into permanent nerve damage, ulceration, and gangrene. Prevention and treatment was simple but not always available: dry socks, air-drying the feet, soaking in various medicinal baths, and rest.

Each Marine carried a field dressing attached to his belt to bandage wounds, but immediate treatment for the seriously sick or injured was provided by two overworked Navy medical corpsmen attached to each 256-man company. Those who could not walk were carried to the rear by the walking wounded; Corporal Martin G. Gulberg's experience was typical. Shot through both legs at Soissons, he lay under fire for four hours until another Marine, shot in the face, put him on his back, and carried him to the aid station. Others were gathered in by stretcher-bearers, the latter often musicians from the regimental band. The battalion aid station staffed by two Navy surgeons and about 12 medical corpsmen was usually established in some sheltered spot – an abandoned bunker or building, sometimes a road cut – behind the front lines. Patients were triaged and transported to one of the division field hospitals by stretcher-bearer, or in a motorized or horse-drawn ambulance. There, patients were fluoroscoped to locate shrapnel, underwent more detailed surgery, or underwent decontamination in the case of poison gas casualties. Transport by ambulance or hospital train to base hospitals for additional treatment was followed by continuing treatment including regular wound debridement and re-bandaging by the hated “agony wagon” (ward treatment cart) and a period of recuperation.

a constant threat. Private Cedric D. Sothern arrived in Brest as a replacement, and was confronted with grueling marches, rides in overcrowded boxcars, and wet campsites. Sothern reported that after one three-day train ride 128 men were evacuated suffering from pneumonia, influenza, and rheumatism.

Hygiene was impossible in the trenches, and in a pre-antibiotic world even small injuries might lead to fatal infections. It was common for men to search each other for small injuries, treating their comrades with iodine. The wet, cold trenches introduced a new affliction, trench foot (immersion foot).

E ADVANCED TRENCH WARFARE TRAINING, FRANCE, 1918

Advanced training in France was haphazard. At best a period of training in skills like chemical warfare, moving in defilade, night raiding, and other skills was followed by a period of service in a relatively quiet sector, a *bon sector* in French usage, under French advisers. Much of this training was conducted by the elite French *Chasseurs alpins*; by this stage of the war the “Blue Devils” were forced to relinquish their distinctive dark blue uniforms and were identified only by their collar badges. Such sectors were still dangerous. Here the Germans have decided to launch a random artillery barrage. The inexperienced Marines simply crouch down, while a more experienced French officer flattens himself against the trench wall. A cynical old *poilu* watches and smokes his pipe in his funk hole, a small personal shelter dug into the wall of the trench.





Marines and a French *poilu* gather for hot chocolate obtained from a YMCA vendor. Note the rubber boots, the uniform sweater (usually worn under the blouse) on the man with the pot, and the large collar of the overcoat. (NARA)

Preventive inoculation against contagious diseases like smallpox had been common since the late eighteenth century, but one prevalent and much feared battlefield disease was tetanus, carried in the manure used to fertilize fields and in the droppings of horses, mules, and donkeys. Immunization required multiple inoculations, so virtually every wounded man recalled being given a whopping booster dose of the vaccine.

Medical services were augmented by civilians, including volunteer ambulance companies. Lance Corporal William Manchester Sr., a runner in the 5th Marines, was seriously wounded in the Meuse–Argonne Offensive. His shoulder wound developed gangrene, and he was placed in the moribund ward to die. Instead he was adopted and cheered by the attentions of a Salvation Army soldier, who provided free cigarettes and encouraged him to fight for his life. He survived, but with a paralyzed and withered right arm.

FIRST COMBAT

On March 17, 1918 – a memorable Saint Patrick’s Day – the Brigade moved into a “quiet” sector of the Verdun Front. Private Frank M. Jacobs observed that the Germans on the other side were also trainees, and the *poilus* they relieved had adopted a live-and-let-live attitude. The trenches and dugouts were battered and shin deep in fetid mud, infested with lice and huge rats that ran over sleeping men and plundered their reserve rations. Private Onnie J. Cordes complained that his bunker was half full of stagnant water, and on cold nights the rats would creep under blankets to share the warmth of the sleeping Marines. The Marines shot more rats than Germans.

Lieutenant Herman A. Zischke recorded that the trenches of the opposing sides were in places up to a kilometer apart, but where closer – as little as 16 meters apart – the foes constantly exchanged volleys of grenades. Zischke’s



Without antibiotics even small injuries could develop into life-threatening infections. These men are inspecting each other for punctures inflicted by barbed wire. (USMCHD)

unit, 18th Company, 2/5, occupied a salient under constant artillery fire, and his diary casually noted that in one valley there were 18,000 unburied dead from previous fighting. Most action was desultory shelling that occasionally killed and maimed men, interrupted by the terror of night patrols sent out to cut the German wire. Gulberg referred to these patrols as a “stunt” that might easily devolve into a savage fight in the darkness.

After two months of this the 2nd Division was relieved for a period of recuperation, and then moved north to relieve the 1st Division in another quiet sector near Cantigny.

THE DEFINING BATTLE – BELLEAU WOOD

On May 27 the Germans launched their well-planned *Kaiserschlacht* offensive, designed to push the French off the dominating Chemin des Dames Ridge. A massive artillery bombardment shattered the British and French defenders (largely because capture of the ridge had been so costly that French General Auguste Duchêne was unwilling to trade space for time), and sent them reeling back in retreat. Suddenly the situation returned to a war of maneuver, and Germany had the upper hand. Allied measures failed to stem the disaster, and the path to Paris seemed open to the Germans. Desperate, the French called upon Pershing to commit his partially trained troops.

German units had already filtered into Chateau-Thierry as far as the north bank of the Marne River, only to be stopped in a desperate three-day stand by the US Army 3rd Division's 7th Machine Gun Battalion and French Colonial troops. Unable to capture the key bridges at Chateau-Thierry, the Germans shifted to threaten the highway toward Paris, 35 miles (56km) away.

An indication of French desperation was a decision to provide critical motor transport. Loaded about 30 men to a *camion* (heavy truck), the 2nd Division set out on a grueling road march that skirted the Paris suburbs. The men could see the Eiffel Tower in the distance, while French troops frantically emplaced artillery along the roadsides. The field kitchens, artillery, and heavy baggage wagons were dispatched by slower trains, which caused considerable hardship. The first Division artillery did not arrive until June 3.

Pausing only for a few hours' sleep, there was no time to prepare food. Sergeant Daniel E. Morgan, 77th Company, 6th Machine Gun Battalion recalled the cooks killing some chickens acquired from civilians when the order came to move on, and everything was bundled into the *camions*. Days later he came out of the line and found the basket of chicken parts. Starving, he gnawed on a raw chicken leg. Other men scavenged from local farms or their own casualties, and ate their reserve rations.

Crowds of civilians cheered the Americans, but around Meaux, east of Paris they soon gave way to crowds of refugees pushing in the opposite direction with all their worldly belongings. Many Marines later recalled the refugee columns as the most awful sight of the war. A few French soldiers advised the Marines to turn back. In several

The first experience of trench warfare was in the elaborate trenches constructed by the French over several years. (USMCHD)



Marines in a hasty trench. In an attack troops wore the light marching pack, and some men were designated to carry forward picks and shovels to improve positions. This photo might have been taken in training since the man on the left wears canvas leggings. (USMCHD)



towns French officers told the Marines to help themselves to anything in the town – the Germans would get it anyway. The Marines found meals still on the tables in eerily abandoned houses, and Private Martin G. Gulberg said the Marines plundered the wine cellars, food stocks, rabbit and chicken coops.

When his company stopped to sleep, Private Warren R. Jackson (95th Company, 1/6) was startled to see a battery of French artillery set up by the roadside. He thought it strange that the guns were placed 50 or more miles behind the front, but when the company was roused in the middle of the night, he found that the front was not far away.

In the assessment of Colonel Albertus W. Catlin (CO, 6th Marines), German pressure around Belleau Wood had to be relieved before Chateau-Thierry could be secured. The wood formed a dangerous salient extending into the Allied line, and the Germans were quickly turning the rocky, forested hills into a fortress that could serve as a jumping-off point for a continued offensive. Belleau Wood had to be eliminated before the Allied line could be considered reasonably secure.

On June 1 the Brigade moved into a position north of the Paris–Metz highway, with the Army’s 3rd Brigade to the south. Catlin described a landscape of rolling farmland dotted with copses of trees. One particularly large wood was densely forested, with visibility less than 20 feet (6m), concealing a tangle of gullies and rocky outcrops. Catlin thought Belleau Wood was not large, but dominated the landscape. Survivors of shattered French units filtered through the Marine positions, warning of *beaucoup d’Allemands* close behind. Warren Jackson thought they looked more like hunted animals than human beings, and almost to a man the Marines remembered the demoralized advice that the “*Boches*” would be in Paris within days. The American artillery and machine-gun units had not arrived, but the Germans were stalled by accurate rifle fire.

At midday on June 2 the German long-range artillery began pounding the Marines. For two days they endured artillery and lashing by long-range machine-gun fire. Don Paradis recounted sheltering in a barn – the Marines had not yet learned to avoid buildings that provided irresistible targets to enemy observers – and 13 men were killed. By June 3 parts of the German 237th



Units of the Marine Brigade moving into position prior to the attack on Belleau Wood, with horse-drawn machine-gun carts at left. (USMCHD)

Division occupied Belleau Wood and launched halfhearted attacks driven off by long-range rifle fire; the American divisional artillery still had not arrived.

Newly promoted Lieutenant-Colonel Frederick M. Wise, the CO of 2/5, recalled seeing several German observation balloons, and thinking they would soon “catch hell.” Worse than the usual artillery, mixed high explosive and poison gas, the Germans emplaced large trench mortars in the wood. These large-caliber but mobile weapons fired “aerial torpedoes” nearly four feet (122cm) long, with enormous concussive effect that shook the ground.

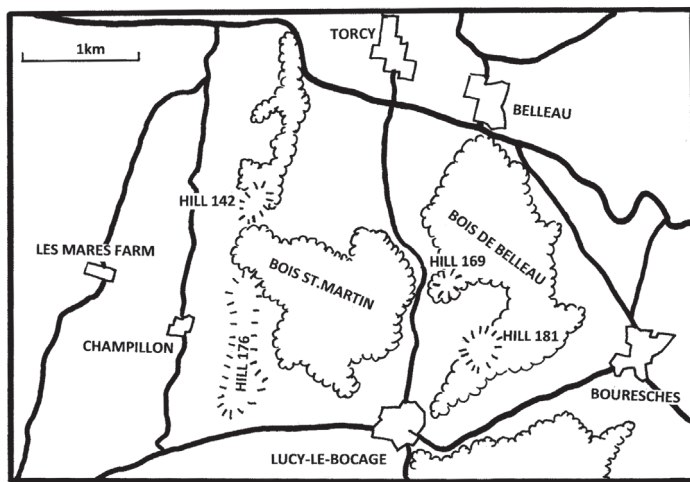
On June 4 the Germans launched an anticipated full-scale attack south and west out of the wood to dislodge the Marines from positions around the village of Lucy-le-Bocage and Les Mares Farm. Lieutenant-Colonel Wise admired the discipline of his Marines who held their fire and waited for the enemy to come within effective range. Then he saw his men coolly working their rifle bolts, and successive waves of enemy infantry ruined by the aimed fire. Under their punishment the Germans eventually broke and ran.

Captain Lloyd Wright of the 51st Company, 2/5, reported that the French on his right fell back, and two platoons from the 95th Company, 1/6, rushed in to plug the hole. Wright reported to his superiors that a French major gave a Captain Corbin written orders to fall back, but he countermanded the order, and advised that the 82nd and 84th Companies were on their way to fill the gap on his right. His verbal reply to the French major has gone down in Marine Corps lore: “Retreat, hell! We just got here!”

ATTACK ON HILL 142

By June 5 the Marines encountered German scouts and infiltrators working their way into the areas occupied by the Marines, suggesting an imminent attack. The commander of the French XXI Corps was desperate to reduce the threat to the Paris–Metz highway. He issued orders for a counterattack into the wood. Reconnaissance would have revealed the Germans converting the forested hill mass into a fortress, but there was none. Worse, there was no comprehensive plan of attack, so the 4th Brigade was thrown piecemeal against the entrenched Germans.

In the attack on June 6, only the bravery and tenacity of individual Marines prevented total disaster.



BELLEAU WOOD AND ENVIRONS, JUNE 1918

The Germans occupied a complex of low but rocky, wooded hills set among open grain fields. The Marines initially attacked Hill 142 and Bois St. Martin from the west (left) and then the south, but the heaviest fighting was in the village of Bouresches and the Bois de Belleau. (Map by authors, from archival documents)

a grazing fire at knee level. The German gunners aimed low, striking men in the legs. Those who went down were struck repeatedly as they lay wounded. The Marines were learning a harsh lesson about why machine-gunners were seldom taken prisoner.

Onnie Cordes of 17th Company, in the following wave, quickly discarded his pack containing boxes of hardtack, and with only his rifle, belt, helmet, and gas mask started across the fire-swept fields. One bullet glanced off his helmet, another hit his cartridge belt but was apparently stopped by the cartridges inside. Hamilton's men fought their way through a second grove, but overshot their objective. Despite the best efforts of their officers and NCOs the Marines pursued the enemy like dogs after game.

Now the two lead companies were intermingled with the Germans, fought hand to hand, and drove them out of a wooded ravine, shooting down many as they fled across the next wheat field. Cordes recorded that some of the pursuing Marines got ahead of the Germans. A large open wheat field with machine guns emplaced on the other side blocked their way, but the Marines plunged ahead. Cordes thought that almost all were killed or mortally wounded, as none returned from the woods on the far side. Cordes' captain ordered them to stay in the ravine, sniping at the enemy, "picking them off like flies."

Captain Hamilton had lost all his junior officers. He consolidated the two companies (the other company had one surviving officer) and awaited the expected German counterattack. He did not have to wait long. Gunnery Sergeant Ernest A. Janson (serving under a false name, Charles Hoffman) became the first Marine to win the Medal of Honor when he bayoneted two attacking Germans and drove off ten others.

Despite Cordes' fears, some of the two lead companies worked their way back from the next wood, crawling through muddy drainage ditches in the wheat fields. The enemy counterattacked. Captain Hamilton was struck in the head by a rock thrown up by a grenade and became addled for several minutes. He quickly recovered his senses when he saw an NCO begin frantically firing into a clump of bushes about 20 feet (6m) away. About 15 Germans of a machine-gun section had stumbled into the Marines, and a desperate hand-to-hand fight ensued.

At 0500hrs 1/5 attacked the western margin of the wood, but because of poor planning and preparation only the 49th and 67th Companies made the initial attack; reinforcement by the rest of the battalion in the nick of time prevented a debacle.

Captain George W. Hamilton of the 49th Company observed that less than 50 yards into the open fields they came under heavy machine-gun fire; three German machine-gun companies and supporting infantry held the grove. Many Marines noted that the experienced German gunners were trained to lay down



The initial assault on the German positions in Belleau Wood was across open fields sown with oats and wheat, like this one. (USMCHD)

THE ASSAULT ON THE WOOD

Not until 1700hrs did 2/5, 3/5, 2/6, and 3/6 launch ragged attacks on a broad arc around the western and southern margins of the wood. Communications difficulties were grossly magnified when operations were mounted on short notice. Colonel Catlin of the 6th Marines later wrote that at 1545hrs Lieutenant Williams, General Harbord's aide, arrived by motorcycle with instructions to attack at 1700hrs. Catlin immediately grasped the situation facing the assault troops. Major Benjamin S. Berry's 3/5 had 400 yards (365m) of open wheat field to cross under heavy machine-gun fire. Catlin believed Berry's attack was doomed.

Lieutenant George V. Gordon (16th Company, 3/5) learned of the attack after his company was scheduled to begin its advance, and then received contradictory orders to hold in place. This chaotic attack was the same as that in which correspondent Floyd Gibbons was critically wounded.

German machine-gun and rifle fire raked the Marines in the open fields, the German artillery in the woods joined in, as did their bigger guns at Belleau and Torcy. Major Berry was immediately badly wounded but pressed on with blood streaming down his arm.

Sergeant Merwin Silverthorn noticed the wood to their left front, full of machine guns that enfiladed the Marine line, but, taught to ignore such distractions, concentrated on the objective. Out of his 52-man platoon only six survived the first 75 yards. When 3/5's attack on the outskirts of Lucy-le-Bocage faltered, Gunnery Sergeant Dan Daly of the 73rd Machine Gun Company (Daly had already won the Medal of Honor during the Boxer Rebellion) stood up in the intense fire, waved his rifle over his head, and bellowed "Come on you sons-of-bitches! Do you want to live forever?"

Lacking any means to communicate effectively with any of his subordinates except runners, Colonel Catlin went forward to observe. A French liaison officer, Captain Tribot-Laspierre, was begging him to move back to a less exposed position when a bullet hit Catlin in the chest. (Catlin later concluded, very analytically, that it was a random round.) The impact of the round felt like a blow from a sledgehammer, and spun Catlin around, knocking him to the ground. As he struggled to rise, he realized that his right side was paralyzed. Shot through the right lung, Catlin felt no pain, only annoyance that he could not continue to exercise command.

The Belleau Wood hunting preserve was a tangle of dense vegetation, rock outcrops, and isolated buildings, shelled into a nearly impenetrable tangle of debris. (USMCHD)



Captain Laspierre dragged the larger Catlin to the shelter of a shallow communications trench nearby. Catlin was bleeding internally, but little could be done until the surgeon arrived. Then the enemy began another gas and high-explosive barrage. The men put Catlin's mask on him, which was the beginning of a long struggle to breathe with a lung full of blood and a stifling mask over his face. Hours later Catlin began the arduous eight-hour journey by stretcher-bearer and ambulance to Hospital Number 2 in Paris.

Major Benton W. Sibley's 3/6 met with limited success but forced its way into the forest, amid hand-to-hand fighting. Inside the forest the Marines improvised, and the infiltration tactics that came naturally to them from expeditionary fighting were much like the "innovative" enemy storm tactics. Corporal Joseph E. Rendinell (97th Company, 3/6) was instructed to scout German positions stealthily in the wood, sending runners back to advise his commander of what he found. Units could then attack specific objectives rather than rushing blindly into the forest. Like other Marines, Rendinell described attacking German positions from the side and rear, stalking German soldiers. In some cases small groups attacked the sides and rear of German machine guns that were firing on other Marines still coming across the fields. At 2100hrs Sibley reported that his men had secured the lower edge of the wood. Engineers were sent in to help secure positions, and the fighting continued through the night.

Silverthorn had been shot in the kneecap in the open fields, and made his way back to the aid station. Tagged for evacuation, he instead grabbed a stretcher and another Marine, and went back to search for a badly wounded comrade. By the time he found him at about 2300hrs, the man was dead. One

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BELLEAU WOOD, JUNE 6, 1918

Belleau Wood, June 1–26, 1918 was a defining battle in the history of the US Marine Corps. The densely forested, rocky hills had been shelled into an alien landscape of gas-saturated, splintered debris. The Marines quickly fell back on previous experience of fighting by infiltration, much like the "innovative" German late-war *Sturmtruppe* tactics, and frequently attacked German positions from the flank or rear. Here Marines have overrun a German heavy machine-gun position. Machine-gunners were much hated by the infantry of both sides, and in the words of one Marine "never taken prisoner by either side." In the background other Marines have taken prisoner the supporting German infantry.



sergeant named Patterson made repeated trips into the fire-swept fields to rescue wounded. When he returned from his last foray, he sat down on the edge of a foxhole. Struck in the throat by a random shell fragment, he died nearly instantly.

The French corps commander was pressing Brigadier-General James A. Harbord, the Army officer in charge of the 4th Brigade, for news of success. In one last spasm Harbord ordered Major Thomas Holcomb's 2/6 and the reserve 83rd Company from Sibley's 3/6 to take Bouresches and its railway station. The brunt was borne by the 96th Company, supported by machine guns. Receiving orders to attack in 20 minutes, the battalion was double-timed into position, and Second Lieutenant Clifton B. Cates of the 96th Company recalled not knowing his objective, or where he was going. The company commander was immediately mortally wounded. Cates was struck on the helmet and knocked unconscious, and when he regained consciousness he could not fit his helmet back on because of a huge dent.

Cates staggered over to where some Marines were sheltered in a ravine. Gathering as many men as he could, Cates and his scratch force pushed into Bouresches, fighting their way along the streets. The battered company finally secured the village, but with only 21 surviving effectives Cates could position only four outposts to hold the town. By runner Cates dispatched a message to division: "I have only two men out of my company and 20 out of some other company. We need support, but it is almost suicide to try and get it here as we are swept by machine gun fire and constant barrage is on us. I have no one on my left and only a few on my right. I will hold."

Private James R. Scarborough (83rd Company, 3/6) had stumbled over a fallen Marine. Bullets ripped through his knapsack as he fell, cutting one of the suspender straps. Then a tremendous blow caused him to black out momentarily. Groping to find the wound, he discovered that a bullet had torn through the rim of his helmet, jerking it back and stunning him.

Still dazed, Scarborough looked up to see his section leader, Corporal Collier, standing over him. Collier pulled Scarborough to his feet and told him to get moving. Disoriented, Scarborough stumbled back toward where the attack had started from, then – embarrassed – reoriented himself and resumed his advance. Catching up to Collier, Scarborough grabbed him by the shoulder, but stumbled backward with Collier on top of him. As he started to apologize, Scarborough saw the hole in Collier's chin. His lower face was a gory mess of blood, teeth and bone. Collier was dead.

Fortunately for Cates, Captain Randolph T. Zane's 79th Company arrived in the nick of time, and Cates at last thought they could hold the town against the inevitable German counterattack. In fact, for three more days the two companies held the town against increasingly frenetic German attacks.

Despite their heroics, by nightfall the Marines had only a tenuous hold on the margins of the forest and on Bouresches, but the effort to capture the small railway station outside Lucy-le-Bocage had failed. It was the single bloodiest day in the history of the Corps to date, with more casualties than in its entire previous history.

Don Paradis was acting as a runner, and he and numerous other runners spent the long night darting to and fro across the wheat fields littered with dead and dying.

On June 7 both sides largely licked their wounds, but there was intense German high explosive and poison gas shelling of Marine positions, and

counterattacks against the Marines in Bouresches and Belleau Wood proper. The Germans successfully reinforced their positions in Belleau Wood.

Renewed attacks on June 8 failed to make significant gains, though small bands of Marines penetrated deep into the forest. These bands were ordered to withdraw. By this time the Germans had brought up heavy artillery, shelling the Marines.

Ordered into reserve, First Lieutenant Louis F. Timmerman Jr. mustered the 19 survivors of his platoon from the 83rd Company; he had lost 31 men in a few days, but consoled himself with the thought that most were probably only wounded.

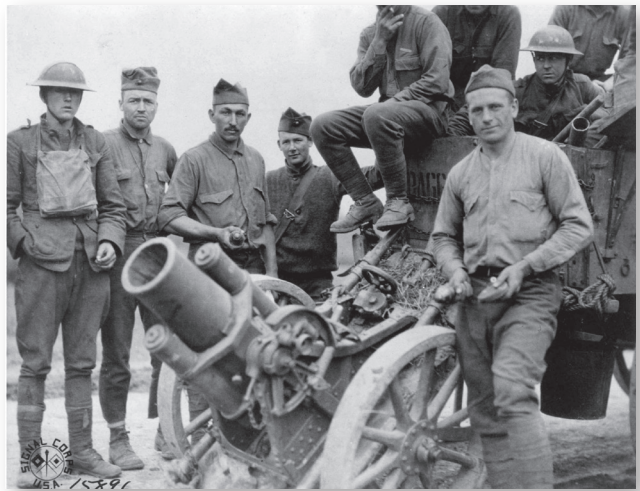
In the predawn hours of June 10 Allied heavy artillery deluged the forest. The 80th Company, 2/6, walked into a hornets' nest; the enemy held fire until point-blank range, driving them back. Other units made it into the wood, and fighting continued through the night, with heavy losses.

On June 11, 1/6 and 2/5 attacked the center of Belleau Wood, and the enemy retaliated with massive artillery fire: high explosive, mustard gas, and a vomiting agent designed to limit the usefulness of gas masks. The attacks continued to be ragged and poorly coordinated. At virtually the last moment Lieutenant-Colonel Wise of 2/5 was reinforced by the 23rd and 77th Machine Gun Companies of the 6th Machine Gun Battalion, but received last-minute orders that negated all his careful attack plans.

Wise thought that all their prior training had failed to prepare them for this kind of fighting, stalking and killing at close range, and that raw courage and mental toughness alone carried them through. When his battalion was well inside the wood, Wise went forward. In front of each German machine-gun position lay scattered Marine corpses, but Wise bitterly observed that there were few dead Germans. He came upon one such machine-gun position camouflaged behind a brush pile. Several dead Marines lay in front of it. The machine-gunners had worked their slaughter until the last possible moment, then threw up their hands and cried "*Kamerad!*" in surrender. Snipers had slain other Marines, and Germans had played dead to shoot Marines from behind.

The Germans did suffer. One private recorded that only a quarter of his company survived the day, and the attack by the "terribly reckless fellows." Wise's battalion had been badly cut up, and veered off course toward the east, but it had broken the German defenses on the southern margin of the wood. Clearly the various battalions could no longer function with such massive casualties. Replacements were fed into the meat-grinder in wholesale lots, drafts from the 5th Marine Brigade, and green men freshly arrived in France.

By June 12 the Marines had captured most of the hill mass, but their hold was still precarious. On June 13 the Germans struck back supported by the artillery of three divisions, and nearly succeeded in recapturing Bouresches. Then the Marines counterattacked. In one attempt to reinforce Marine positions, the 96th Company, 2/6, was sighted in the open by German observers:



Survivors of the Marine Brigade with a German *Minenwerfer* heavy mortar captured near Belleau Wood. (USMCHD)



The savage hand-to-hand fighting in Belleau Wood took place in a shattered, gas-impregnated, almost otherworldly landscape. (Artist SGT Tom Lovell, courtesy National Museum of the Marine Corps)

“During an intense enemy bombardment with high explosive and gas shells which wounded or killed many members of the company, G/Sgt [Gunnery Sergeant] Stockham, upon noticing that the gas mask of a wounded comrade was shot away, without hesitation, removed his own gas mask and insisted upon giving it to the wounded man, well knowing that the effects of the gas would be fatal to himself. He continued with undaunted courage and valor to direct and assist in the evacuation of the wounded, until he himself collapsed from the effects of gas, dying as a result thereof a few days later.” (From Stockham’s Medal of Honor citation)

The relentless German attack continued until June 14, but the American 23rd Infantry had extended its lines west into the outskirts of Bouresches, narrowing the Marine front and freeing units to continue the attack into the wood proper. But the Brigade had been badly mauled, and on June 16 and 17 was relieved by the Army’s 7th Infantry, although the soldiers were placed under the tactical command of Marine Colonel Wendell C. Neville. For four days the 7th Infantry

battered at the German positions, with heavy losses. The French III Corps had now assumed responsibility for the area, and relentlessly pressed Neville to attack and secure the forest; the 7th Regiment’s officers complained about their attack orders.

On June 22 the Marine Brigade was back in the wood, and the next day resumed the attack, suffering fearsome casualties. The III Corps agreed to commit additional artillery, and from 0300 until 1700hrs on June 25 heavy artillery pounded the remaining German positions. Close on the heels of the barrage, the Marines and Army machine-gun units swept over the surviving German positions. When repeated German counterattacks failed in the morning hours of June 26, the Marines captured over 500, and Major Maurice Sherrer reported “Woods now U. S. Marine Corps entirely.”

On July 1 Army troops retook the village of Vaux, halfway between Bouresches and Chateau-Thierry. The Paris–Metz highway was now relatively safe.

The butcher’s bill was heavy. Lieutenant-Colonel Wise’s battalion was typical. He had left Courcelles on May 31 with 965 men and 26 officers. He now had 350 men and six officers; 615 men and 19 officers were dead, wounded, or missing.

CASUALTY

Correspondent Floyd Gibbons wrote a lengthy and graphic description of his experiences as a casualty of the Belleau Wood fighting. Struck by three machine-gun bullets that penetrated his right arm, shattered his left shoulder



The first stage of a badly wounded Marines' evacuation was on a stretcher usually carried by four men. (USMCHD)

blade, ripped out his left eye and inflicted a compound skull fracture, Gibbons lay exposed to machine-gun fire for three hours in an oat field. Fearing gangrene or tetanus, he struggled to raise his mutilated face out of the dirt by putting his British gas mask case, carried on his chest, under his head. The motion, and the cries and writhing of a wounded Marine nearby, attracted the further attention of the German machine-gunners. He "watched the bullets rip apart the young man's body, buttons and parts of his uniform flying off, 'til finally he lay still." Gibbons pulled his British gas mask case out from under him and replaced it with the thinner French version – anything to reduce the target he offered the ruthless enemy machine-gunners.

After nightfall a companion helped Gibbons stagger a mile to the battalion aid station. There was not even enough water to wash his wounds, so Gibbons' head and dangling eyeball were crudely bandaged, and escorted by a friend he was sent walking down the road to the rear. Gibbons eventually caught a ride in a Ford ambulance that bounced across shell craters in the darkness to a clearing station in a wrecked church, where he was again examined, then loaded into an empty ammunition truck with no springs for another rough ride to Military Base Hospital Number 1. Gibbons graphically described the suffering inflicted upon men with serious wounds and broken bones as the truck jostled them across rough terrain. The driver tried to make the ride as easy as possible, but finally gave up and sped to the rear. Later in the day – after others believed more likely to survive had been treated – Gibbons was finally anesthetized and operated upon to remove his wrecked eyeball and repair his skull.

Men too grievously wounded to return to the fighting were evacuated to the United States. For the less seriously injured, a period in a convalescent hospital followed. Private Robert U. Neal (45th Company, 3/5) was later wounded at Soissons when a large piece of shrapnel ripped through his

The wounded Marine's first stop was the battalion aid station established behind the front line, this one below a rock outcrop near Belleau Wood. (USMCHD)



legs. Neal described a convalescent ward with a library, piano and pool table, supplies for writing letters, occasional movies, “human” food, and for once a good dry bunk. But in typical Marine Corps fashion he was broke, since neither the pay system, nor mail delivery had found him. He was also missing his toiletry kit, lost when he was wounded, and would have to buy a replacement from his own pocket when his back pay finally arrived.

THE BELLEAU WOOD CONTROVERSY

Two American correspondents accompanied the Army 7th Machine Gun Battalion in its valiant stand at Chateau-Thierry but, because of AEF censorship policy, their story was spiked, never to see print. One of the reporters, Wilbur Forrest, wrote that days later the AEF senior censor, an Army major under heavy pressure from civilian correspondents who wanted to distribute some news of Americans fighting a desperate battle, caved and allowed the word Marine to be released in a dispatch from Belleau Wood. In the ensuing clamor the Marine Brigade was – in the public mind – credited not only with its actions at Belleau Wood, but the entire defensive action around Chateau-Thierry, though in reality no Marines fought at Chateau-Thierry proper.

This newfound recognition came at a price. Although the error had been the Army censor’s, Army leadership felt their sacrifices had been slighted, and that the Marines were glory-hounds. Future Army leaders (many of them Pershing’s protégés) would go to extraordinary lengths to assure that Army troops would not serve under Marine commanders, and that no Marines would serve in Europe in World War II. The Holland Smith versus Ralph Smith controversy on Saipan in 1944 further poisoned relations. A measure of the rancor was that when Army Lieutenant-General Simon Bolivar Buckner was killed in action on Okinawa in 1945, it was discovered that he had left secret instructions that Marine Corps Major-General Roy Geiger was to succeed him. Determined that no Marine would lead Tenth Army, the Army Chief of Staff dispatched a more senior officer, Army Lieutenant-General Joseph Stilwell, from Washington via a relay of fast aircraft, only to arrive after the fighting had ended.

The undeniable valor of Marines in future conflicts, and the relentless churning of the Corps’ public relations machinery as it fought for institutional survival after both World Wars, would only add to the rancor. The interservice rift would not be truly healed until the late 20th century when the distinction between soldier and Marine became a somewhat more friendly rivalry.

SOISSONS

The failed German offensive had pushed a huge U-shaped salient into the Allied front, its eastern shoulder held by the French

The next stage of evacuation was usually by horse-drawn or motor ambulance. The faces of these wounded Marines show a mix of strain and elation at having survived. (USMCHD)



at Rheims, and the western shoulder near Vierzy, southwest of Soissons. The 2nd Division's reward for a job well done would be yet more hard fighting to help eliminate this bulge. The division was sent back along the Marne River for a brief period to recuperate and absorb replacements. A few Marines were cleaned up and sent into Paris for a Fourth of July parade, and feted as the "saviors of Paris." The Germans, still desperate to defeat France before the arrival of more Americans, planned another offensive from the Marne Salient.

The French under Marshal Ferdinand Foch learned of the German plans, and the attacks were a total disaster. The Germans expected a French counteroffensive on Bastille Day, and when it did not materialize, shifted forces to the eastern side of the salient. Foch saw an opportunity to pinch off the huge salient with a combined French–British–American attack, and trap or destroy the stalled German forces. He managed to pull off an incredible rarity in World War I – a surprise attack.

Pershing offered up the American 1st and 2nd Divisions. Army Brigadier-General Harbord, who had commanded the Marine Brigade at Belleau Wood, was promoted to division command. Marine Colonel Wendell Neville was promoted to brigadier and given command of the 4th Brigade.

New orders would thwart the Marines' fantasies of liberty in Paris. On July 16 *camions* arrived and the Marines were ordered to board for an all-night road march. General Gerald C. Thomas (a gunnery sergeant at the time) later observed that "When they were traveling away from the front they walked, but when higher headquarters wanted them in a hurry, trucks would be found for them to ride."

At noon the next day the trucks dropped the Marines off, and after a four-hour rest they were told they would go into the attack at 0430hrs the next morning. As usual the kitchens were left behind and the men had no food but emergency rations, and little water. The final night march on foot to the jump-off line was a horror of drenching rain and mud as the Marines slogged along the roadsides, the road itself reserved for cavalry, horse-drawn artillery, logistics wagons, and something new to the Marines – French Renault tanks. Some units were deposited in the wrong places, and had to hike up to 15 miles (25km) to reach their assigned positions. Many Marines marveled at the huge concealed logistics dumps established in absolute secrecy.

The Marine commanders had learned lessons from Belleau Wood, few of them pleasant. First Lieutenant Elliot D. Cooke, the CO of 55th Company, 2/5 was aghast when told to leave one officer and 20 men behind. They would serve as a cadre to rebuild his company after the battle.

The July 18 Soissons attack was more poorly coordinated than the first day at Belleau Wood, if such a thing were possible. Arriving late at the line



The typical first step in treatment of poison gas casualties was to be stripped naked and showered. (USMCHD)

of departure the Marines double-timed directly into the attack, led by the French tanks. On the 4th Brigade front only the 5th Marines attacked; the 6th Marines were the Division reserve. In the chaos of poor or non-existent maps and few compasses, the Marines had vague instructions to “follow the barrage.” The Second Battalion had one map for the entire battalion, and Cooke achieved only a quick glance at it. To add to the complexity, the Marines were supposed to execute a right oblique movement to clear the way for the Moroccan Division to their left. Without a map, Cooke had instructions to execute the turn at Maison Neuve Farm – wherever that was.

When the Moroccans did not keep pace in the advance, 1/5 and 2/5 missed their landmarks and advanced across the Moroccans’ front, exposing themselves on three sides. Without maps, each scattered village looked much like another. What no one realized was that Vierzy sat in a valley – invisible to most of the advancing Marines. In the end, the regiment captured the wrong towns – Chaudun as well as Vierzy.

The Germans resisted with their usual tenacity. When the 66th Company, 1/5, was blocked by a particularly powerful strongpoint in the Viller-Cotterêts forest sector, Sergeant Louis Cukela crept around to the rear of the enemy and attacked one machine-gun position with the bayonet. Grabbing German grenades, he eliminated the remaining machine guns and drove off or captured the gunners. For his gallantry Cukela was commissioned and awarded both the Army and Navy Medals of Honor. The eccentric Cukela went on to become one of the Corps’ odd assortment of “characters” in the Banana Wars of the 1920s, eventually retiring as a major.

Another sergeant in the same company, Matej Kocak, attacked another enemy position single-handedly. “Sergeant Kocak went forward alone unprotected by covering fire and worked his way in between the German positions in the face of heavy enemy fire. Rushing the enemy position with his bayonet he drove off the crew. Later the same day, Sergeant Kocak organized French colonial soldiers who had become separated from their company and led them in attacking another machine gun nest, which was also put out of action.” (Navy Medal of Honor citation)

At nightfall intermixed Army and Marine units were ensconced in the valley around Vierzy, but the anticipated German counterattack never came.

In the predawn hours of July 19 the 6th Marines, delayed as engineers labored to clear the clogged roads of huge trees knocked down by the immense preparatory barrage, finally moved through the battered Army and Marine Corps regiments to continue the assault. The Marines were to be supported by artillery and tanks spread at 60-yard intervals. Private Albert J. Campbell (80th Company, 2/6) wrote that the Marines moved stealthily into the open fields and lay down to avoid observation. But when the tanks

G

BATTALION AID STATION, JUNE 6, 1918

The task of the two Navy commissioned officer surgeons and 20 enlisted Navy medical corpsmen attached to each battalion was to triage casualties, provide immediate treatment to those whom they thought could be saved, and prioritize evacuation. Anesthesia and surgery were provided only at rear-area hospitals. Here a surgeon tightens the special field-tourniquet strap while a corpsman restrains the patient. Although the Navy chaplain’s duties were primarily spiritual, he might be called upon to assist in treatment. In the background, walking wounded await orders to move to the rear, and orderlies – junior enlisted men from the battalion – wash down bloody stretchers.



advanced into the fields they drew a storm of artillery and machine-gun fire that destroyed or disabled almost all the tanks. The surrounding infantry were just collateral damage.

The attack staggered to a halt under the effects of ground fire, intense strafing by enemy aircraft, and artillery directed by aircraft. That night French troops relieved the 2nd Division. The Brigade had been savaged, suffered numerous casualties, but contributed to the beginning of the end for the German Army. From now on the Germans would only retreat.

In the aftermath of Soissons the Brigade was moved to a quiet sector for recuperation and to absorb more untried replacements. The numbers were inadequate, as the AEF now suffered from the same manpower shortages that afflicted the European armies as the carnage chewed up increasing numbers of men.

These sectors used for recuperation were what the French called *bon sectors*, and the Marines were informed in no uncertain terms that they were not to fire unless fired upon. The men enjoyed beer parties, mass bathing parties, and caught fish for fish fries (with grenades). The Marines could see outdoor lights, hear music, and smell food and beer from similar German parties.

ST-MIHIEL

The St-Mihiel Salient Offensive of mid-September 1918 was to be the first commanded by General Pershing, who now had 14 divisions (550,000 men) of the AEF, plus the French II Colonial Corps of four divisions (about 110,000 men) at his disposal. The ultimate goal was the capture of the fortified city of Metz, occupied by the Germans since early in the war. The salient that extended deep into Allied lines was a remnant of the fighting for Verdun that to some extent blocked Allied lateral communications, and was the last German lodgement on the banks of the Meuse.

The American-led operation was the prelude to a more general Allied offensive in late September, and Pershing was pressured into undertaking the offensive before his American First Army was truly ready. The French Colonial Corps would assault the nose of the salient to hold the Germans in place while the Americans pinched off the neck. Again, the now veteran but battered 2nd Division would play a major role, attacking the eastern shoulder of the salient, near their old rest area at Pont-à-Mousson, as part of the I Corps. Capture of communications centers like the village of Thiacourt, the 2nd Division objective, would help bottle up German forces in the salient. The fly in this ointment was that the Germans' four-year occupation had allowed development of a defense in depth.

The Americans marched at night, lying up in concealed camps and sleeping during the day. A rumor leaked out that the Americans should expect 100,000 casualties in the coming offensive. Replacements still dribbled in at the last moment, with some new men arriving too late to eat anything. Others caught up after their units were in action.

As usual, on the night of September 11 the rain fell in torrents on the men slogging through knee-deep mud or waiting in ready positions. At 0500hrs the 3rd Brigade led the assault, with the Marines following. The advance was rapid, and many Marines commented that a lot of time was spent "enjoying the show" and looking for souvenirs. In fact, despite having advance intelligence of Allied intentions, the Germans had been caught off balance.



In the more mobile warfare of late 1918, hasty trenches were the norm. The flimsy screen is intended only to prevent direct observation by the Germans. The man second from left has removed his jacket and is wearing a non-regulation sweater-vest. (USMCHD)

annihilated. He made sure his two bandoliers of ammo were slung to the front, and that his issue Bible and his heavy razor were on the front pockets of his blouse. "I was using all of the protection that I could think of."

At 0500hrs on October 3 the Germans launched a counter-barrage, and again communications and coordination failed miserably. Not until 0600hrs did Lieutenant James M. Sellers (Brannen's CO) receive orders to attack at 0555hrs as part of the first wave. His battalion was supposed to be the lead in a column of battalions with five others behind. The only thing that saved the Marines was the accuracy of their own tightly controlled rolling barrage. The Marines rushed in on its heels, sometimes catching the German machine-gunners still in their deep bunkers.

H

LATE WAR UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

As uniforms became unserviceable the Marines phased in the unpopular Army/AEF uniform to simplify logistics, and because the early forest-green uniforms were very similar in color to German uniforms. This figure wears the late-war uniform with the light marching or "short" pack that contained only essentials like emergency rations. He is wearing the American-made corrected English small box respirator gas mask. An entrenching shovel is attached to the knapsack, and every other man was supposed to carry the two-piece mattock (A), but it was actually less common. The metal filter canister of the gas mask was carried in a small carrier slung around the neck (B). The new Browning automatic rifle (C) and the Browning machine gun (D) replaced the Chauchat and Hotchkiss weapons respectively only in the final battles of the war. A variety of American-made grenades (E) replaced the previously used French models in the late war period. The 37mm M1916 trench gun (F) was a French-designed man-portable direct fire cannon. Despite its enormous weight (312 pounds/155kg) its high-explosive round was useful in eliminating fortified positions; the canister round was less often used.



A

B

C

E

D

F



A machine-gun section equipped with Browning guns loaned from the Army rests during the Blanc Mont offensive. The man at right has the distinctive tripod and cradle, and the ammunition carriers are draped with cloth ammo belts. (USMCHD)

Some got a bit carried away. Private John Kelly of the 78th Company “ran through our own barrage one hundred yards in advance of the front line and attacked an enemy machine-gun nest, killing the gunner with a grenade, shooting another member of the crew with his pistol and returned through the barrage with eight prisoners.” (Private John J. Kelly Navy Medal of Honor citation)

John H. Pruitt similarly “single-handed attacked 2 machine guns, capturing them and killing 2 of the enemy. He then captured 40 prisoners in a dugout nearby. This gallant soldier was killed soon afterward by shellfire while he was sniping the enemy.” (Private John H. Pruitt Navy Medal of Honor citation)

Matej Kocak of the 66th Company, 1/5, was not so fortunate. In another solo attack on a German machine-gun nest as at Soissons, he was spotted and riddled with bullets.

Carl Brannen grabbed a fine set of binoculars off the body of a German officer, casually slinging them around his neck. A short while later he was struck by several rounds from a machine gun, but the binoculars and bandoliers took the brunt. Ten or so of his own rifle rounds detonated, and the binoculars and bandolier caught fire. Unhurt, except for a cut lip and scratches, Brannen discarded the burning bandolier, but put the binoculars back around his neck when they stopped burning.

The Americans had seized positions on the crest of the ridge, but lacked instructions to pursue. They chivvied the retreating enemy with long-range rifle fire, but were hard pressed since formations on both flanks had not carried their sectors.

By 0815hrs the 5th Marines and the Army’s 9th Infantry moved up to exploit the success. The reserve 5th Marines was left to fill in the exposed flanks of the division as best it could, tying in with Army units on the ridge. At nightfall the division held a deep funnel-shaped salient onto the German-held ridge.

Further attacks by both the 5th and 6th Marines on October 4 gained some ground but both units were pulled back since the division flanks were still too exposed. The 2nd Division was soon relieved by the 36th Division; it was needed for the long-anticipated Meuse–Argonne Offensive. Integration of more replacements, a quick meal of fried steaks (a rarity) and they were again hastily loaded onto trucks – never a good sign.

MEUSE–ARGONNE

The German Army was battered and staggering. While the 2nd Division hammered at Blanc Mont the bulk of the AEF had, since September 26, struggled in the great offensive. The Germans had rushed replacements in to forestall any breakthrough along the Hindenburg Line toward the Allies' main goal, the railway complex at Sedan. The Americans were exhausted, racked with dysentery and thirsty – in retreat the Germans had poisoned most of the wells. It was some of the roughest terrain on the Western Front: steep ridges, poor roads, and high ground for German artillery observers. In a fourth attack on November 1 the 4th Brigade was tasked to advance in columns of battalions, break the Hindenburg Line, seize Barricourt Heights 4 miles (6.5km) beyond, and then allow the 3rd Brigade to pass through. The division was reinforced by all the machine-gun units of the 42nd Division, and the entire remaining US tank force – 15 tanks.

Because of limitations of period cameras, actual combat photos like this one taken in the Meuse–Argonne Offensive are rare. (USMCHD)





Infantry advances under fire in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. (USMCHD)

At 0330hrs on November 1 the greatest American artillery barrage of the war commenced, including over 250 machine guns “beating” the terrain with indirect fire. The Americans also turned a German tactic to lay a trap. The Americans withdrew from their frontline positions, knowing the German machine-gunners would try to infiltrate to the American side of the barrage. Instead they were caught in the heart of the carnage.

The troops began to hear wild rumors – that peace talks were under way, that the German Army had mutinied and killed the Kaiser. Most dismissed them as wishful thinking.

By the night of November 10 the division was poised to cross the Meuse River in another cold, drenching rain. Carl Brannen wrote of trying to warm himself beside a burning German ammunition dump while engineers threw a pontoon bridge across the flooded river. Then “The troops carried their equipment, ammunition, and rifles in their hands so as to have a better chance to get out if they made a wrong step in the darkness” on the bridge.

The next morning the men were suddenly ordered not to fire another shot. The war was over. Soon men were walking in the open, and warming fires “unthinkable before” sprang up everywhere. The division spent a week cleaning, integrating replacements, and resting.

VICTORY MARCH AND OCCUPATION DUTY

On November 17 the Marine Brigade began the 150-mile (242km) trek through Belgium and Luxembourg; they were poorly prepared for such a lengthy march and lacked adequate food. The march was horrific. British boots issued on the eve of the march were so poorly made that men marched barefoot. An average march of 15 miles (25km) took all day.

The advancing Marines carefully kept contact with the German rearguards. Brannnen noted: "While they would be leaving a village on one side, we were entering on the other." Liberated civilians lavished carefully hoarded food and drink on the Marines. They also waved homemade American flags "not accurate on the number of stars or stripes, but we knew their intentions were right." But Warren Jackson noticed the emaciated carcasses of innumerable German Army horses along the roadside: "Some people had evidently been hungry. There were carcasses with a hindquarters cut out." Under the terms of the armistice the Marines crossed the Rhine on December 13 after a series of brutal marches in the bitter weather.

Winter occupation of the Rhineland was easy duty, but cold and miserable, made worse by food shortages, boredom, the global influenza epidemic, and collapsing morale. Memoirs record the usual disjoint between ranks: officers wrote fulsomely of the joy of drilling their troops, while enlisted men griped about the senseless drill and field maneuvers in the miserable weather. Fraternization with civilians was limited, but most got along well. Several memoirs did mention being told that Germany was not fairly defeated, and would one day get even with the French.

Less fortunate Marines were sent to Russia, then in the throes of civil war.

The dead were exhumed and their remains shipped home if families desired it. Others were reburied in American military cemeteries in France.

This grainy photo shows a machine-gun section, equipped with the now standard Browning machine guns, in the Meuse-Argonne. (USMCHD)





An infantry company at a halt during the march into German-occupied Belgium. The weather later turned cold, rainy, and miserable. (USMCHD)

In its headlong race to dismantle its postwar military, the country treated its veterans no better than after prior wars. Most returned to resume their civilian lives as best they could, with varying degrees of success. The Great Depression was not kind to many.

Treatment of the survivors of horrific wounds led to advances in plastic surgery and prosthetic limbs, but for the “shell-shocked” – victims of post-traumatic stress – no effective treatment existed. Sergeant Daniel E. Morgan, a typical victim, eventually wandered home to the coalfields of his youth.



Because of its maritime connection, the Marine Brigade was assigned to occupation of the Rhineland and the Rhine River Patrol. (USMCHD)



There he found that the mine whistles “nearly drove me mad and sent me seeking shelter. How I long to run anywhere to get away from the shrieking whistles that sounded so much like high explosive shells in flight, tearing their way through the atmosphere on their murderous missions.”

Corporal William Manchester was reduced to private and discharged with the callous notation “Not likely to become a public charge” because of his withered and useless right arm. Warren R. Jackson participated in a veteran’s fantasy; he marched in the August 12, 1919 victory parade in Washington, but found his discharge the next day “lacked the exhilaration expected.”

After the war many bodies were exhumed and repatriated to the United States for reburial. (USMCHD)

MUSEUMS, COLLECTIONS, AND REENACTMENTS

The premier collection of Marine Corps Great War material is the National Museum of the Marine Corps located in Triangle, Virginia. This modular museum is privately funded, but displays the Marine Corps History Division’s extensive collections of artifacts. It devotes one gallery to World War I, with extensive displays of Marine Corps and captured German weapons, vehicles, aircraft, and artillery. Life-size dioramas (complete with sound effects), a film, and recorded narratives in the words of Marines and Navy medical corpsmen complete the experience. An overview of the gallery can be viewed online at http://www.usmcmuseum.com/Exhibits_WorldWarI.asp.

The primary repository of graphic materials and documents related to World War I is the National Archives II in College Park, Maryland.



TOP LEFT
"Iron Mike," the statue commemorating the Marines of the Great War, now stands outside the National Museum of the Marine Corps. (Author's collection)



TOP RIGHT
The National Museum of the Marine Corps displays the premier collection of Marine Corps History Division artifacts, and includes many in life-size dioramas like this one depicting a war correspondent, with armband, attached to the Marine Brigade. (Author's collection)

The infiltration tactics utilized by the Marines in Belleau Wood often resulted in attacks on the rear of German defenses, as described by Corporal Joseph Rendinell of the 97th Company. (Artist Frank Earle Schoonover, courtesy National Museum of the Marine Corps)





The first museum at Belleau Wood was built by an eccentric local farmer from the nearby village of Bussiares in the 1920s, but razed by the Germans during the World War II occupation. Today the Musée de la Memoire de Belleau in Belleau Village preserves artifacts and archives of the fighting. Nearby is the American Aisne–Marne Cemetery, with outdoor displays and a chapel built amid the old trenches and shell craters. For additional information see <http://www.american-remembrance.com/>. The site also provides information on the larger nearby cemeteries and monuments to the larger Chateau-Thierry battle.

Established AEF reenactor groups include the Great War Association (<http://www.great-war-assoc.org/>), and the Great War Historical Society (<http://www.gwhsww1.org/>). At the time of this writing the latter included the 66th Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1392777934297692/>) under formation.

An astonishing amount of Great War memorabilia remains in private hands, and frequently appears on online auction sites. The potential or inexperienced collector should be extremely wary, since many of these items are reproductions. Other items, particularly the pack systems, entrenching tools, and various models of the M1903 rifle, remained in service through the early days of World War II and the potential buyer should be aware of these later-production items that are not particularly rare.

The US government maintains the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery and Memorial Chapel, and the French government the Musée de la Memoire de Belleau which tells the story of the battle, with interpretive displays, artifacts, and archives. (Romain Cansiere)



The relentless attack across the grain fields surrounding Belleau Wood in the face of murderous machine-gun fire was one of the defining events in Marine Corps history. All recruits are taught Gunnery Sergeant Dan Daly's rallying cry to his men: "Come on you sons-of-bitches! Do you want to live forever?" (Artist SSGT Kristofer J. Battles, courtesy National Museum of the Marine Corps)

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GLOSSARY

Boot camp	basic training for recruits in the US Navy and Marine Corps. The origin of the term is obscure, with some stating that “boots” are the lowest, dirtiest item in the military inventory. Other research suggests it originated as a derogatory term for a sissified sailor – one who wore rubber boots in cold, wet weather.
Fluoroscopy	an early type of real-time X-ray, viewed like a television screen.
Leave (“furlough” in Army usage)	the Marine’s vacation time.
Liberty	a brief authorized absence, from a period of hours to a few days, from the duty station. Liberty does not count against the Marine’s <i>leave</i> .
Monkey meat	from the French <i>viande de singe</i> . The most common French canned corned beef ration was Madagascar brand <i>boeuf bouilli</i> ; cynical <i>poilus</i> reasoned that since there were likely more monkeys than cattle in Madagascar, it was more probably canned monkey. (Actually Madagascar has no monkeys.) This is the origin of the British “bully beef.”
<i>Poilu</i>	a French infantryman; in French literally “hairy one,” from their beards and large mustaches.
Salvation Army	a religious and charitable order founded in 1865, organized on military lines, with spouses serving together. Provides disaster and war relief services.
Seabag	the duffel; a large canvas sack with a carrying strap and hasp for locking, used for long-distance travel or storage.
Slumgullion	a thick stew of no specific recipe that used whatever ingredients the erratic supply system or local civilian sources provided. A major complaint was that when cold (which was often) a thick crust of congealed grease formed on the top.
Sterno (TM)	a trademarked brand name commonly used as generic for any jellied denatured alcohol. It burns with a slow, hot, smokeless flame.

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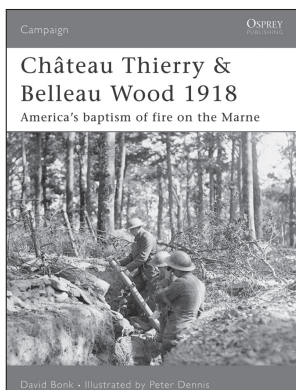
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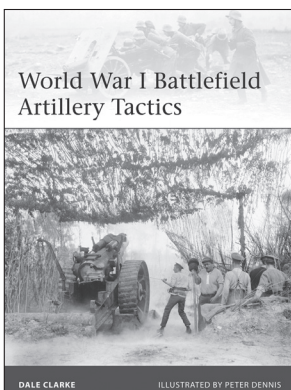
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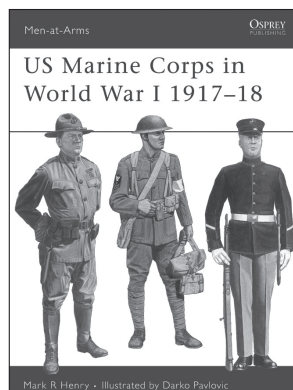
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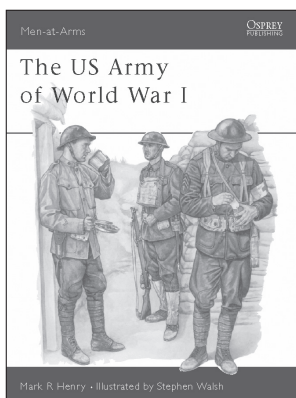
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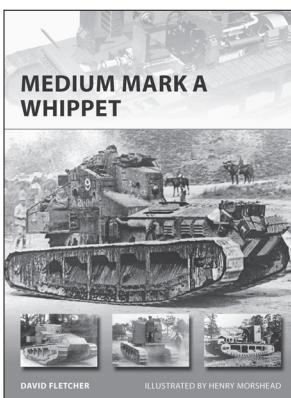
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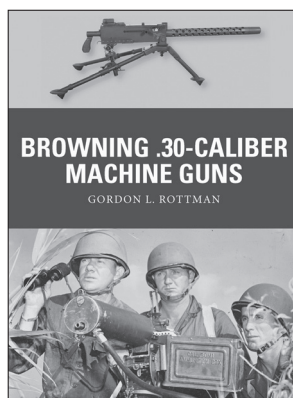
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