

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cartographic Transcendence: Mapping the Process of Mourning in Great War Tourism Guidebooks

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Abstract

By the time the Great War reached an armistice in 1918, travel companies, publishers, and even tire manufacturers had compiled guidebooks for tourists interested in visiting the battlefields of the Western Front. Using the three-volume *Michelin Illustrated Guides to the Battlefields* (1920) as primary texts, this essay argues that the various maps embedded in these books were instrumental in converting American tourists into what David W. Lloyd would term “pilgrims” – those who would visit these hallowed war-torn sites and emerge from the experience with a greater level of spiritual transcendence. To this end, then, maps were facilitators of the mourning process, even framing or formatting the way in which surviving loved ones could express their grief to themselves and to the outside world. Once pilgrims arrived at the American cemeteries in Europe, they entered a space whose design was so geometrical and exact that it took on a remarkable resemblance to the very guidebook maps that had led them there. In achieving a 1:1 scale with the landscapes they represented, these maps offered a multivalent, transcendent experience whereby mourners could be emotionally and spiritually immersed in that hallowed terrain where their soldiers fell and would remain.

In the penultimate scene of Willa Cather’s Pulitzer-winning novel *One of Ours* (1922), Mrs. Wheeler learns that her son Claude has been killed on the Great War’s Western Front. As she absorbs the news alone in her parlor back in rural Frankfort, Nebraska, she looks to the map that she and her son consulted to track the conflict’s progress in the months and years before his deployment: “She had an hour alone, when there was nothing but him in the room, – but him and the map there, which was the end of his road. Somewhere among those perplexing names, he had found his place.”¹ The map not only reminds Mrs. Wheeler of the many times she and Claude were able to bond emotionally, but also that “[h]e died believing his own country better than it is,

¹Willa Cather, *One of Ours* (New York: Vintage, 1991; first published New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922), 369.

and France better than any country can ever be. And those were beautiful beliefs to die with.”² The novel then ends with housekeeper Mahailey’s assurance that Claude will be waiting for Mrs. Wheeler in due time “up yonder.” Hope in these final lines is embedded both in a map and in a sense of verticality, which for Mrs. Wheeler means “interstellar spaces,” but for Mahailey, a woman of deep love and simple pleasures, means a space “directly overhead, not so very far above the kitchen stove.”³

What happens from that point in the novel readers simply do not know. History tells us, however, that by 1919 American “Gold Star” families had the opportunity to request that the remains of their fallen soldiers be disinterred from foreign soil and shipped home at government expense. In an interwar period characterized simultaneously by “the intensity with which Americans memorialized their war dead” and by the “fractured and unsettled” way in which that memorialization unfolded,⁴ the choice of interment proved controversial, with most families deciding to repatriate, but with a sizeable minority deciding against. In total, around 46,000 soldiers were returned, while just over 30,000 remained in Europe.⁵

Given her awareness of her son’s love for France, Mrs. Wheeler probably would not have brought Claude home as his real-life analogue G. P. Cather, Willa’s first cousin, had been returned to Bladen, Nebraska after first being interred in two temporary graves near Cantigny, where he fell in May 1918. If anything, and with the financial means to do so, Evangeline Wheeler more than likely would have made the voyage to the Somme American Cemetery where Claude would have been permanently interred. Back at home, as surviving members of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) were demobilizing and reentering civilian life, the map in the parlor would stand in for the body that remained abroad.

Cather’s focus on maps throughout *One of Ours* is perhaps indicative of their deeper resonance in keeping the memory of a fallen soldier alive, especially if he were buried thousands of miles away. This essay addresses the role of tourist guidebook maps for those who grieved the loss of a Great War American soldier buried overseas. As historical sociologist Rafique Ahmad and cultural geographer Anne Hertzog assert, maps, itineraries, and other material items possessed a deeper, more resonant value for those who used them in the “effort of remembrance”:

The itinerary as a designed object – in the form of a “trail,” a brochure, a map, a signage – has its effects in “doing,” in the symbolic act of the “trail,” laying of wreaths, walking through the preserved war trenches and tunnels, or cycling through battlefields ... In other words, it can be argued that rituals, gestures, and performances of visitors and intermediaries at the memorials and along the “trail,” made possible through itinerary, act as intercorporeal

²Ibid., 370.

³Ibid., 371.

⁴Steven Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory: The First World War and American Remembrance, 1919–1941* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2014), 2, 3.

⁵For controversies surrounding the repatriation of Great War dead see Holly Fenelon, *That Knock at the Door: The History of Gold Star Mothers in America* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2012), 45–49. For the numbers of soldiers returned or kept in Europe, see *ibid.*, 49.

hinges through which visitors perceive, exchange, and share memories and meanings with each other.⁶

At the practical level, maps were the key link to this “intercorporeal” relationship uniting mourners and the personally sacred site where their loved ones fell or were buried, especially for American travelers, most of whom had never been to Europe before and likely would never return, given the expenditure in time, energy, and resources to get there in the first place.

But if Ahmad and Hertzog are correct, and as the historical record suggests, maps’ material effects were indeed emotionally resonant, sustaining the travelers before they took the trip and, perhaps, well after their return. In this sense, I argue, maps contributed to what Jay Winter has termed the “language of mourning” that ran alongside, and sometimes overlapped with, more conventional forms such as fiction, memoirs, plays, and poetry.⁷ As another such language, guidebook maps were facilitators of the mourning process, even framing or formatting the way in which surviving loved ones would express their grief to themselves and to the outside world.

Taking my cue from the ending of *One of Ours*, in which maps and verticality are intimately bound up with one another, I argue that maps offered griever what I call “cartographic transcendence,” which holds two interrelated implications. First, at the visual level it implies the ability to intellectually and emotionally absorb a landscape’s two-dimensional representation on a page and understand the larger historico-spatial contexts that brought a loved one to be interred in the foreign soil marked on the map. This mental absorption was aided by Great War innovations in cartography, which privileged aerial perspectives as a way to clarify or “restitute” the war-torn landscape into more visually and mentally consumable images.

Second, maps helped griever to see themselves not simply as postwar travelers, but as traditional pilgrims whose eventual destination at the gravesite held a more spiritually elevating power. For as this essay will also argue, after traversing battle-scarred landscapes, these pilgrims entered a cemetery space whose design was so geometrical and exact that it resembled the guidebook maps that had led them there. In many cases – such as the St. Mihiel American Cemetery, which I use as a case study – the cemeteries and monuments have erected large stone or bronze maps, which help to situate the pilgrims on the battlefield landscape they have traversed. As works of art themselves, however, the maps allow for a deeper abstracting and metacognitive experience, compelling those who stand before them to see where they are in relation to their fallen soldiers (that is, if their bodies were recovered in the first place) while they are in fact experiencing the emotional intensity of that spatial proximity. In this sense, pilgrims are immersed in the landscape as they transcend it.

⁶Rafique Ahmad and Anne Hertzog, “Itineraries of the Great War and the Rise of the Local on the Western Front: Memory, Commemoration and the Shifting Regimes of Remembrance Tourism,” *Memory Studies*, 13, 6 (2020), 1172.

⁷Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 7.

From journey to pilgrimage: verticality in the Michelin guidebooks

Without a doubt, maps in guidebooks were so essential, so *de rigueur*, that they almost go without notice in most critical conversations about Great War battlefield and cemetery visitation.⁸ Upon closer inspection, however, we can see how maps created a set of hierarchies, value systems, and psychological cues to draw in and emotionally engage their viewers. But who exactly were these individuals who, maps in hand, traveled over such haunted landscapes, and what motivations inspired them? Tony Walter breaks these “travellers” into three groups: tourists, enthusiasts, and pilgrims; and in similar fashion, David W. Lloyd identifies the three groups as tourists, anti-tourists, and pilgrims.⁹ While the tourists of various classes traveled largely for pleasure, enthusiasts and anti-tourists chose these locales out of personal or intellectual curiosity – perhaps to search for the grave of a distant ancestor in the case of the enthusiast, or to seek out a deeper educational or cultural enrichment in the case of the anti-tourist.¹⁰ Embarrassed by a tourist’s crass pleasure-seeking behaviors abroad, anti-tourists in particular emphasized in their own sojourns “solitude, privacy and a personal semi-private relationship with the scene being gazed upon.”¹¹ The third kind of traveler – indeed, one of the oldest kinds of traveler – was the pilgrim, usually someone who was close to the fallen soldier and who sought from the trip a deeper spiritual connection with, and transformation by, the intended destination than did either the tourist, enthusiast, or anti-tourist.¹²

Well before the war’s end was in sight, interest in battlefield tourism was persistent enough that British travel agencies had to notify an eager and curious public that they had no intention of planning battlefield trips until after all hostilities had ceased.¹³ By August 1919, tours by London’s Thomas Cook’s commenced, becoming so popular by the next year that the company offered nine tours weekly, four of which were advertised as “de-luxe.”¹⁴ The war’s carnage made it clear, however, that whoever would travel to the battlefields must treat such experiences as a pilgrimage. France’s Michelin Tire Company, headquartered in Clermont-Ferrand, was perhaps the most famous of the guidebook publishers, with tourism offices also in London

⁸Aside from Winter’s *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, see also George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Tony Walter, “War Grave Pilgrimage,” in Ian Reader and Tony Walter, eds., *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1993), 63–91; David W. Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism: Pilgrimage and the Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia and Canada, 1919–1939* (Oxford: Berg, 1998); Lisa M. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919–1933* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); Thomas W. Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); Thomas H. Conner, *War and Remembrance: The Story of the American Battle Monuments Commission* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2018); and Caroline Winter, “Touring the Battlefields of the Somme with the Michelin and Somme Tourisme Guidebooks,” in Martin Kirby, Margaret Baguley, and Janet McDonald, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Artistic and Cultural Responses to War since 1914: The British Isles, the United States and Australasia* (London: Palgrave, 2019), 99–115.

⁹Walter, 64, uses the generic term “traveller” to refer to tourists, enthusiasts, and pilgrims.

¹⁰Walter, 71–72; Lloyd, 19.

¹¹Lloyd, 19.

¹²Walter, 71; Lloyd, 19.

¹³Lloyd, 23.

¹⁴Walter, 67.

and Milltown, New Jersey. In early 1917, while Verdun was still “bleeding” men and resources, its *Battle-Fields of the Marne* edition proclaimed,

such a visit should be a pilgrimage, not merely a journey across the ravaged land. Seeing is not enough, one must understand; a ruin is more moving when one knows what has caused it, [and] a stretch of country which might seem dull and uninteresting to the unenlightened eyes, becomes transformed at the thought of the battles which have raged there.¹⁵

To understand such a “ravaged land” entails not just the movement of an automobile (undoubtedly with four durable Michelin tires on its axles) along the roads, but a mental transformation in which a guidebook, replete with topographical maps and historical and architectural digressions, played an instrumental part. Moreover, if the ruins found on a map are “more moving” when the mind that absorbs them is informed by these different details, the mind itself has moved not just from ignorance to enlightenment, but, in keeping with the theme of a pilgrimage, from the profane to the sacred. With the right attitude and guidebook, the traveler who traverses these battlefields may start out an enthusiast, anti-tourist, or even just a tourist, but could soon enough emerge a pilgrim. Indeed, as Tony Walter’s research has revealed, many tourists visiting these battlefields and cemeteries had no aim of being spiritually moved but became “unintentional pilgrims” over the course of their journey.¹⁶

Among all the guidebooks vying for American consumption, Michelin’s was certainly the most “prolific.”¹⁷ Not only did the company release a three-volume set devoted just to the American engagements in the war by 1920, but its name recognition as an international purveyor of tires likely proved hard for the competition to surpass. By January 1922 the company had published an astounding 1,432,000 guides in France, Great Britain, and the United States.¹⁸ The Michelin guides were fairly compact – each one less than 150 pages – and thus easier to stow and peruse while in transit. And perhaps most importantly, these volumes came with a plethora of maps of all different scales.¹⁹ For these reasons, I will rely chiefly on the 1920 Michelin guides for my investigation into the use of maps for pilgrimages. Battlefield

¹⁵ Michelin Tire Company, *Illustrated Michelin Guides for the Visit to the Battle-Fields: Battle-Fields of the Marne 1914: The Ourcq* (Clermont-Ferrand: Michelin and Cie., 1917), 2.

¹⁶Walter, 71.

¹⁷See, for example, Col. Jas. A. Moss and Col. Harry S. Howland, *America in Battle: With Guide to the American Battlefields in France and Belgium* (Menasha, WI: Geo. Banta, 1920). The guide states its mission thus: “to place in the hands of the pilgrim ... in brief, simple form, the story of the achievements of our soldiers in translating the Spirit of America.” *Ibid.*, iv. The newly formed American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), charged with the creation and maintenance of the overseas monuments and cemeteries, alone published two such works: *A Guide to the American Battle Fields in Europe* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1927); and *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe: A History, Guide, and Reference Book* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1938). The latter was largely overseen and partially written by Major Dwight D. Eisenhower, and came out in 1938. For Michelin’s popularity see Lloyd, 103; and Winter, “Touring the Battlefields of the Somme,” 102.

¹⁸Lloyd, 103.

¹⁹By comparison, *America in Battle* contained 615 pages and possessed only four maps on two foldout sheets tucked into a sleeve inside the back cover.

guidebooks, asserts Caroline Winter, “provide basic information to help travellers negotiate people, cultures, and places, but they are rarely passive or impartial in their selections and information can privilege some places over others in influencing perceptions about cultural values and importance.”²⁰ The maps embedded in the Michelin guidebooks bear out Winter’s point, especially when understood within the larger context of the prose, photographs, and other media found within their pages. Indeed, the way these guidebooks used maps was fairly innovative for the age.

Prior to the Great War, the undisputed king of tourist information was the German Baedeker company, which, according to one 1918 article, had printed “upwards of seventy of these guide books which covered every part of the globe save Poland.”²¹ Why Polish territory had been left out is unclear, but Baedekers were widely recognized for their precision, detail, practicality, and facts (as opposed to personal impressions).²² What seemingly makes them so authoritative upon first glance is their voluminous prose. By taking the 1910 volume *Baedeker’s Belgium and Holland, Including the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg* as one case in point, we find a book of 489 pages that includes nineteen smaller-scale maps showing larger areas of land and thirty-seven city maps. But these fifty-six maps in total are swallowed up visually by page after page of prose in densely packed type (see Figure 1). One is liable to grant the volume a presumption of authority based just on the size of its many paragraphs. By the time readers encounter the book’s first inset map, they have read eighty-six pages on Belgian and Dutch art, history, geography, monetary systems, language, and guest accommodations. Indeed, one might hope a magnifying glass accompanied each book.

This particular Baedeker volume, with its extensive knowledge of Belgium, would have been one that *Scientific American* had in mind when it published an anonymous article titled “Baedeker as an Office of Military Intelligence” in its November 1918 issue. Whether or not the Baedeker family had such intentions, it claims, “they succeeded in collecting between the innocent looking covers of their guide books unrivalled information about every country in the world which must have been of priceless value to the German General Staff in their war of conquest and spoliation.”²³ In Germany’s unstoppable march through neutral Belgium into northern France in the opening weeks of the war, “the maps were marvels of accuracy and detail.”²⁴ Mark D. Larabee is correct to point out the apparent illogic of an article in, of all venues, *Scientific American* denouncing scientific, geographic, and cartographic precision; still, as Larabee observes, whether out of a general anti-German sentiment or for the specific reasons pointed out in the 1918 article, Baedeker guidebooks themselves became “casualties” of the war as their sales outside Germany plummeted.²⁵

²⁰Winter, “Touring the Battlefields of the Somme,” 101.

²¹“Baedeker as an Office of Military Intelligence,” *Scientific American*, 119, 18 (1918), 354.

²²Mark D. Larabee, “Baedekers as Casualty: Great War Nationalism and the Fate of Travel Writing,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 71, 3 (2010), 459–60.

²³“Baedeker as an Office of Military Intelligence,” 354.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 354.

²⁵Larabee, 474, 476–77.

146 *Route 10.*

TERVUEREN.

Environ.

in the baroque style. — The first station on the tramway from Grimberghen to Londerzeel (p. 3) is the village of *Meyse*, near which (and $3\frac{1}{4}$ M. to the N. of Laeken) is the château of *Bouchout*, since 1879 the residence of the unfortunate Princess Charlotte, sister of Leopold II. and widow of the Emp. Maximilian of Mexico, who was shot in 1867.

From the square near the church of *St. Josse-ten-Noode* (Pl. F, G, 3: tramway, *Chemins de Fer Economiques*, Bourse-Place de St. Josse line, see p. 94) a line of the *Chemins de Fer Vicinaux* (starting from the end of the Rue Verbist) runs to the *Chaussée de Louvain*, and thence past the *Cemetery of St. Josse-ten-Noode* and (a little to the right) the *Tir National*, or shooting-range of the Brussels rifle-clubs, to the new *Chief Cemetery of Brussels*. The *Grande Avenue* (*Groote Laan*), beginning at the entrance, divides the S. part of the cemetery into two parts. Following Avenue 5, to the left of the entrance, we come to the *Monuments to the French and German Soldiers* who died in Belgium in 1870-71. Beyond the German monument, which stands at the intersection of Avenue 3, leading to the *Grande Avenue*, rises a large monument by V. Rousseau, erected by the municipality in memory of policemen, firemen, and others killed whilst on duty (*Victimes du Devoir*, Flem. *Slachtoffers van de Plicht*). The English *Waterloo Monument*, to the E. of the *Grande Avenue*, at the end of Avenue 2, with a mourning Britannia, recumbent lions, and arms, by J. de Lalaing (1890), and the tombstones of the officers brought hither from the old cemetery, is very impressive.

TERVUEREN. — RAILWAY from the Gare du Quartier-Léopold (Pl. F, G, 5), $9\frac{1}{2}$ M., in $\frac{1}{2}$ hr. (fares 1 fr., 60 c.; return $1\frac{1}{4}$ fr., 85 c.). — A preferable route is by TRAMWAY (Nos. 40 and 45; in 1 hr.; fares 45, 35 c.), starting behind the Palais du Cinquantenaire, the terminus of the tramways mentioned on p. 94, and running along the Avenue de Tervueren.



The AVENUE DE TERVUEREN (6 M. long and about 85 yds. wide), laid out in 1895-97, begins at the triumphal arch of the Palais du Cinquantenaire (p. 136) and runs to the S.E. past numerous new

Figure 1. Baedeker's Belgium and Holland, Including the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg (New York: Karl Baedeker, 1910), showing dense lettering alongside a map of the city of Tervueren, Belgium.

By 1920, when the first guidebooks for American pilgrims were being published, a methodological split was taking place.²⁶ While the Baedeker model clearly relied on densely typed prose and surprisingly few maps, the Michelin guides – with their many topographical maps, city street maps, and landscape drawings and photographs – not only were more visually ordered and emotionally soothing, but also offered an implicit rebuke to the Baedeker system. Subjectively, Baedekers may give one the feeling of being immersed – even drowning – in the landscape described by the prose within their densely packed pages, while the Michelin guidebooks, with their many maps and blank spaces on the page, give readers the transcendent feeling of hovering over their landscapes.

Such aerial perspectives cannot be overlooked, so to speak, in the production and comprehension of the Michelin guidebook maps, for as a number of critics including Imre Josef Demhardt, Peter Chasseaud, and Karen Piper have demonstrated, the Great War was a watershed moment in the history of cartography.²⁷ In a war known for multilayered trench systems that collectively spread for thousands of miles, the photographs supplied by aerial reconnaissance (a process known as “photogrammetry”) were the most reliable means by which combatants could visualize and understand a battlefield they could not otherwise see. As these photographs were turned into paper maps for use by officers, they underwent a process called “restitution,” which the AEF field manual *Instructions Concerning Maps* (1918) describes as “marking on a chart or map, to scale, the more or less distorted data given by photographs.”²⁸ In contrast to its photographic counterpart, a restituted map sought to clear away any distortions or unnecessary images that might obscure the overall terrain and compromise the user’s objective (see Figure 2). Thus, in providing plenty of maps with only the most relevant visual details and plenty of blank space on the page between the maps and text, the Michelin guides, especially in comparison to their Baedeker counterparts, seem to take their cue from the restitution process practiced and consumed to great effect during wartime.

Restituted maps derived from aerial perspectives, moreover, helped train the brain to think in cartographic terms. In his successful 1919 memoir *Fighting the Flying Circus*, American pilot Eddie Rickenbacker attests to the ways in which the very mind-sets of both surveillance and fighter pilots were molded by their aerial experiences:

No matter how good a flyer the scout may be and no matter how perfect his eyesight is, he must learn to see before he can distinguish objects either on the ground or in the air. What is called “vision of the air” can only come from experience and no pilot ever has it upon his first arrival at the front.²⁹

²⁶For details of this split, consult *ibid.*, 465–66.

²⁷See Imre Josef Demhardt, “A Terrible Mother of Invention: Cartographic Progress during World War I,” *Journal of Cartography*, 4, 3, 241–44; Peter Chasseaud, “British Military Mapping on the Western Front, 1914–1918,” *International Journal of Cartography* 4, 3, 245–71; and Karen Piper, *Cartographic Fictions: Maps, Race, and Identity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press) 2002.

²⁸American Expeditionary Forces, *Instructions Concerning Maps* (Washington, DC: AG Printing Department, 1918), 18.

²⁹Edward V. Rickenbacker, *Fighting the Flying Circus* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co, 1919), 9.

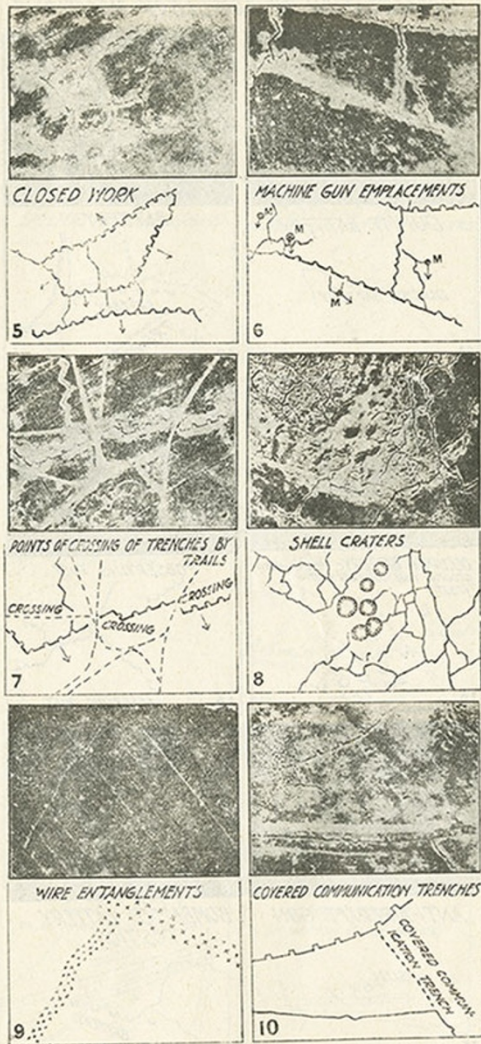


Figure 2. American Expeditionary Forces, *Instructions Concerning Maps* (Washington, DC: AG Printing Department, 1918), 21. From photogrammetry (above) to their corresponding restituted maps (below).

Ultimately, the “vision of the air” was the fluid mental valence between the map the pilot consulted on the ground and the very landscape it represented from the overhead perspective of a cockpit. Upon recalling his flight instructions for the skies above Pont-à-Mousson and St. Mihiel in April 1918, Rickenbacker enjoins his civilian readership thus: “Picture a map of these French towns, as every pilot in our Squadron 94 had it indelibly pressed into his memory. While flying in the vicinity of enemy territory it is quite essential that one should know every landmark on the horizon.”³⁰ Here, Rickenbacker seeks to transfer his “vision of the air” to readers who must conjure their own mental maps of France to follow his aerial trajectory.

Thus “[c]artography’s impulse to leave the ground,” as critic Karen Piper puts it,³¹ held many implications, not the least of which was in the way that maps began to ingrain themselves in the human psyche, just as the human psyche had ingrained itself upon the map. As the Great War made public consumption of maps an everyday occurrence through newspapers, magazines, cinema newsreels, and broadsides, an entire generation had become map-aware to an extent not yet seen before.³² As a 1928 study of aerial photography explained, “As the Public continue to see pictures of the earth from above, and aerial maps or pictures are continually being used, the world becomes more air-minded.”³³ Combatants and a war-informed public alike grew to possess a greater cartographic awareness, but one now informed by aerial photogrammetry and thus able to navigate battlefields not just in wartime, but also after the war as the fraught process of mourning was the new tactical and strategic obstacle to confront.

Allowing readers a “vision of the air” through aerial photographs and restituted maps is all the more pressing when one considers the visual chaos a pilgrim or any other traveler might encounter either in the voyage across a battle-scarred landscape or even in the subsequent pages of the guidebooks themselves. For instance, the first volume of Michelin’s three-part *Americans in the Great War*, which is devoted to the Second Battle of the Marne, offers this warning to its readers: “The ruined villages are as the shells and bombs left them. Everywhere are branchless trees and stumps, shell craters roughly filled in, trenches, barbed wire entanglements, and shelters for men and ammunition. Thousands of shells, shell casings, rifles, gun limbers and machines guns lie scattered about.”³⁴ To counter this visual chaos, the guidebook provides a thirty-eight-page spread to educate readers about the American contributions to Second Battle of the Marne. Unlike the Baedeker guidebooks with their voluminous, densely packed paragraphs, however, this lengthy spread breaks up the prose with thirteen maps, thus allowing the reader to rise above

³⁰Ibid., 21.

³¹Piper, 12.

³²For the ubiquity of wartime visual images see Pearl James, “Introduction: Reading World War I Posters,” in James, ed., *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 8–10.

³³Alan J. Cobham, foreword to Clarence Winchester and F. L. Wills, *Aerial Photography: A Comprehensive Survey of Its Practice and Development* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1928), ix–x.

³⁴Michelin Tire Company, *Michelin Illustrated Guides to the Battlefields (1914–1918): The Americans in the Great War*, Volume I, *The Second Battle of the Marne* (Chateau-Thierry, Soissons, Fismes) (Clermont-Ferrand: Michelin and Cie., 1920), 40.

the landscape described in the paragraphs before being immersed into more prose detailing battle tactics.

The first volume also outlines a three-day, round-trip itinerary originating from Paris and including Château-Thierry, Belleau Wood, Soissons, and Fismes. Though damaged heavily, Château-Thierry was large enough to avoid complete obliteration; other villages, even if they had little tactical value for the Germans, were not as lucky, testifying to the raw power of industrial warfare.³⁵ Such was the fate of Regniéville, in the St. Mihiel sector, which was utterly destroyed in September 1918. Afterward it existed only on page 72 of Volume II as a point on a map and again as a photograph of a levelled landscape (save the ruin of a church belfry) on page 85 (see [Figures 3, 4](#)). Especially for American travelers, who presumably would have had no familiarity with the French landscape prior to their arrival, the maps accompanying the photographs of obliterated villages would have given them a practical grounding so as not to be visually bewildered and overwhelmed by the mental disjuncture between what *should* be on the landscape and what no longer was.

The page of the Michelin guidebook detailing the aforementioned round-trip itinerary then moves on to a paragraph of only one ominous sentence: "Corpses are occasionally seen."³⁶ And rather surprisingly, in a move that I have not found in other guidebooks, two photographs appear of German corpses. As [Figure 5](#) shows, French minister Clemenceau casually speaks to several doughboys while looking at a bloated and somewhat contorted German corpse, its face covered by a helmet, only about five feet away.³⁷ Why might the guidebook go to such grisly measures, which risked turning potential pilgrims away? Practicality offers the most obvious answer. Especially in the years immediately after the war, undaunted travelers on these itineraries could have (and likely on occasion *did*) come across corpses in various states of decomposition. Thus, for those earliest American visitors, who had previously charted the progress of the war through maps and press releases from a safe distance on the other side of the Atlantic, these guidebooks and their ghastly images would emotionally prepare them for the unexpected. The mention of corpses, even if they had been removed and laid to rest years earlier, reminded visitors of what their loved ones sacrificed or endured on these haunted landscapes.

At the same time, if we understand these images, alongside those of the decimated Regniéville, within the larger context of a pilgrimage, then their very gruesomeness is the point insofar as pilgrimages are journeys whose inherent physical and emotional struggles are meant to be faced, endured, and transcended. Indeed, to the extent that these guidebooks were instrumental in the actual progress of a pilgrim over the landscape to find a grave or in converting the enthusiast or (anti-)tourist into a pilgrim, they were concerned with themes of verticality, particularly resurrection. Once corpses such as the ones shown in the Michelin guidebooks were located,

³⁵Here it bears quoting the observation of J. K. Finch's *Topographic Maps and Sketch Mapping* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1920), 77: "it happened in a number of cases in the war zone in France that parties fully equipped with large scale maps walked right through towns several times without being able to find them. This was due to the fact that the map showed a landmark that had been absolutely wiped out."

³⁶Michelin Tire Company, *The Americans in the Great War*, Volume I, 40.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 42. An even grislier corpse appears pages later with the skull clearly visible and the rest of the skeleton somewhat obscured by its tattered uniform. Lying next to it is another corpse whose only definition in this small black-and-white image comes from a visible sole of a hobnailed boot.

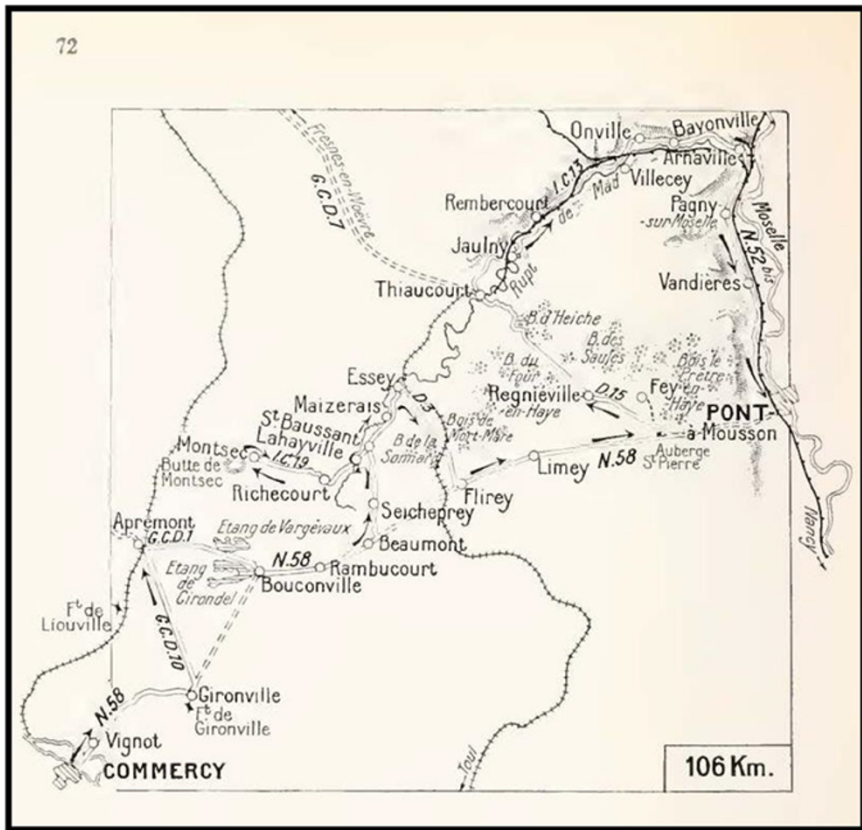


Figure 3. Michelin Tire Company, *Michelin Illustrated Guides to the Battlefields (1914–1918): The Americans in the Great War, Volume II, The Battle of Saint Mihiel (St. Mihiel, Pont-à-Mousson, Metz)* (Clermont-Ferrand: Michelin and Cie., 1920), 72. On the map below, Regniéville is located slightly west of Pont-à-Mousson.

they were buried hastily where they fell or interred in nearby cemeteries. In the cases of American dead, from those temporary cemeteries they would be disinterred either for repatriation or for final removal to the nearest US-created cemetery, once those sites were established. For the majority of these burials, officiated by a chaplain or fellow soldiers, traditional religious rites applied, including presumptions that spirits ascended from their bodies to a heavenly realm. Conceptually, in their attempt to “transcend the everyday nature of the world,” as Ian Reader explains, pilgrimages in many religious traditions have often relied on either an actual or an imagined vertical axis.³⁸ A mountain, to use just one brief example, is central to Dante’s pilgrimage, occupying the setting of Purgatory in *The Divine Comedy*. As the sins of the repentant souls disappear along their ascent up Mt. Purgatory, the souls become so light that they literally float upward to Paradise.

³⁸Ian Reader, *Pilgrimage: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 27.



REGNIÉVILLE VILLAGE AND THE RUINED BELFRY OF THE CHURCH

For a long time Regniéville was the advance-post of the French line between Mort-Mare Wood, *on the left*, and Prêtre Wood, *on the right*. At the beginning of April, 1915, the French advance was especially dangerous for the enemy, whose counter-attacks became more frequent. It was evident that the slightest advance in the direction of Thiaucourt would hamper the German communications between Metz and St. Mihiel, and would hinder the revictualling of the troops as well as the steady supply of reinforcements and munitions. That is why, on April 9, the Germans made fifteen successive attacks to drive the French from their trenches and the edge of Mort-Mare Wood.

Keep on towards Thiaucourt. To the left of D. 15 there is an American cemetery (photo below), 500 yards from Regniéville. 1 km. further on, fifty



AMERICAN GRAVES AT REGNIÉVILLE

Figure 4. Michelin's *The Americans in the Great War*, Volume II, 85. Lower: Regniéville decimated in 1918.

Throughout June and the first half of July, stiff fighting took place around the town, especially in **Courteau Wood** at the top of Hill 204. After being retaken by the Allies on June 6, this hill was constantly disputed, and repeatedly changed hands. The Germans, who were preparing their offensive of July 15, between Château-Thierry and Rheims, attached great importance to this position, which covered their right flank and dominated Château-Thierry. From July onwards the Allies, by a series of local operations, approached the town. On the night of July 1–2, the Americans captured the village of Vaux (*which the tourist passed through before entering Château-Thierry*), taking 400 prisoners belonging to the 201st German division. Enemy counter-attacks failed to win back the village.

The Americans also advanced to the east of Hill 204, and finally recaptured it on July 9 during a night attack.

The Allies' successful counter-offensive of July 18 completely cleared Château-Thierry. On July 21, with their front pierced on the north and east, the enemy was forced to abandon the town, which was then entered by General Degoutte's Army.

CHATEAU-THIERRY PLUNDERED BY THE GERMANS.

When the Franco-American troops entered Château-Thierry, the town had been methodically **sacked**. The enemy emptied the houses of everything portable, including mattresses, metallic articles, etc. The churches were likewise despoiled. In the case of St. Crépin's Church the Germans had not time to carry off the whole of the plunder. The photograph, p. 43, shows what was hurriedly left behind, part being packed in cases, the rest, including a fireman's brass helmet stolen from the fire-station, lying scattered about.



THE FRENCH PRIME MINISTER, M. CLEMENCEAU, CONGRATULATING THE AMERICAN TROOPS ON THE BATTLEFIELD AT CHÂTEAU-THIERRY.
(From "l'Illustration.")

Figure 5. Michelin Tire Company, *Michelin Illustrated Guides to the Battlefields (1914–1918): The Americans in the Great War*, Volume I, *The Second Battle of the Marne (Chateau-Thierry, Soissons, Fismes)* (Clermont-Ferrand: Michelin and Cie., 1920), 42. French prime minister Georges Clemenceau and doughboys look at a German corpse.

With particular regard to transcendence, then, the maps that are situated in the guidebooks near these photographs of ruins – and especially of corpses – provide a visual sense of clarity and order, offering in the case of the large-scale street map of Château-Thierry a restituted vision of the city's wholeness (see [Figure 6](#)) to counter other images on nearby pages of fragmented buildings and bodies. As a drawn map, [Figure 6](#) does not show any signs of its current-day wreckage, as we otherwise see in the photographs of the leveled Regniéville, but instead a suggestion of how the city existed prior to the war and how it might be again one day.

Case study: Michelin's guide to the St. Mihiel offensive

In their attempt to transcend the gloom of these wrecked spaces, the Michelin guidebooks again show a keen awareness of vertical axes – both in their use of maps and in the specific destinations to which the maps lead pilgrims. The second volume, for instance, outlines several itineraries for the various sites along the St. Mihiel salient offensive, which took place from 12 to 16 September 1918, and is particularly famous in American military history as being the first campaign of the war in which the American Expeditionary Forces were fully in charge of their own army. In the first itinerary, illustrated here in [Figures 7](#) to [9](#), a six-page spread engages the reader along this vertical axis by use of three types of visual aid: first, two topographical maps that bookend the full spread; second, one smaller-scale panoramic sketch of the St. Mihiel region, including nearby forests, roads, villages, and front lines as they existed until the start of the offensive on 12 September; and finally, four photographs, three of which show destroyed German fortifications and the fourth several children standing on an automobile on a street of St. Mihiel after its liberation on 13 September.³⁹

The overall effect of these images in the six-page sequence is to give a traveler a broader vision of the offensive's movement over the course of the first two days of its four-day duration. On the first page of this spread (see [Figure 7](#), upper left), readers are able to use the topographical map depicting the village of Ailly-sur-Meuse and the nearby wooded Forêt d'Apremont to gain a zenithal view (looking straight downward) of the first day of the offensive as it initially would have been imagined abstractly by commanders of the American 4th Corps and the 39th French Division, both of which were responsible for this southwest sector of the offensive. In rendering only the necessary roads to keep the travelers on the itinerary, the restituted map also provides a view of the landscape the American 4th Corps's left flank would have used in its advance through the Forêt d'Apremont. With its clean lines and relative lack of detail, the map visually situates the travelers according to the AEF's advance two years prior.

But the safety of those clean lines disappears as the next three images over the course of as many pages drop from a zenithal view to the ground, where travelers encounter destruction, first in a photograph of a German trench that passes under the very road along which the itinerary takes them (see [Figure 7](#), lower left),

³⁹ Michelin Tire Company, *Michelin Illustrated Guides to the Battlefields (1914–1918): The Americans in the Great War, Volume II, The Battle of Saint Mihiel (St. Mihiel, Pont-à-Mousson, Metz) (Clermont-Ferrand: Michelin and Cie., 1920)*, 53, 54.

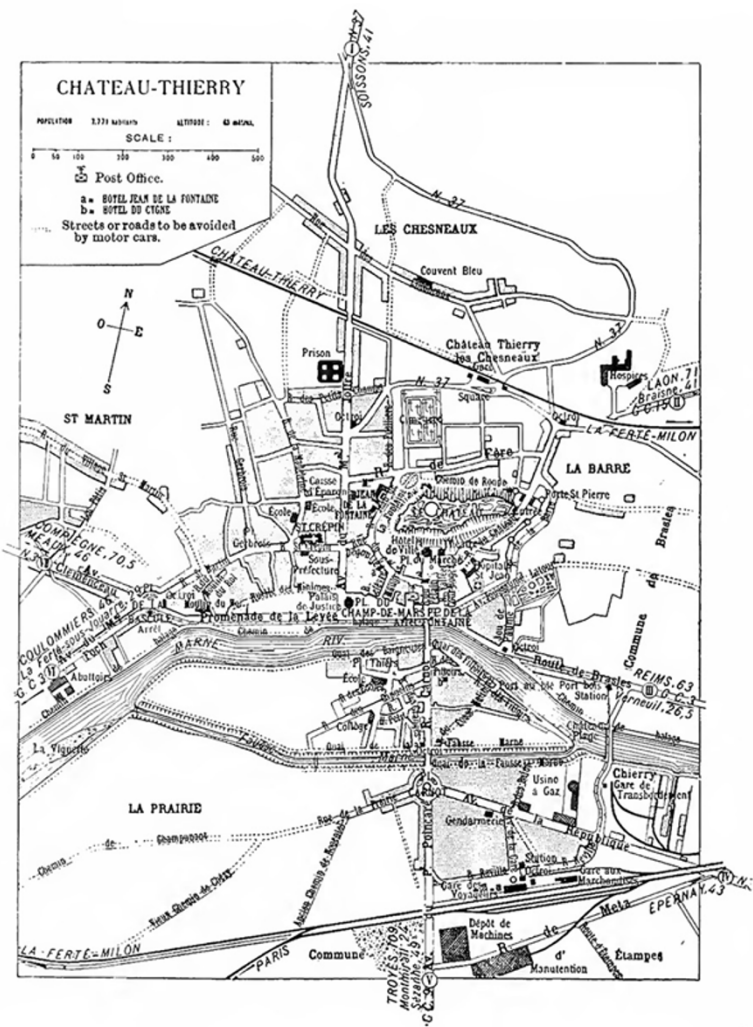


Figure 6. Michelin's *The Americans in the Great War*, Volume I, 44. Map of Château-Thierry.

and then in two photographs depicting nearby destroyed German fortifications (see [Figures 7](#), right; and [8](#), left). As a visual process wherein verticality plays a key role, these four images provide the cartographic experience that allows for both a sense of messy, chaotic immediacy and abstract order. If the stated aim of the aforementioned *Battlefields of the Marne* edition of the Michelin guidebooks was to convert a “journey” into a “pilgrimage,” this visual descent into the rubble of warfare not only

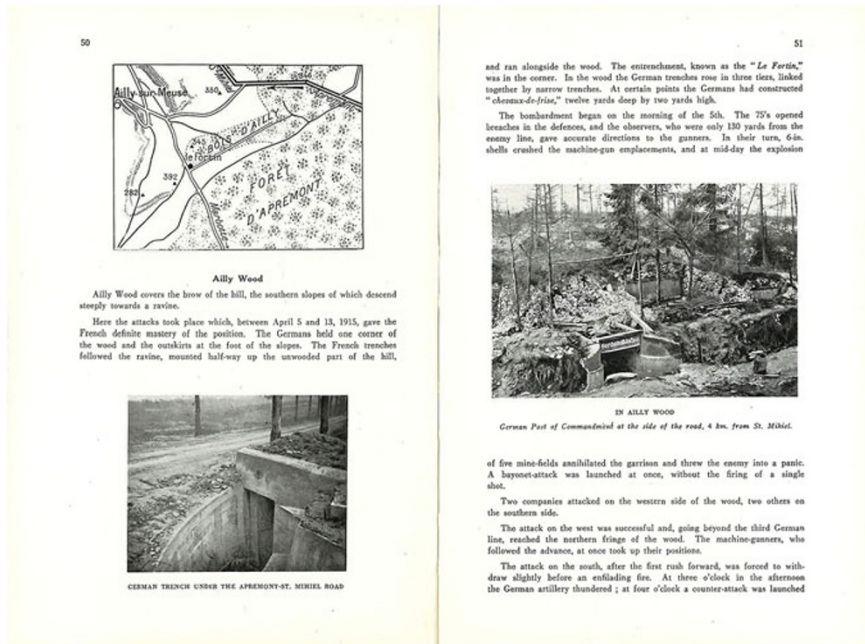


Figure 7. Michelin's *The Americans in the Great War*, Volume II, 50-51. Upper left: a map of the Forêt d'Apremont. Lower left: German trenches. Right: destroyed German fortifications.

resonated with mourning families, but also proved an initial and necessary part of that harrowing pilgrimage process.

Since the primary objective of the offensive was to liberate the city of St. Mihiel and its rail lines located at the salient's tip, then the remaining images of the six-page spread approximate that movement. Having passed through a war-ravaged space both on the landscape and in the pages of the guidebook, travelers then approach the actual city with an overhead panoramic sketch to direct them (see Figure 8, right). Visually, travelers are lifted back to the sky but now with an oblique view toward the horizon instead of a zenithal view that looks directly down. The view of the scene, which this time includes the sky just beyond the horizon, offers a visual respite of sorts from the three preceding photographs of ruin. Unlike the first map in the spread, St. Mihiel is now in view, even if only as a minute street grid.

Panoramic sketches have been used since at least the seventeenth century, giving what Martin Brückner calls "cartographic double-vision" to their corresponding maps, which would usually be printed adjacent to the panorama on the same sheet.⁴⁰ The panoramic sketch of St. Mihiel offers what I would call a *double double-vision*, first encouraging viewers to see the sketch and the maps to which it corresponds in the traditional sense as military tacticians in 1918 would have viewed them, but then

⁴⁰Martin Brückner, *The Social Life of Maps in America, 1750-1860* (Williamsburg, VA and Chapel Hill, NC: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture and University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 228.

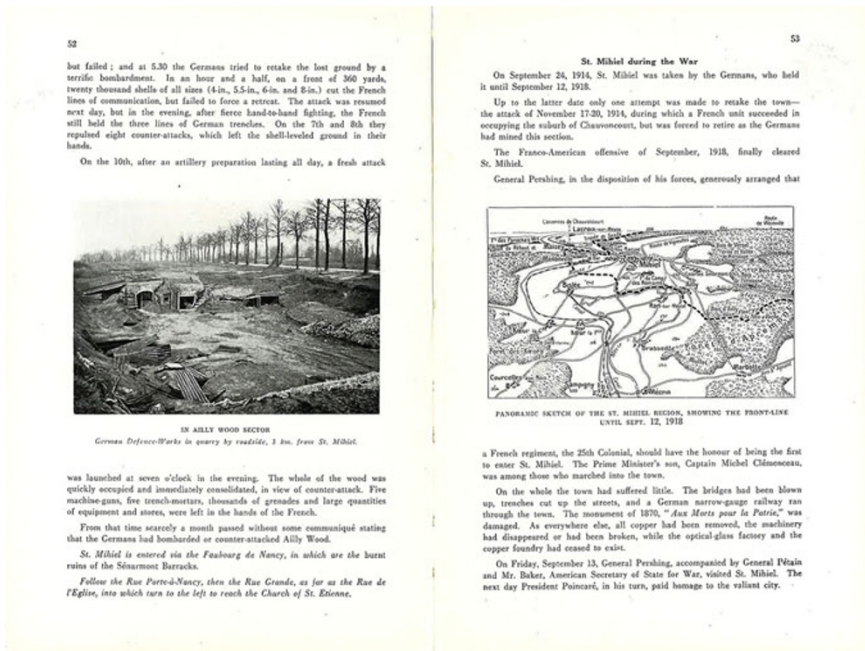


Figure 8. Michelin's *The Americans in the Great War*, Volume II, 52–53. Left: destroyed German fortifications. Right: panoramic map of St. Mihiel and environs.

asking viewers to see those images through the lens of peacetime pilgrims. In this second role, viewers can see such hope in a presumably peacetime landscape, unlike the corresponding maps whose restitution omits these details in order to delineate boundaries with abstract clarity, or unlike the actual corresponding landscape as it existed in disarray immediately after the war. Lloyd explains that a key part of a battlefield pilgrimage was the opportunity to escape clock time in favor of a time when past and present lived together.⁴¹ The panoramic sketch, which includes intact forests, fields, and a view of the skyline, encourages viewers to imagine multiple times simultaneously: the peaceful countryside as it was before the war, then as it was shattered during and immediately afterward, and finally as it will look again when redeemed by time, nature, and a robust national infrastructure program.

In depicting an intact landscape to counter earlier images of human-made destruction, the panoramic sketch then offers a segue to the images that follow on the last two pages of the spread. As George L. Mosse explains, in wartime “[n]ature and man symbolize each other’s sadness in the face of almost certain death. But such close identification of man and nature, more often than not, turned thoughts of destruction into hope and resurrection: symbols of death and destruction were at the same time symbols of hope.”⁴² Following the panoramic sketch and its hints of resurrection, a photograph of children in an automobile and the overhead map of St.

⁴¹Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism*, 133.

⁴²Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 108.

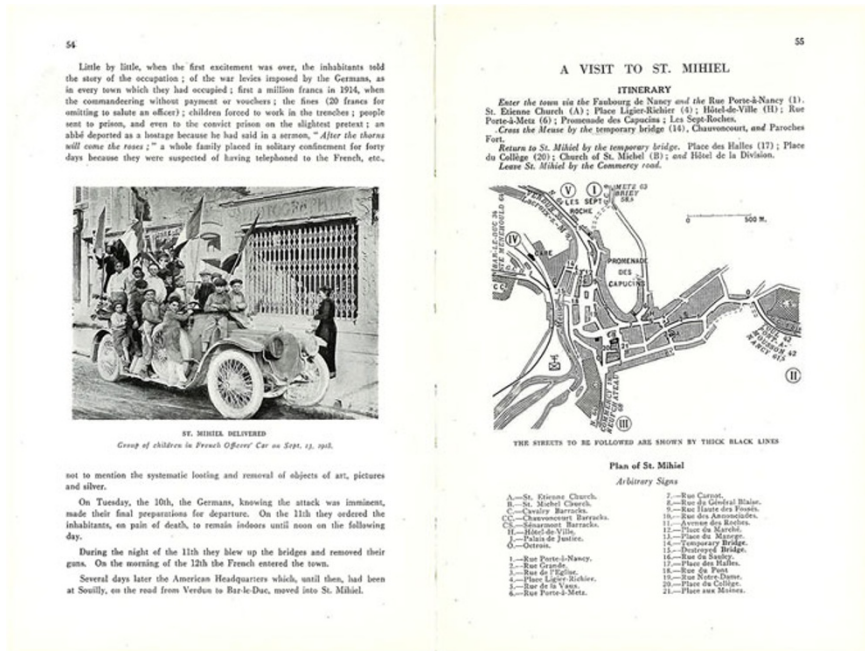


Figure 9. Michelin's *The Americans in the Great War*, Volume II, 54–55. Left: children on an automobile on the streets of St. Mihiel. Right: zenithal map of St. Mihiel.

Mihiel respectively await travelers (see Figure 9). The relationship between the photograph and the map may be apparent on two levels. First, travelers use the map to bring them to the city along similar lines of approach as the French and Americans when liberating it from four years of German occupation. The very means that travelers use to enter the city, the automobile, is represented in the photograph with an air of both gayety and resurrection (through the children themselves). The car in the photograph, then, corresponds thematically to a restituted rendering of St. Mihiel's streets with the bookending map of the city on the final page of the spread. Of course, travelers of the immediate postwar era would find St. Mihiel in partial ruins; and to be fair to the Michelin guidebook, these ruins are well represented in its pages. But for those who look for offsetting sites within the city, the book's map at the end of the visual sequence I have described offers clear directions to churches, some that were damaged and others that remained intact.

With regard to churches, in fact, the same Michelin volume benefits from covering the city and surrounding lands once inhabited by the Renaissance sculptor Ligier Richier. Richier, the guidebook explains, was born about the year 1500 and sculpted many impressive pieces in his native St. Mihiel, including the "grotto or crypt" bas relief found in the Church of St. Etienne and known informally as "the Sepulchre," which took around ten years to complete.⁴³ As Lloyd explains, guidebooks encouraged travelers to witness the "devastated zone" firsthand

⁴³ Michelin Tire Company, *The Americans in the Great War*, Volume II, 57, 56.

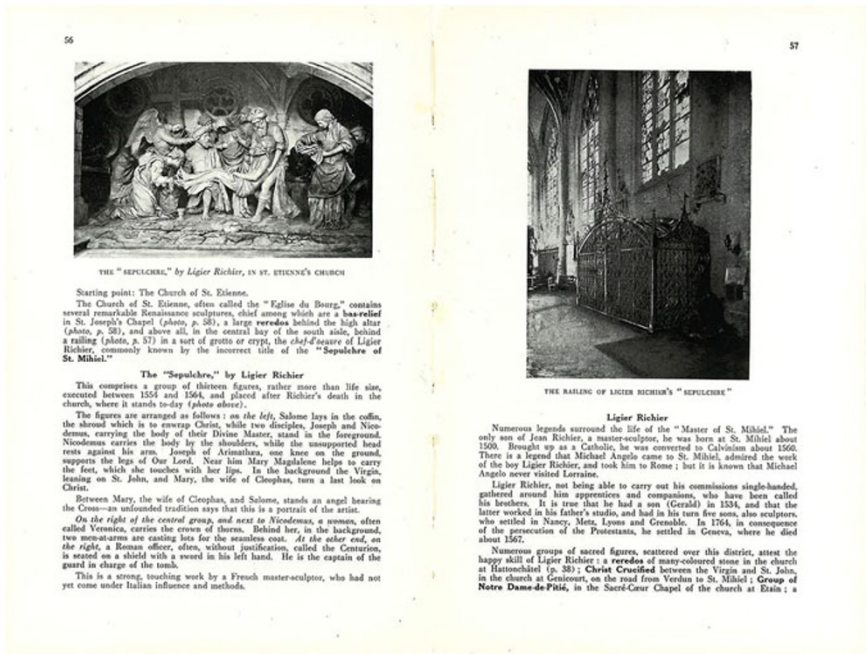


Figure 10. Michelin's *The Americans in the Great War*, Volume II, 56–57. "Sepulchre" by Ligier Richier in the St. Etienne Church of St. Mihiel.

in order to understand the suffering of and the lessons to be learned from the martyred regions of France and Belgium. The focus on the destruction wrought by Germany was most noticeable in the guidebooks produced in France for English tourists. The Michelin guides stressed the grandeur of the churches, towns and artefacts which had been destroyed in the war.⁴⁴

The English were not the only ones to whom such visions of destroyed grandeur were directed, however; nor was destruction the thematic *telos* of these itineraries. This short digression into the religious art of Ligier Richier, including its famed "Sepulchre" bas relief, is one of many throughout the Michelin guidebooks of the American battlefields. What characterizes this digression above all else is the bas relief's depiction of Christ's death, his eventual resurrection, and the Madonna's suffering. As Figure 10 shows, Christ's lifeless body is held by a number of mourners as it is being prepared for entombment.⁴⁵ Behind him, also center, is the Madonna, with her head lowered and her grief-stricken face partially concealed by a hood. The associations with the Great War are clear enough: a son's death in his prime and the plight of the parents – and particularly of the mother – who must bear the grief involved in putting the child to rest.

⁴⁴Lloyd, 116.

⁴⁵Michelin Tire Company, *The Americans in the Great War*, Volume II, 56.



Figure 11. "You, help my boy win the war." *Buy a Liberty Bond*, 1917. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC, 20540, USA. Control number 00652365.

The suffering Madonna would have been particularly resonant with Gold Star mothers. As traditional Christianity holds, Mary loved her son beyond measure – enough, in fact, to reconcile herself to his divine destiny, crucifixion, in the effort to save humanity from its sins. The death-destined soldier-sons of the Great War offered an analogue to this narrative. Drawing on the work of Sarah Ruddick (among others), Ana C. Garner and Karen Slattery have shown how the Committee on Public Information and the Council on National Defense were keenly aware of mobilizing mothers to the cause of war (see Figure 11), an effort that entailed converting them from the identity of the Good Mother who, to paraphrase the popular antiwar song of the time, didn't raise her boy to be a soldier,⁴⁶ to the Patriotic Mother. The latter identity is derived from Spartan women of earlier ages who had to split their preservation impulses, being willing to sacrifice their sons, whom they had nurtured and preserved up through boyhood, for the preservation of the *polis*.⁴⁷ Thus Patriotic Motherhood was the life force of American democracy as it produced sons who, with their mother's reluctant approval, would be willing to give their lives for its survival. When those sons fell in battle, a mother's grief, second only to the Madonna's, became not just a personal setback, but a national imperative to affirm that the war, despite its cost, was worth the fighting.

As the endpoint of this six-page excursion to St. Mihiel, then, "the Sepulchre" turns the St. Mihiel–Apremont road by which travelers enter the city into something akin to the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem, the Camino Santiago in northern Spain, or France's famed *voie sacrée*, the only supply line linking the semi-besieged city of Verdun to the railhead at Bar le Duc some fifty-seven kilometers to the south.

⁴⁶The popular song "I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier" was written in 1914 by lyricist Alfred Bryan and set to music by Al Piantadosi.

⁴⁷Ana C. Garner and Karen Slattery, "Mobilizing Mother: From Good Mother to Patriotic Mother in World War I," *Journal and Communication Monographs*, 14, 1 (2012), 16–18, 11. See also Sarah Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1989).

The map's clear instructions on how to reach the Church of St. Etienne, where "the Sepulchre" is housed, would be of tremendous value for a pilgrim or for a tourist inclined to become one.

Absorbing maps, absorbed by maps: diaries and memorial landscapes

The story of Lillie Green of Wilder, Idaho, offers a case in point of how a Patriotic Mother's loss intersected with both cartography and government policy. Lillie was among the first wave of Gold Star mothers to take the government-funded pilgrimage in 1930. Her son Jasper was severely wounded by gunshot on 22 July 1918 and died at the American Red Cross Military Hospital in Paris exactly a month later. He was then interred on the outskirts of Paris at the Suresnes American Cemetery, created and maintained by the American Battlefield Monuments Commission (ABMC).

Not surprisingly, once Jasper reached France, his letters, which were viewed by army censors, withheld specific locations for fear they could be intercepted by German intelligence. One letter to his parents vaguely begins, "I am now sitting by in a comfortable furnished room in the YMCA, somewhere in France." After mentioning several family-related details over the course of three paragraphs, he concludes, "I guess you will think I do not say much in my letters, but I say all I have permission to."⁴⁸ One can only imagine the mental grasping of a parent who is given so little geographical information and who, like Cather's Mrs. Wheeler, might turn to a map of France for solace. Lillie then learned of her son's death almost a month later on 19 September. In the nearly two months between Jasper's wounding and notification of his death, Lillie sent him several unanswered letters. One such letter, dated 29 July, a full week after the wounding that left Jasper incapacitated, frames Lillie's panic in spatial terms: "I hope you are getting along fine. I only wish I could know where you are and what you are doing[,] but God knows, God bless and keep you safe."⁴⁹ Another letter from Lillie, written the day after Jasper's death and showing deepening concern that her previous letters had gone unanswered, resorts to vertical perspectives: "You see the same dear old sun and moon and the same Dear God. Don't that bring us near together?"⁵⁰ If only, the letter implies, Lillie had the same aerial view that God has – or at least that one has when looking at a map – to see her son's whereabouts. Geographical certainty eventually came at a high emotional price, as Lillie learned of Jasper's burial sometime after 18 November, almost five months after his death.

Having decided years earlier to keep Jasper's grave in France, Lillie was among the first wave of Gold Star mothers to take advantage of the government-funded and organized pilgrimages. Her own trip began on 20 June 1930, with a four-day train voyage from Idaho to New York City, with a two-day stay there before departing for an eleven-day transatlantic trek that finally terminated for her in Paris. In her diary, each day of the sea journey was recorded with information more appropriate for a cartographer's journal or a captain's log:

⁴⁸Diane Green-Hartley, *Lillie's Jasper: The 1930 Pilgrimage of a Gold Star Mother* (n.p.: CreateSpace, 2010), 52.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 77.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 84.

3 day out June 27, 1930
 Latitude 40.18 N
 Longitude 60.30 W
 Distance 321 miles
 Length of V 23 hours 45 minutes
 Average Speed 13.5 knots
 Distance Cobh (Queenstown) 2850 miles
 Distance from Ambrose 610 miles
 Sea small SW
 Wind Var 3⁵¹

Remarkably, Lillie kept up the nautical postings for the remainder of her voyage, first to the port of Queenstown, Ireland, and then to Ambrose, England, to deliver a group of Gold Star mothers to the Brookwood American Cemetery southwest of London. If Lillie's earlier anxieties about her son's safety were amplified by her ignorance of his whereabouts in France, then the meticulous recording of her voyage across the Atlantic attempts twelve years later to provide cartographic certainty and emotional clarity. Franco Moretti has shown how readers and literary critics need not be passive recipients of the geographical terrain they read about in a text. Rather, they can open up texts to new interpretations by mapping the described topographies and "bringing to light relations that would otherwise remain hidden."⁵² Lillie's diary does not contain a map of her trip, although we know that, if she did not possess one before setting out from Idaho, she would have received a Michelin foldout upon arrival in Paris.⁵³ All the same, the diary invites a later reader (even if that reader were none other than Lillie's future self) to become a cartographer, using the latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates for each day to map a trajectory, first across a formless ocean and later past the more visually salient boundary of western France's coastline and on to Paris.

But if the diary offers such precision and drive in its description of Lillie's arrival in Paris, its recollection of the visit to the Suresnes American Cemetery may, to an outside reader, prove anticlimactic:

Wednesday July 9

This morning at 9:30 a.m. we all got in our bus and went out to the Suresnes Cemetery, just outside the city of Suresnes

We were given beautiful wreathes to put on the graves of our sons.

It was hard for us all.

The cemetery is very beautiful.

The crosses are beautiful Italian marble and sparkle in the sunlight.

The flowerbeds, trees, shrubs and climbing roses are very beautiful. Green grass is everywhere.⁵⁴

⁵¹Ibid., 96.

⁵²Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800–1900* (London: Verso, 1998), 3.

⁵³Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 222.

⁵⁴Green-Hartley, 104–6.



Figure 12. Grave of Jasper Green in foreground with flags and memorial chapel in background, Suresnes American Cemetery. Photograph by the author.

For reasons that she may have taken to her own grave, Lillie does not mention what exactly she felt at the gravesite, nor does she record the grave's exact location, which is plot B, row 13, grave 11 (see [Figure 12](#)). Instead, the entry turns outward to the general features of the cemetery itself: its vegetation, wreaths, and marble crosses. The sparseness of the prose, much of which is taken up with topographical description, resembles the restitutive process used in mapping throughout the war. Similarly, Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) believes that the only way to honor the Great War dead is by cartographic inscription:

There were many words you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.⁵⁵

The character who makes these remarks, Frederic Henry, is himself so overcome with the loss of Catherine Barkley that he, like Lillie, resorts to cartographic prose to express what cannot be expressed otherwise. In many ways, Lillie's objective and terse description, not unlike the ones found in Michelin guidebooks, is the logical termination of a record measured in unadorned cartographic increments of latitude and longitude.

⁵⁵Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Scribner 2003; first published New York: Scribner, 1929), 185.

The St. Mihiel American Cemetery: a case study in cartographic landscapes

If Lillie used cartographic methods to express her grief, the cemeteries designed by the American Battle Monuments Commission met her halfway. Formed by an act of Congress in 1923, the ABMC was charged with creating eight European cemeteries (Suresnes near Paris and Brookwood near London being two of them) to inter the bodies of those soldiers whose families decided against repatriation. As these cemeteries came to fruition throughout the rest of the decade and into the 1930s, their aesthetic design relied on map-like sparseness, angularity, and clean lines. The ABMC created a seven-member Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), headed by the prominent art historian and city planner Charles Moore.⁵⁶ Moore was immediately concerned with making the cemeteries visually appealing enough to convince families that if they left their soldiers interred overseas, they would be well cared for in a place of dignity and beauty. As he explained in a memorandum from 1921, "Now we are going to have six [cemeteries in France] and unless we make those cemeteries 'little Arlington[s]' no one will know that the American troops fought in France. We must have something more than a patch of white."⁵⁷

Elizabeth Grossman is right, however, to point out that these "little Arlingtons" are in several key respects a significant departure from the original overlooking Washington, DC: "The rows of headstones curve along the irregular contours of the Arlington hills. Roadways conform to the undulating sweep of the grass, and the irregular placement of the trees creates broken patterns of light and shade."⁵⁸ Those who have visited Arlington likely recall its many hills, and the map of the grounds seen in Figure 13 also shows the cemetery's asymmetrical arrangements of grave sections and roadways. "In contrast," Grossman continues, "the War Department cemeteries [in France] are symmetrical in plan. Graves are arranged in large blocks divided by a central path; in the larger cemeteries they are divided by minor crosses and parallel axes. If the ground slopes it does so evenly and reinforces the grain of the rows of headstones."⁵⁹

The precision and "geometric order" of the ABMC cemeteries were apparently not lost on visitors.⁶⁰ In describing the 1931 Gold Star pilgrimage of Margaret Cowgill to the Oise–Aisne American Cemetery, daughter Harriet Cowgill Morrison included a poem written by a Jack W. Croft of Chicago, whose third and final stanza reads,

In the cemetery row on row,
Are the crosses lined just so.
A simple solution to them must be clear
Spend half the time making peace appear
As attractive to those who died that were dear,
As we do lining the crosses just so,

⁵⁶Conner, *War and Remembrance*, 25.

⁵⁷Quoted in Elizabeth Grossman, "Architecture for a Public Client: The Monuments and Chapels of the American Battle Monuments Commission," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 43, 2 (1984), 120.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 121.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

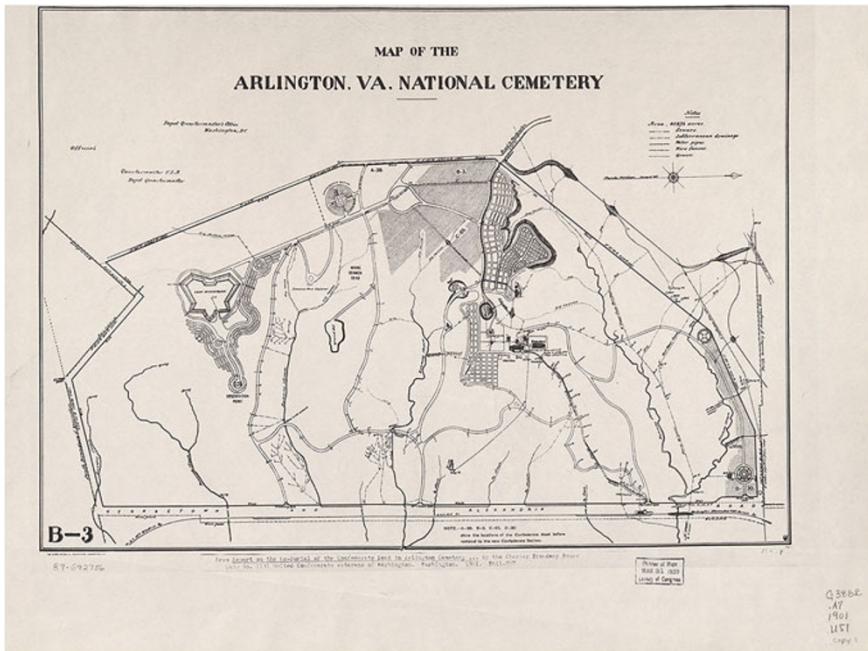


Figure 13. Map of Arlington National Cemetery. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, DC, 20540-4650, USA dcu. Call number G3882.A7 1901.U51.

In our cemeteries row on row.⁶¹

Contemporaneous and current-day readers would likely pick up on the allusion to John McCrae's famous 1915 poem "In Flanders Fields," which begins, "In Flanders Fields the poppies blow / Between the crosses, row on row."⁶² The subject matter of Croft's poem is itself geographical, as the narrator takes an aerial perspective in order to give readers a better sense of the cemetery's precise linear layout. Moreover, the poem's formal elements punctuate, as maps do, the relationship between what is represented on the page and the visual arrangement of the lines on the page. For instance, the description of the linear crosses is complemented by the visually apparent precision of the seven-line stanza, which itself is made up of rhyming couplets that bookend a tercet.

Even in the half-finished states these cemeteries would have been in when the official Gold Star pilgrimages took place, they already conformed to a geometric pattern that was so predictable, so orderly, so precise, and so intentionally lacking in detail that aerial photographs hardly look all that different from the blueprints of the cemeteries or the maps depicting them in guidebooks. Take, for instance, a

⁶¹Quoted in Henrietta Haug, ed., *Gold Star Mothers: A Collection of Notes Recording the Personal Histories of the Gold Star Mothers of Illinois* (Brussels, IL: s.n., 1941), 43.

⁶²John McCrae, "In Flanders Fields," in Candace Ward, ed., *World War I British Poets: Brooke, Owen, Sassoon, Rosenberg and Others* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1997), 12.

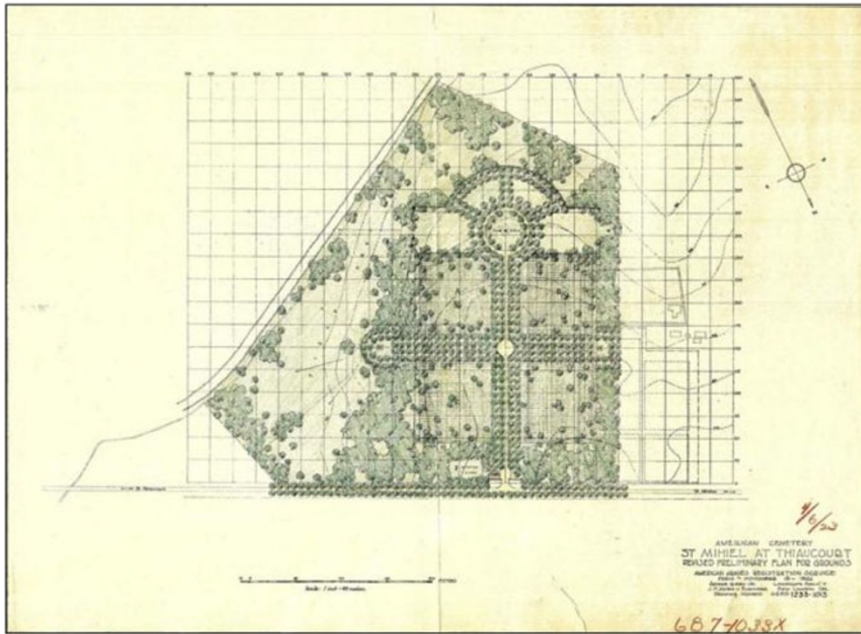


Figure 14. Map of the St. Mihiel American Cemetery, 1921. RG 117, Cartographic and Architectural Branch, NARA II.

map and an aerial photograph of the St. Mihiel American Cemetery in Thiaucourt, France (see Figures 14, 15). Their resemblance to one another, the photograph's angle notwithstanding, is so strong in part because the actual site lacks the kinds of architectural and landscape variation and detail that Grossman rightly finds in abundance at Arlington National Cemetery, but not in those created in Europe by the ABMC. Here I am reminded of the American Great War aviator Stewart Walcott, who, like Eddie Rickenbacker, compared landscapes below to their two-dimensional cartographic representations: "Nothing to do but climb two or three thousand feet and just sit there and watch the country unfold, comparing the maplike surface of the earth spread out below with the maps in the machine."⁶³ Typically, restitution photographs taken from the distance of two or three thousand feet above can obscure the details that are otherwise found on the landscape. But here, the photograph looks like a restituted map in large part because the cemetery itself – with its level, planar surface and its minimal human-made features (other than the simply designed headstones themselves) – is comparatively restituted.

In other ways, the St. Mihiel American Cemetery, designed by the University of Pennsylvania's Paul Cret, offers a fine case study in the culminating emotional effects of maps on pilgrims. In Cret's design of the cemetery, the map and aerial photograph suggest a spiritual progression for those who visit it. The chapel, which was

⁶³Quoted in Samuel Hynes, *The Unsubstantial Air: American Fliers in the First World War* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014), 71.

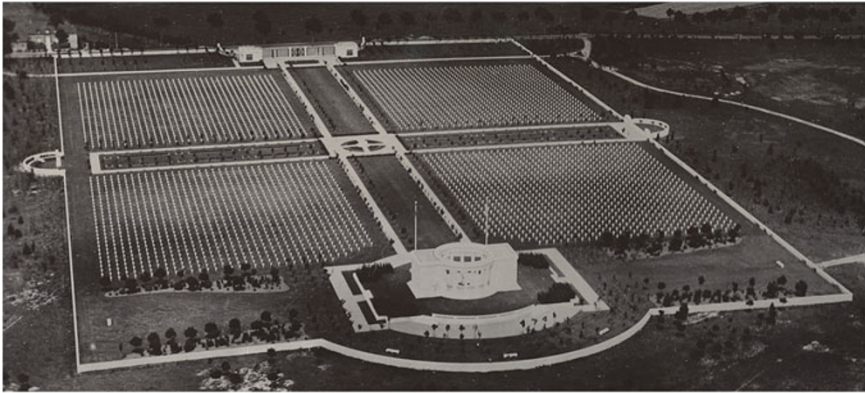


Figure 15. Aerial photograph of St. Mihiel American Cemetery, 1933. Image I 17-MC-34-75, Still Picture Branch, NARA II.

completed in 1932, is located at the back of the cemetery, and after pilgrims enter through the gated entrance, they must pass by 4,153 graves to reach it. The somber nature of the progression is ordered by the linear precision of the cross-shaped (and the occasional Star of David-shaped) marble headstones. The cemetery's orderly layout speaks to the emotional need to impose order on the chaotic and violent circumstances that brought these men to this hallowed terrain in the first place. For a pilgrim whose loved one is among the dead, the progression advances to a specific gravesite. The maps pilgrims use, be they the Michelin foldouts distributed to the American Gold Star mothers or ones they brought with them, deliver their users to their terminus: a landscape that, in its sparseness, angularity, and visual clarity, itself resembles a restituted map.

At the back of the St. Mihiel cemetery pilgrims encounter a symmetrical, two-winged Doric circular peristyle, designed by architect Thomas Harlan Ellett and made of Rocheret limestone. In the center of the peristyle stands a large urn-like sculpture designed by Paul Manship and inscribed with verticality in mind with Pegasus in ascent. The east wing houses what the ABMC's 1925 *Annual Report* called a "chapel of nonsectarian character," which contains a marble altar and several kneelers.⁶⁴ On the back wall laid with gold tiles is a large mosaic, designed by Barry Faulkner, which Paul Cret described as "a woman replacing her sword in the scabbard, with doves taking flight."⁶⁵ Directly across the peristyle from the chapel is the

⁶⁴United States Congress, House, and American Battle Monuments Commission, *Annual Report of the American Battle Monuments Commission to the President of the United States, Fiscal Year* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1926), 17, retrieved from the Library of Congress, at www.loc.gov/item/2022693061.

⁶⁵Historic American Landscapes Survey, Creator, Thomas Harlan Ellett, Paul Philippe Cret, US War Department, George Gibbs, Office of The Quartermaster General US War Department, Xenophon H. Price, et al., 2000, 10, *St. Mihiel American Cemetery & Memorial, Office and Visitor Buildings, Route de Verdun D3, Thiaucourt, Departement de la Meurthe-et-Moselle France, FR*. Moselle Thiaucourt Departement de la Meurthe, France. Translated by Mcpartland, Marymitter Documentation Compiled After. Photograph. At www.loc.gov/item/us0029.



Figure 16. Map of the St. Mihiel salient campaign on the back wall of the “museum” at the St. Mihiel American Cemetery in Thiaucourt, France. Photograph taken by the author.

west wing, known in historical documents as the “museum,” which contains a large map on the back wall showing the entire St. Mihiel offensive with different types and colors of marble delineating the AEF divisions (see Figure 16). This interior’s side walls list the names of 284 soldiers missing in action.

The map, I argue, makes the museum not a separate space from the chapel on the other end of the peristyle, but rather an extension of it. The absence of furniture further adds to the museum’s hallowed bearing and keeps the map the major focal point. To highlight the map’s equally ethereal quality, above it appear two angels holding a cartouche that reads “MAP OF S. MIHIEL REGION” in gold lettering. If pilgrims were impelled to kneel before the altar and the winged woman in the opposite chapel, they may feel nearly the same impulse in the museum, whose massive map – an imposing five meters high and six meters wide – looms over observers, thus reversing the traditional positionality whereby the user looms over the map to consult it for directions.⁶⁶

As both loomers and the loomed-over, pilgrims are invited to join those two angels; while angels look down on it, the pilgrim looks up at it to see the represented landscape of the offensive. Such spatial details, coupled with the dates inscribed on the map, also provide a temporal element, allowing visitors to pinpoint *when*, not just *where*, their soldiers fought and died. The experience collapses two of Henri Lefebvre’s spatial categories, “lived” space and “conceived” space,⁶⁷ opening up the possibility of cartographic transcendence: from a zenithal view – but one in which

⁶⁶Map dimensions provided by Felicia Bories, interpretive guide, St. Michiel American Cemetery, direct email to the author, 22 May 2025.

⁶⁷Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 38–39. The first of these Lefebvre also calls “lived” space (*ibid.*, 40), which describes an individual’s immediate interaction with a specific locale at a specific time. The second category is “conceived” as a reproduction of an actual space, such as a map of Paris or a photograph of the Adirondacks. The third

they are also loomed over and thus absorbed into the vast map – pilgrims have a metacognitive perspective in which they see where they are *as they are seeing where they are*. Thus, as the stone map indicates where pilgrims have arrived after several thousand miles of travel, not only do its massive size and colorful beauty envelop the pilgrims spatially, but also it and the pilgrims together become a part of the very landscape that also includes the 4,153 hallowed graves just beyond the museum's walls.

In this sense, with its geometrical orderliness and imposing marble map, the cemetery space puts the person in the map, just as guidebook maps had promised to put the person in the cemetery space. This experience becomes a metacommentary on what critic Peter Turchi calls a map's "logical end," for as pilgrims stand before the massive map, its 1:10,000 scale is enlarged to a 1:1 scale insofar as the map now *becomes a part of the very landscape* that looms over the pilgrims while they absorb it.⁶⁸ In other words, if maps are means to an end insofar as they lead one to a final destination, the museum's map becomes its own end. Noting how Gold Star mothers often felt closure upon visiting the overseas cemeteries, Budreau asserts, "If, as the women's earnest avowals suggest, inner peace and emotional closure were attained upon seeing their loved one's grave, then the decision to leave bodies overseas had only prolonged the mourning process."⁶⁹ Thus this cartographic tautology – in which a guidebook map leads to itself now rendered as a work of art on the wall of a memorial – may very well have offered additional closure to grieving pilgrims, whose emotional solace, like Mrs. Wheeler's solace in *One of Ours*, was derived in part by a map of far-off terrain indicating where their soldiers had fallen and would remain.

The marble map of the St. Mihiel Salient would have additional significance for relatives of soldiers whose bodies were never recovered or whose remains were never able to be identified. As [Figure 16](#) also shows, the names of the missing in action are inscribed on large bronze panels on the side walls of the museum flanking the map on the back wall. The names offer a clear example of what Thomas W. Laqueur terms "necronominalism," which he defines as "the precise counting and marking of the dead, one by one," and the treating of their very names "as if they were actual remains."⁷⁰ But in the cases of soldiers who could not be identified or recovered, names carry an even greater gravitas: "The lost and unidentified dead are imagined to be present in the lists of their names as they are imagined to be present in their bodies, as if each inscription were itself a tomb and the monument in a giant churchyard or cemetery."⁷¹ In the St. Mihiel Cemetery's museum, however, the map on the adjacent wall adds a new dimension to the necronominalism, adding an element that Laqueur also calls "necrogeography," which he describes as

is a space that, through "images and symbols," the artistic imagination "seeks to change and appropriate" (ibid., 39). T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land* or Williams Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County are good examples, inspired as they are by actual locations (London and Oxford, Mississippi respectively), but then artistically altered to become spaces all their own.

⁶⁸Turchi, *Maps of the Imagination*, 37.

⁶⁹Budreau, *Bodies of War*, 239.

⁷⁰Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead*, 414.

⁷¹Ibid., 419.

“the space of corruptible bodies, the space in which the cultural norms of the living dictate their fate.”⁷² For most pilgrims who lost a loved one in the 1918 St. Mihiel offensive, the necrogeography is the plot of ground either in the St. Mihiel American Cemetery itself or (for those families who chose repatriation) in a cemetery back in the United States. But for those soldiers whose bodies were never recovered, the map not only shows the general ground where they fell and likely still remain, but also then itself becomes the very necrogeography insofar as its spatial proximity to the bronze names, which now stand in place of the bodies, becomes the terminus of the pilgrim in lieu of an actual gravesite.

Maps were not only the means by which Great War soldiers fought; they were also the means by which soldiers who fell were located and memorialized. By the time the government-funded Gold Star pilgrimages came to an end after the summer of 1933, 6,685 mothers and widows out of an eligible 11,440 had taken the trek to Europe, their various guidebooks leading the way.⁷³ In the same year, the lack of reconciliation that had plagued the war’s end ever since the Treaty of Versailles came to a head with the appointment of a Great War veteran, Adolf Hitler, to the chancellorship of the German Republic. Within months the republic would fall into dictatorship. Back in France, writers for the ABMC, Dwight Eisenhower and George Marshall chief among them, were at work assembling an even greater battlefield guidebook.⁷⁴ Upon its release in 1938, however, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe* largely went unread and unused, as the world was already staring down the barrel of an even greater war. Maps would soon be in high demand once again – not for purposes of memorialization, but rather for an even greater bout of destruction.

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⁷²Ibid., 118.

⁷³Budreau, 207.

⁷⁴Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory*, xv, xx.

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