

C O N T E N T S

- Acknowledgments ix
List of Abbreviations xi
- 1 Pershing's Crusaders: The American Soldiers of the Great War 1
 - 2 "I Want You for the U.S. Army": Motivations, Joining Up, and
Conscription 8
 - 3 "Oh! How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning": Life in Training
Camps 47
 - 4 Learning "The Savage Game": Training in the United States 82
 - 5 Of "Canned Willie," "Slum," and Hard Bread: The Doughboy's
Food 100
 - 6 Of "Tin Hats," "Little Tanks," and Entrenching Tools: The
Doughboy's Clothing and Equipment 124
 - 7 Be It Ever So Humble: The Doughboys' Shelter 146
 - 8 "Good-Bye Broadway, Hello France": Life on Board a Ship for
France 159
 - 9 "The French They Have Their Customs Rare, Parlez-Vous":
The Doughboys and the French and British People 180
 - 10 Of Trench Guns, Sho-Shos, and Trench Knives: The Doughboy's
Weapons 211
 - 11 "Oh, the Army, the Army, the Democratic Army, . . . the Jews, the
Wops, the Dutch and Irish Cops": Ethnic Soldiers and African
Americans in the AEF 232
 - 12 The Ninety-Day Wonders and Sam Brownes: The Officers and
NCOs of the AEF 260
 - 13 After England Failed: Tommies, Poilus, and the American
Soldiers 281

- 14 Harsh Schoolmasters, Devious Huns, and Dejected Prisoners:
The Doughboys and the German Soldiers Meet 305
- 15 Training and Trenches in France 325
- 16 “Mother, Take Down Your Service Flag, Your Son’s in the S.O.S.”:
Life in the Services of Supply and the Rear Area 349
- 17 “How ’Ya Gonna Keep ’Em Down on the Farm, after They’ve Seen
Paree?”: Sex, Sin, and Temptation in the AEF 369
- 18 “Sky Pilots,” “Holy Joes,” and the Doughboy’s Religion 407
- 19 The Longest Hours: Preparing for Battle 431
- 20 The Big Show: The Doughboy in Combat 448
- 21 “The Cavalry, the Artillery, the Lousy Engineers”: The
Artillerymen, Tankers, Combat Engineers, and Signalmen
in Battle 496
- 22 Restless Young Men with Guns: Morale and Discipline 516
- 23 CC Pills, Going West, and the Hen-Flew-End-Ways: The Sick, the
Wounded, and the Dead 566
- 24 “And We’ll All Go Back ’Cause It’s Over, Over Here”: The
Armistice, Occupation Duty, and Returning Home 599
- Notes 635
- Bibliography 709
- Index 739



A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

To some extent, this book began on Christmas Day 1965, when my parents, Nan and Larry Faulkner, gave me a REMCO Doughboy playset. That playset, with its SPAD fighter plane, tank, armored car, cannon and five soldiers, sparked a lifelong fascination with the Great War. I thank my parents for encouraging my love of history and for this really fun toy. I am also indebted to a man I never met but wish that I could have: the late great Bell Irvin Wiley. His book *The Life of Johnny Reb* was the first work of serious history that I truly loved. In fact, I admired the book so much that as a young southerner I even put aside my ingrained antipathy for all things northern and read its successor, *The Life of Billy Yank*. Wiley's works opened for me that wide and imaginative world built around the question: "What was it like to have lived in the past?" It was his unflinching efforts to capture the experiences of the Civil War's soldiers that most inspired me to try to do the same for their Doughboy sons and grandsons.

This book has been over twenty years in the making, and it would not have been possible without the assistance of numerous talented colleagues and scholars. In two decades of squirreling away soldier accounts, documents, and records, I have racked up a number of personal and professional debts to those who have assisted me in this project. I am grateful to Emory Thomas, John Morrow, and Charles Sanders for their efforts to guide a headstrong army officer toward the scholarly exploration of history. Robert Dougherty, Lee Wyatt, Gian Gentile, Ty Seidule, and the other members of the United States Military Academy Department of History offered mentorship, access to sources, and models of emulation for how to be a "practicing historian." For fourteen years I have had the privilege of serving with the talented members of the Department of Military History, United States Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. These comrades, most notably James Willbanks, Scott Stephenson, Maryln Pierce, John Suprin, Chris Gabel, Sue Rosell, and Sean Kalic, have offered me unflinching friendship, support, and advice on this work and my other endeavors.

I am grateful for the assistance of all of the dedicated librarians, archivists, and researchers who had a hand in this project. Timothy Nenner and Mitch Yockelson offered me wise counsel and suggestions during nu-

merous visits to the National Archives. The hard work and consideration of David Keough of the U.S. Army Military History Institute; Jonathan Casey of the National World War I Museum and Liberty Memorial; Mike Browne, Kathy Buker, and Elizabeth Merrifield of Fort Leavenworth Combined Arms Research Library; and Sandra Reddish and Robert Smith of the U.S. Army Cavalry Museum were essential in bringing this work to fruition. I must also thank Mike Briggs and the staff of the University Press of Kansas for their assistance, patience, and understanding in getting *Pershing's Crusaders* into print. Given the talents of all those listed above, any errors in this book are purely my own.

I have spent over thirty-three years in and around the U.S. Army, and my time in the company of soldiers has certainly influenced this work. It is my hope that being in combat far from home, coping with the inanity that is the natural purview of military service, and fighting and training while tired, cold, and wet have given me important insights into the lives of the dough-boys. I am grateful to all of those with whom I have served for their dedication to the Republic and for teaching me about war and soldiering.

I am most thankful for my wife, Laura, and my children: Connor, Brenna, and Shelby. Their unconditional love and support means everything to me. I am most appreciative of my wife. Laura has always been my best sounding board and editor and has endured endless proofreadings of drafts, my addiction to purchasing World War I letters and ephemera, and my obsession with this book.



A B B R E V I A T I O N S

AEF GHQ	American Expeditionary Forces General Headquarters
Bde	Brigade
Bn	Battalion
CARL	Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS
Cav	Cavalry
CGSCSRP	Command and General Staff College Student Research Paper
Co	Company
Div	Division
DRL	Donovan Research Library, Fort Benning, GA
Emory	Robert W. Woodruff Library Special Collections, Emory University, GA
EN	Engineer
FA	Field Artillery
GO	General Orders
IG	Inspector General
IN	Infantry
MGB	Machine Gun Battalion
MDWW	<i>United States Medical Department in the World War</i>
MHIWWIS	U.S. Army Military History Institute World War I Veteran Survey
MP	Military Police
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NWWIM	National World War I Museum and Liberty Memorial, Kansas City, MO
PIO IN	Pioneer Infantry
QMC	Quartermaster Corps
Regt	Regiment
RG	Record Group
TN	Train
UGA	Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript collection of the University of Georgia
USACM	United States Army Cavalry Museum, Fort Riley, KS

- USAMHI United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA
- USMA United States Military Academy Library Special Collections, West Point, NY



University Press of Kansas

Pershing's Crusaders



University Press of Kansas



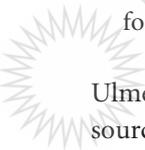
University Press of Kansas

Pershing's Crusaders

The American Soldiers of the Great War

Less than three weeks after the Armistice, infantry Captain Herman Ulmer pondered the difficulty of setting “down with any degree of accuracy a true and complete record of the events” of his weeks of fighting in the Argonne. He mused,

One might succeed in producing a mere compendium of bald, bare facts,—after the fashion of a railroad time table—but it would require a book, volumes of books, to present the manifold and conflicting impressions which those events carried with them . . . Our impressions of those days are not settled. They are not formed as a mold, to remain unchanging forevermore. We are constantly extracting from those momentous times as we live them over in our memories, entirely new sensations, hitherto unaroused, or unnoticed in the multiplicity of our emotions. Our impressions of today are not the ones of yesterday, and it is probable that tomorrow will bring still newer ones. The recollections of that period inspire a myriad of thoughts, and we might write for years and years and never finish recording them all.



Ulmer neatly encapsulated the innate problem of using historical sources and the writing of history. The task of the historian is to sift through the “manifold and conflicting impressions” of those in the past in order to present a coherent vision or interpretation of historical events to those in the present. *Pershing's Crusaders* hopes to avoid being a “mere compendium of bald, bare facts” by recounting, as comprehensively, detailed, and vividly as possible the daily lives,

experiences, and attitudes of the American soldier and Marine in the Great War.¹

This book attempts to be a “travel guide” to the soldiers’ experiences as well as an “anthropological” study of their world and their worldviews. As a “travel guide,” it takes the reader on a journey that starts with the doughboys’ induction into the service and then moves through their training in the United States, their voyage to Europe, their training in France, their experiences in combat, and finally to their return home and demobilization. The “anthropological” aspects of the work examines what motivated the soldiers to serve and accept the verdict of the draft, their attitudes toward military service, what they thought about their allies and enemies, and the material realities of the troops’ food, clothing, shelter, and weapons. It further explores the doughboys’ sex lives, religion, medical care, morale, and discipline. The book is intended to give the reader an understanding of what it meant to serve as a doughboy in the Great War. *Pershing’s Crusaders* seeks to make a human connection between the reader and the doughboys by giving them a deep and well-rounded appreciation of the soldiers’ opinions and day-to-day existence in and out of battle.

The American soldiers of the Great War lived at a key point in the nation’s history: the moment that the Republic emerged as a key player on the world’s stage and embarked on its first large-scale foreign war. The war caught the doughboy generation with one foot planted in the nineteenth century with its assumptions of manhood and military glory and the other foot in the modernity of the industrializing and urbanizing twentieth century. In their time, they experienced a number of important “firsts” in American history. As such, they were the first Americans to endure modern high-tech mass warfare. In only nineteen months, the U.S. Army went from being a pitifully small constabulary force built on rifles, horses, and a few field and coastal artillery pieces to a four-million-man heavy weight possessing all the fiendish implements of mass killing. This process was far from smooth and pretty, and many a doughboy would suffer as the army painfully learned of the monumental changes to warfare that the Great War had initiated. In the process of learning, the American soldiers pioneered a modern American “way of war” focused on massive firepower and global power projection and sustainment.

World War I was the first time that large numbers of Americans came into intimate contact with foreign peoples and cultures. Prior to the war, foreign

travel for Americans was still largely confined to sailors, international businessmen, and a handful of relatively well-off tourists. Over the course of the Great War more than two million Americans interacted with European civilization. These numbers dwarfed the number of soldiers who experienced far-off societies in America's previous foreign wars. The American armies with which Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott invaded Mexico in 1846 and 1847 and the force that William Shafter took to Cuba in 1898 were less than half the size of one of John Pershing's twenty-seven combat divisions. The total number of soldiers serving in the Philippine War, the largest overseas deployment of American forces prior to World War I, was roughly equal to the number of troops in one of Pershing's nine corps. As will be noted, it would be wrong to argue that the Americans returned home from France with a greater appreciation of multiculturalism. In fact, the doughboys' contact with Europe and the Europeans served mostly to strengthen their faith in American exceptionalism and in the inherent superiority of American society over all others. To a large extent the opinions of the returning doughboys helped to set the stage for the rest of the assertive, confident, and bumptious "American Century" and shaped postwar American society. It is not too much of a stretch to argue that the doughboys were the pioneers of the American sexual revolution. Furthermore, in a departure from the self-affirming American exceptionalism of their white comrades, African American doughboys returned home after having experienced a cultural model in France that offered a counterpoint to Jim Crow America. In many ways, these black soldiers were the vanguards of the civil rights movement.

The title of the book comes from a movie produced in 1918 by the War and Navy Departments in conjunction with the Committee on Public Information (CPI). The movie itself is a rather typical piece of the CPI's propaganda work, chronicling the dedication of the military, the hard work of the home front, and the menace of the Germans. It is the movie's poster (reproduced on the jacket cover) that is perhaps most revealing. On it, John J. Pershing on horseback leads a mighty and resolute host of American soldiers into battle. Although the poster is centered on Pershing, the American flag still occupies a suitably prominent and appropriately patriotic place above him. In the background a ghostly cadre of crusader knights watches over their modern-day doughboy counterparts as they embark upon their own holy and righteous mission. To a very large extent, this poster captures how the doughboys saw

themselves and their war. Based upon their own views of the United States and influenced somewhat by the unbridled patriotism and fear-mongering of the CPI, most soldiers believed in the justness of the nation's cause and viewed themselves as crusaders who came to "make the world safe for democracy" by rescuing Europe from the threat of brutal German militarism. The doughboys were generally idealistic and ideological soldiers battling to protect hearth and home and to defend American principles and values.²

Although his name is prominent in the title, John J. Pershing, as well as his senior subordinates, makes only fleeting appearances in the pages of this book. It is striking how little Pershing is mentioned by his soldiers in their diaries and letters home. The few times that the author has seen him referenced by the troops were mostly in accounts of post-Armistice inspections and parades. This work focuses on the lives of the American Army's enlisted men and junior officers. As such, Pershing and the officers of the American Expeditionary Forces General Headquarters (AEF GHQ) appear onstage only when their policies and directives influenced the daily lives of the doughboy. It is important to focus on the "common" soldier of the Great War for several reasons. One is the changing realities of the battlefield itself. The size and scale of combat in World War I meant that senior officers could no longer directly influence fighting at the lower end of the tactical scale. As combat became more dispersed and decentralized, it was the soldiers and officers at the battalion level and below that increasingly decided how, and even if, their superior commander's orders were carried out. Second, as war shifted from being a matter of a few days of battle to weeks and months of combat, the individual soldier's morale, discipline, training, and physical condition grew in importance. Thus, understanding what motivated the doughboys to fight and the moral and physical realities of their world leads to a deeper appreciation of the AEF's challenges during the war. Last, the attitudes and opinions of the doughboys offer a greater understanding of American society at the turn of the twentieth century.

Pershing's Crusaders humbly follows the tradition of Bell Irvin Wiley in his classic studies *The Life of Johnny Reb* and *The Life of Billy Yank*, and of Don Rickey's *Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay*, Edward Coffman's *The Regulars*, and Lee Kennett's *G.I.: The American Soldier in World War II*. These insightful books have captured the details of the lives of American soldiers with unparalleled depth, breadth, and sensitivity. This work also builds upon

the writings of Jennifer D. Keene, Chad Williams, Mark Meigs, Edward A. Gutiérrez, and other scholars of the American experience in the Great War. This book, however, seeks to present a more holistic and detailed exploration of the many facets of the doughboys' lives and attitudes than has been given in previous accounts.

Given the fact that over four million soldiers served in the American Army in World War I, it is no surprise that the doughboys had a variety of motivations for serving and a wide spectrum of opinion regarding military life, combat, their surroundings, and the people who they encountered during their time in uniform. Because of this multiplicity of personal experience, it is inaccurate to state that there was an "average doughboy." However, these varied masses of men did share certain commonalities of experience. After all, one of the goals of any military organization is to establish a great degree of uniformity in its ranks when it comes to things such as training, weapons, tactics, food, clothing, and shelter. The unchanging nature of war itself also created commonalities that united the doughboys. At its core, war has always been about killing, dying, fear, exertion, and privation. These realities were as well understood by an American soldier of World War I as they would have been by a Roman legionnaire of antiquity or as they would be by an infantryman of the twenty-first century. That being said, each war also has a subjective nature: the distinctive aspects of its time and place, such as technology and the period's societal realities, that make it unique from other conflicts in history. This work aims to illustrate how the doughboys experienced and understood both the objective and subjective realities of the Great War. When I use the understandably fraught terms "many doughboys," "a number of doughboys," or "most doughboys," it is only after I have seen comments on the subject in question reoccur time and time again in a wide variety of sources. Likewise, terms such as "some soldiers" or "a few soldiers" denote that similar comments of the topic in question arose in the sources, but were not, perhaps, the dominate opinion in the ranks.

To accomplish this holistic examination of the doughboys, *Pershing's Crusaders* rests upon materials drawn from a deep and varied array of primary sources. Wars in the era of mass literacy and growing military bureaucracies have produced a wealth of correspondence, firsthand accounts, and records that allow us to gain a deeper appreciation for the daily lives and experiences of the "average" soldier. The soldiers themselves were driven by a need to

keep in tenuous touch with those back home and to record what they knew would most likely be the most momentous times of their lives. In conducting research for this work, I read over five thousand soldier letters and diaries, including over nine hundred letters that I had amassed in a personal collection that I hope will ultimately reside in the National World War I Museum in Kansas City, Missouri. The book also draws heavily upon soldier surveys, memoirs, unit histories, and unpublished manuscripts that detail soldiers' time in uniform and upon articles in military newspapers and journals such as *Stars and Stripes*. Many of these sources reside in the U.S. Army Military History Institute (USAMHI). In the 1970s, the USAMHI began sending surveys to World War I veterans to collect their personal accounts of the conflict. The quality of the answers to the surveys themselves vary greatly, ranging from detailed recounting of the veteran's service to terse and unenlightening responses to the queries. Although age and memory perhaps made some of the facts in the surveys problematic, the USAMHI also asked the veterans to send any of their letters, diaries, or other written accounts that they wished to donate to the institute. These additional sources, generally written during or soon after the war, were a treasure trove of material.

As armies grew larger over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, their systems for training, supplying, and employing their soldiers became increasingly complex. This, in turn, created military bureaucracies that ran on an insatiable and varied diet of reports, studies, and investigations that kept the war machine lurching forward. The U.S. Army also sought to learn as much as possible from the conflict and scrutinized its wartime operations to prepare for future wars and further internal reforms. In addition to personal accounts, *Pershing's Crusaders* draws upon thousands of these official primary source materials to aid in drawing a nuanced portrait of the dough-boys' world. The vast majority of these sources came from Record Group 120, "Records of the American Expeditionary Forces," and Record Group 165, "Records of the War Department General Staff," in the National Archives annex at College Park, Maryland. The work also uses staff studies, lectures, and student papers written in the Army War College, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, and the U.S. Army Infantry School in the 1920s and 1930s.

To provide an immediacy and an intimacy that allow the work to make the key emotional human connection between the reader and the people of

the past, as much as possible the book uses quotations from writings of the doughboys to make its points. To remain true to the past and its participants, all quotations have been left with their original spelling and punctuation, and the limited additions to the original passages were made only for added comprehension and clarity. It should be noted that the book's subtitle could more accurately be "the American Soldier *and Marine* in World War I" as I have used accounts from Marines throughout the work. Although there were subtle differences in the experiences of soldiers and Marines during the Great War, in all substantive areas the commonalities of their lives far exceeded these minor points of dissimilarity. Although I have sought to be as comprehensive as possible in discussing the doughboys' lives, as with any work of this scale there are bound to be omissions or subjects that deserve greater coverage. The work is limited to those Americans serving in France, Belgium, and Germany and does not discuss those fighting in Russia or Italy. Due to the uniqueness of their experience, the book also does not discuss the lives of pilots and aircrews. When I knew that other authors have covered some subjects in more depth than I could here, for example, in the experiences of American women in uniform, I deferred to them. I hope that any other omissions that have been made in this work will be filled in by other historians in the future.

