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The American Army and the First World War

This is a definitive history of the American Army's role and performance during the First World War. Drawing from a rich pool of archival sources, David Woodward sheds new light on key themes such as the mobilization of US forces, the interdependence of military diplomacy, coalition war-making, the combat effectiveness of the AEF and the leadership of its commander John J. Pershing. He shows us how, in spite of a flawed combat doctrine, logistical breakdowns and the American industry's failure to provide modern weaponry, the doughboys were nonetheless able to wage a costly battle at Meuse-Argonne and play a decisive role in ending the war. The book gives voice to the common soldier through first-hand war diaries, letters and memoirs, allowing us to reimagine their first encounters with regimented military life, their transport across the sub-infested Atlantic to Europe, and their experiences both in and behind the trenches.

DAVID R. WOODWARD is Emeritus Professor of History at Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia

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To Frank Buckles
The last American veteran of
World War I who died on his farm in
West Virginia at age 110 in 2011.

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Preface

My commander-in-chief, Michael Watson, the capable and patient military history editor for Cambridge University Press, presented me with a formidable objective in late 2010: write a holistic history of the US Army's role in World War I that examined diverse social, political, diplomatic, and military themes. At times during the past two years I have felt as if I were one of Pershing's Doughboys attempting to navigate the unfamiliar and intricate German defenses at Meuse-Argonne. Indeed, their persistence was required to achieve my assigned mission.

Once the United States becomes a belligerent I address multiple themes, including the raising, training, transporting, and logistical support of a diverse force which included African and Native Americans as well as many other hyphenated Americans, coalition warfare (a new experience for the US military and political leadership), failures in war production, the interdependence of armed force and diplomacy, armed intervention in Russia, and the creation of an independent US force with its own strategical objectives. Although this narrative with its emphasis on leaders such as Pershing and Wilson generally embraces a top-down rather than a bottom-up approach, ordinary American soldiers are given their due by including their voices through the use of letters, memoirs, and other personal accounts. Finally, by placing the American Expeditionary Force's role within the larger war, I avoid examining American participation exclusively from a US perspective.

This account is much indebted to recent scholarship on America's involvement in World War I but it will stand on its own because of its holistic approach. I wish to recognize and express my considerable debt to the scholarship of the older generation of Great War historians, which includes Edward Coffman, Robert Doughty, David Trask, Robert Ferrell, Allan Millett, John Milton Cooper, Timothy Nenninger, Donald Smythe, Daniel Beaver, Holger Herwig, Russell Weigley, and Arthur Link, as well as the rapidly expanding new generation of scholars with their original insights, which includes David Stevenson, Mark

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Grotelueschen, Richard Faulkner, Robert Bruce, Elizabeth Greenhalgh, Douglas Johnson, Jennifer Keene, and Michael Neiberg.

I am also exceedingly grateful for the support of the Marshall University history department, especially its chair Daniel Holbrook and its administrative secretary Teresa Bailey, the latter having assisted, really mothered, the history faculty for almost two decades. The university library staff, especially members of Special Collections and Government Documents, generously gave of their time and the university administration provided me with office space following my retirement to work on this and other manuscripts. The West Virginia Humanities Council awarded me with a fellowship that supported archival research at the United States Army Military History Institute at Carlisle, Pennsylvania and elsewhere. I remain most appreciative of the advice and assistance that I received from staff members at Carlisle and elsewhere in both the United States and Great Britain. I owe a special debt to Edward Coffman, “Mac” to his friends, who reviewed the entire manuscript with his always astute and knowledgeable eye, sharing valuable insights with me. Any errors in fact or interpretation, of course, are my responsibility. Facets of this manuscript have previously been published in my *Trial by Friendship: Anglo-American Relations, 1917–1918*.

Finally and most importantly I express my appreciation to my wife and closest friend of over four decades, Martha Cobb Woodward, whose encouragement and sharp proof reading skills played a major part in bringing this manuscript to fruition.

Abbreviations

AEF	American Expeditionary Force
AFG	American Forces in Germany
AHEC	Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, Pa.
AUAM	American Union Against Militarism
AWOL	absent without leave
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
BL	British Library, London
CAB	Cabinet Papers, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial (British) General Staff
CPI	Committee on Public Information (United States)
CTCA	Commission on Training Camp Activities
<i>DAN</i>	<i>Détachement d'Armée du nord</i> (Northern Army Detachment)
DMO	Director of Military Operations
Doughboys	nickname for US soldiers in Europe; also called "Sammies"
FO	Foreign Office (British)
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
<i>GQG</i>	<i>Grand Quartier Général</i> (Supreme Headquarters of French Army)
IWC	Imperial War Cabinet (British)
IWM	Imperial War Museum, London
LHCMA	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London
LOC	Library of Congress, Washington, DC; also Line of Communications
MID	Military Intelligence Division (United States)

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NA	National Archives, Washington, DC; also The National Archives (formerly Public Record Office), Kew, United Kingdom
NAM	National Army Museum, London
NCO	non-commissioned officer
NLS	National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
<i>OHL</i>	<i>Oberste Heeresleitung</i> (Supreme Army Command)
OTC	Officer's Training Corps (United States)
<i>poilus</i>	nickname for French soldiers ("hairy ones")
POW	prisoner of war
<i>PWW</i>	<i>The Papers of Woodrow Wilson</i> , ed. Arthur Link, 69 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966–94)
RG	Record Group, National Archives, Washington, DC
ROTC	Reserve Officers' Training Corps
SOR	Services of the Rear
SOS	Services of Supply
SWC	Supreme War Council (inter-Allied body created late 1917)
Tommy	nickname for British soldier (from "Tommy Atkins")
U-boat	<i>Unterseeboot</i> (German submarine)
<i>USAWW</i>	Department of the Army, Historical Division, <i>United States Army in the World War, 1917–1918</i> , 17 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1948)
USMC	United States Marine Corps
WC	War Cabinet (British)
WIB	War Industries Board
WO	War Office records, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom
WP	War Cabinet papers, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom
WPC	War Policy Committee (British)
<i>WWIS</i>	<i>World War I Survey</i> (US Army Military History Institute)