

NJS Presents**A Special Feature*****New Jersey and the Great War: Part II*****By Dr. Richard J. Connors****DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14713/njs.v4i1.103>**

As April 2017 marked the 100th anniversary of America's entry into World War I, this edition of NJS has several related offerings. These include this special feature, an adapted version of the second half of Dr. Richard J. Connors' new book, New Jersey and the Great War (Dorrance, 2017). The first half was published in our Summer 2017 issue. Those who want to see the unedited text (to include appendices, endnotes, illustrations, and tables) can always purchase the book [online!](#) We are most grateful to Dr. Connors for allowing us to share his insightful and comprehensive work in this way, and hope you will help us ensure the widest possible dissemination by sharing the very timely piece with your colleagues, students, family, and friends.

Chapter 6: America Enters the War

Victory in the 1916 Presidential elections encouraged Woodrow Wilson to resume the roles of crusader for peace and architect of a new world order. On December 18 he sent, via his ambassadors, a note to each belligerent, seeking "the terms on which the war might be concluded and the arrangements which would be deemed satisfactory as a guarantee against its renewal."²³ Ironically, on that same day Army Chief of Staff General Hugh Scott and General Leonard Wood asked Congress to authorize universal military training. The Germans said they were willing to talk; the British replied in general terms. Encouraged, the President made a speech to the Senate on January 22, spelling out his goals. These included peace without victory, an international League of Peace, and freedom of the seas for neutral nations. The first item was unacceptable to

both sides. After two and one-half years of battlefield slaughter and civilian suffering, victory (ill-defined) was still their goal.

The Germans made the next moves. They announced that unrestricted submarine warfare would begin again on February 1, and followed through by sinking 540,000 tons of shipping that month. The German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Arthur Zimmermann, proposed a Mexican alliance in case war broke out with the U.S., with the words “We shall give general financial support, and it is understood that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona.”²⁴ Insult was thus added to injury, and Wilson soon decided on war. On April 2, stating that “peace is no longer feasible or desirable,” he asked Congress for a declaration of war against Germany. A Joint Resolution to make this move was introduced at the same time. The Senate voted 82-6 in favor, and at 3:12 a.m. on April 6, the House of Representatives added its approval, 373-50.

The declaration of war was followed quickly by a flurry of federal activity. German-owned cargo and passenger vessels, interned in U.S. ports, were seized. Twenty-seven were in the Port of New York, including those at the Hamburg-American and North German Lloyd piers in Hoboken. Their crews, or what was left of them, were sent over to Ellis Island. Two Hamburg-American ships in Philadelphia were taken over by U.S. Marines, with the skeleton crews detained at an immigration station across the river in Gloucester, New Jersey. Spies, alleged spies and German agents, as well as suspicious individuals with “Teuton” backgrounds, were rounded up and hauled off to jail. One of these was Dr. Karl George Frank, a resident of Millburn, Essex County, who headed the Atlantic Communication Company, which had trans-Atlantic wireless facilities at Sayville, Long Island, and Tuckerton, Ocean County. (The U.S. Navy had taken over control of these operations in 1914.) Also brought into custody was an elderly, retired German officer, whose

only apparent crime was that he received an imperial pension. Local authorities became involved as well. Police in Paterson raided the offices of an alleged anarchist publication, *The New Era*; arrested the manager and printer; and held them without bail until federal officials could be contacted. In Verona, Essex County, a man was violently ejected from a meeting discussing creating a home guard when he hissed at an inappropriate time.

The nation's capital was a busy place as the nature and rules of the game changed radically. On the supply/financial side, J.P. Morgan began backing down. Its head, J.P. Morgan Jr., having campaigned aggressively against Wilson during the 1916 Presidential race, was persona non grata at the White House. On the day after war was declared, Treasury officials sought approval from Congress to borrow five billion dollars, with three of those allocated to the Allies. Uncle Sam thus quickly displaced the private sector as the source of dollars for France and Great Britain. Despite this intimate tie, the administration would not call itself an ally, but rather an "Associated Power." The government was wary of the implications of the term "alliance." With Congressional approval, Wilson established a War Industries Board, a Purchasing Commission, a Shipping Board, a Food Administration, and a Fuel Administration (among other new agencies) to assume control over specific areas. Coordination with the Allies, the private sector, and the military was a continuing problem for the next eighteen months. Each actor had its own priorities and preferences. Adding to the confusion: Allied missions continued to operate in the U.S.

For generations American political leaders had criticized the mass conscript armies of Europe, claiming the practice fostered militarism and chauvinistic nationalism. When the U.S. entered the war this was still the cry of many, resulting in calls (even in Congress) for a volunteer army. Former President Roosevelt offered to finance and lead a Division to France. The Wilson administration was, however, convinced that only a huge American Army could bring victory, and

that the efficient way to develop such a force was through conscription. The President had presented this proposal in his April 2 speech asking Congress for a declaration of war. The Legislature fell in line, despite some controversy, passing the Selective Service Act on May 18. This was not officially called a draft, a word with negative connotations from the Civil War.

Things moved quickly. The registration of all males, 21-31, was set for June 5. Local election boards became the draft boards in New Jersey, with Mayors as the responsible officials. Existing polling places became registration sites, although factories were sometimes used. With the enthusiastic backing of local officials, business men, and clergy, registration day was reported as orderly throughout the State. Symbolically, Congress enacted an Espionage Act that same day, indicating it would not tolerate any opposition to the war effort. A year later, June 5, 1918, registration was held for a second time and then, on September 12, for males ages 18-45. Although the reach of conscription was significantly expanded by the latter action, again things ran smoothly in New Jersey.

The public mood was changing during the weeks following the war's outbreak. Most Americans looked to the President to set the tone, and this he was eager to do. The Great War in his mind and speeches became a noble crusade "to make the world safe for democracy," and America's military were crusaders all. Conscription might be compulsory, but there was plenty of room for volunteers, he added. The outpouring of support for the Commander in Chief was impressive.

New Jersey's new Governor, Walter Edge, was already in action. In March he asked for, and received, extraordinary executive powers. On March 28 he created a Committee for Public Safety, composed of local officials and others, to organize security forces in New Jersey municipalities. Various named "Public Safety" committees, "Home Defense" leagues, "Home

Guards,” et al., they were designed to supplement local police in protecting factories, bridges, railroads, canals, and public buildings. These units were later referred to as the Militia Reserve, an attempt at uniformity of nomenclature. During the spring the Governor was also busy recruiting volunteers for the New Jersey National Guard, so that its units would be up to strength when called into federal service. Finally, in August, Edge reconstituted the State Militia, authorizing a force of twenty-six infantry and two machine gun companies, as well as two companies of African-American soldiers, one each in Newark and Atlantic City. These men, 21-45, were drawn primarily from those disqualified from federal service. Militia units used existing armories for meetings and drill. During the summer of 1918, Edge opened the National Guard Camp at Sea Girt for additional militia training. By that time the organization had a strength of 3,467.

As has been indicated earlier, Jerseyans were joiners. Once war was declared this led to an outpouring of activity by existing organizations, and a profusion of new ones in aid of the war effort. In part this was a reflection of popular enthusiasm for the Great Crusade. But in large part it expressed support for the sons, cousins, and uncles called to the colors – our boys going “over there.” Efforts ran the gamut from community sing-a-longs (labeled Liberty Sings); through rallies during the nation’s five Liberty Bond Drives (four in the war, and a Victory Drive in 1919); cooperation with food conservation and vegetable garden campaigns; sending packages to and knitting sweaters for the troops; providing funds for the Red Cross and other volunteer organizations; to holding send-off and welcome-back parades. For many New Jersey residents, the Great War was eighteen months of great excitement. For others it brought family tragedy when the sons, cousins, and uncles came back maimed or in caskets.

There was another tragedy – a spirit of intolerance, vicious at times, was set loose by the gods of war. Spies and saboteurs, ghosts and goblins, were rumored everywhere. German-

Americans were the chief targets. Despite the fact that New Jersey was home to thousands of citizens of German descent, that German factories, businesses, shops, and beer gardens were everywhere, “German” became a dirty word. German Valley in Morris County became Long Valley, the German Hospital in Newark was renamed Newark Memorial, and German language classes were dropped from the curricula in the State’s public schools. Anti-German actions ranged from the ugly, such as attempts to muzzle the German-language press, to the ridiculous – sauerkraut was now “Liberty Cabbage” on restaurant menus. The federal government didn’t help. By executive order, President Wilson created a Committee on Public Information on April 13, 1917. It was headed by George Creel, a long-time Progressive who abhorred censorship and hoped his agency would support the war effort by providing fact-based information. “Creel never abandoned his faith in ‘the facts,’ but as the war went forward, the CPI strayed ever farther from its original, exclusively informational mission and increasingly took on the character of a crude propaganda mill.”

One particularly ugly incident involved a Newark newspaper, ironically titled *New Jersey Freie Zeitung*, or, *New Jersey Free Press*. Acting on a complaint from a postal inspector, federal agents broke into its Newark offices in October, 1917, closed the plant and arrested the publishers, Benedict and Edwin Prieth, as well as the editors. All were subsequently indicted for alleged violations of the Espionage Act. This law made it a crime to issue any “false statements with intent to interfere with the operation or success of the military or naval forces of the United States or to promote the success of its enemies.” The trial began in September, 1918, as the war was entering in its last stages. The prosecutor claimed that the newspaper “made it appear that America had entered the war to fight England’s battles ... and in other ways tended to ridicule the justice of the American cause.” The trial ended in a hung jury. The *Freie Zeitung* would continue publication

until 1954. Most sections of the 1917 Espionage Act, accepted by the U.S. Supreme Court, are still on the books.

Chapter 7: Military Facilities in New Jersey

After the U.S. declared war, the Army created sixteen cantonments scattered throughout the country, places where draftees and volunteers, members of the new National Army, were assembled, organized into units, and received basic training. The men were typically housed in wooden barracks, hastily and sometimes poorly constructed. Sixteen other camps were built for the National Guard. These were largely tent cities, with permanent buildings for mess halls, offices, lavatories, and medical facilities. The Army also established specialized camps, including ones for officer training.

On the morning of June 1, 1917, an officer and nineteen enlisted men from Company C, 26th Engineers, New Jersey National Guard, arrived at Wrightstown, Burlington County, to begin construction of a cantonment. Located on over 5,000 acres of woods and cornfields, it would be called Camp Dix. Like other cantonments, it was named after a Civil War figure. Major General John Adams Dix was a veteran of the War of 1812 and the Civil War. His public service included stints as Governor of New York, U.S. Senator, and U.S. Minister to France. With construction continuing through 1917 and 1918, Camp Dix eventually included 1,655 buildings, as well as drill fields, tactical grounds, and an adjacent rifle range. Its construction attracted skilled and unskilled labor, totaling more than 11,000 persons. Base pay was sixty cents an hour; electricians and plumbers received an extra two and one-half cents per hour.

To appreciate the nature of Camp Dix, one must forget about Valley Forge and even Civil War encampments. Dix was a product of, and a reflection of an urban-industrial age. With a peak population of 35,000 it was as large as a medium-size New Jersey city. It had the characteristics

of a 20th century community: heated, lighted barracks, lavatories with running water, up-to-date water supply and sewage disposal systems, a power plant, refrigerated food storage, and paved roads. The base hospital boasted of 1,800 radiators; each mess hall could seat 1,500. The YWCA supervised a residence hall where wives and sweethearts could spend the night while visiting. Although automobiles and trucks were numerous as Dix had a truck driver school, base transportation still retained vestiges of the past. Horses and mules were on hand in large numbers. These animals marked the prevailing mode of transportation on the Western Front, pulling mobile kitchens, artillery pieces, supply and ammunition wagons. Dix had to prepare for this reality, so it had facilities such as a saddler school, a blacksmith school, and a remount station to train horses for duty in combat areas.

Camp Dix was formally opened on July 18; on August 29 it became the home of the 78th Infantry Division. The Division remained there until it was deployed overseas in May, 1918. Initially, only very basic training could be carried out. One reason was the lack of experienced instructors. General Pershing and the First Division were already in France, having shipped from Hoboken in mid-June 1917. That action was intended as a symbol of America's commitment to the Allied cause, but it deprived the home front of many veterans who could serve as cadre. When 1917 opened the authorized strength of the Army was only 3,820 officers and 84,799 noncoms and enlisted men. Pershing took almost 12,000 men with him to France.

The Allies tried to fill the void by sending over experienced British and French instructors to Dix and other stateside camps. But these camps lacked the equipment to train men for the kind of warfare that characterized the Western Front in 1917. Coordinated tank, infantry, artillery, poison gas, and airplane combat had developed. Infantry tactics had also changed, from mass frontal attacks with rifles and bayonets to fluid, infiltrating movements with grenades, flame

throwers, and chauchats (light machine guns). Dix was ill prepared for this type of training: it had one tank and no airplanes. Training at Dix emphasized close order drill, rifle and bayonet work, gas mask familiarization, trench construction, barbed wire usage, and personal hygiene. The importance of the last had been brought home by horror stories from the European front lines about rats, lice, trench foot, and pneumonia.

The 78th Division was filled with draftees, many of whom were recent immigrants who spoke little English. Dix thus had to provide classrooms for language instruction. Loyalty was apparently no problem. Despite ethnic heterogeneity, everyone identified himself as an American. The troops were well fed; many put on weight during their stay at Dix. The big complaints were about the delay in going overseas, the boring routine, and especially long hikes with full packs. One soldier sent his mother a post-card featuring a doughboy's hob-nail boots. The note read, "I've been through three pairs of these already, so you can tell how much we march."

Although the Camp Dix scene was dominated by the 78th Division, other units received at least part of their training on its grounds. Among these were artillery sections of the 92nd (Buffalo) Division. From time to time Dix also functioned as an embarkation facility.

Since Hoboken was designated a major embarkation port, a location nearby was needed to facilitate assembling, organizing, and outfitting the troops for shipment overseas. The site chosen was on the brow of the Palisades, from which soldiers could be moved by ferry down the Hudson to Hoboken's piers. The camp covered some 770 acres in Bergen County, between the boroughs of Cresskill and Dumont. It was also named after a Civil War veteran. General Wesley Merritt, an 1860 West Point graduate, was a career Army officer with service in the Civil War, Indian campaigns, and the Spanish-American War. Merritt was Superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point for five years in the 1880's. He was also the first Governor-General of the

Philippines. Merritt retired in 1900 and died in 1910 at the age of seventy-four.

As was the case with Dix, Camp Merritt developed into a mini-city with 611 two-story barracks, mess halls, fire stations, post offices, a 2,500 seat theater, warehouses, refrigeration and power plants, medical facilities, ball fields, and tailor shops. One of the last even had a sock-darning machine. The camp's official capacity was 2,000 officers and 40,000 enlisted men. Merritt was a transient camp, receiving its first contingent of departing soldiers in August, 1917. Troops typically remained there for only a few days, receiving medical exams and shots, clothing and equipment, before moving down to Hoboken. Efforts to make their stay more pleasant involved on-site recreation, Red Cross services, as well as hospitality and entertainment provided by nearby communities. The Red Cross alone gave 100,000 knitted sweaters to embarking troops. Camp Merritt also held naturalization ceremonies for immigrant soldiers. Some 8,000 became citizens there.

Camp Merritt's record output was 84,272 men in August, 1918; the total shipped from the camp is listed at 578,000. After the Armistice, Merritt served as a receiving station, processing over 500,000 returning troops. While being mustered out, a soldier was allowed to keep his uniform, shoes, raincoat or overcoat, and, if he had served overseas, helmet and gas mask. He received any current and back pay, a bonus of \$60, and money for his trip home. Unfortunately, the camp, like so many others, was hard hit by the influenza pandemic of 1918, which stretched its medical personnel and facilities to the limit. The Army's appreciation for community support of Camp Merritt was expressed by the distribution of 37,624 medals to Bergen County schoolchildren. Each medal read: "the Boys of Camp Merritt are grateful to you, 1919." The camp was decommissioned in November, 1919.

In addition to Camps Dix and Merritt, New Jersey was home to a variety of military and

naval facilities. Access to Atlantic ports, diversity of manufacturers, the availability of both skilled and unskilled labor: these were among the factors influencing the government's decisions to locate in the State. Some operations, such as the Picatinny Arsenal and Fort Hancock, traced their origins back into the 19th century. Most were hastily built following the 1917 declaration of war. Some had long lives – Dix is an active base today. Most were shut down within a few years of the war's end.

Early in the Great War the Baldwin Locomotive Company decided to go into the munitions business. It created an artillery shell plant at Eddystone, a small town in southeastern Pennsylvania. The Eddystone Munitions Corporation set up its proving, i.e., testing, ground at Lakehurst, Ocean County. The shells were targeted for the Russian imperial army, and Russian inspectors could be seen in town from time to time. The U.S. Army took over control of the Lakehurst site in the summer of 1917 and turned it into a chemical warfare proving ground. Two poison gas target ranges were constructed, each four miles long. Named Camp Kendrick, it also had laboratories, barracks, and facilities for poison gas training and experimentation, including an elaborate trench system. The proving ground personnel totaled some 1,500 soldiers and civilians. The chemical warfare training program had a capacity of 3,400 men. The operation shut down quickly after the end of the war: the base was closed and its buildings sold. The area did not lie fallow for long. In a move authorized by the acting Secretary of the Navy, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the Navy took over the camp for a dirigible base. As Naval Air Station, Lakehurst, it is still there.

Camp Alfred Vail was located in eastern Monmouth County. This Army Signal Corps Camp was built in Little Silver, during the summer of 1917, on the site of an abandoned race track. It was named in honor of a colleague of Samuel F.B. Morse, inventor of the modern telegraph. The post had two basic missions. One was to train telegraph, telephone, and radio operators, as

well as cryptographers, all of whom were desperately needed overseas. The total trained, 1917-1918, was approximately 1,500 officers and 12,000 enlisted men. The second was to be a laboratory and experimental station for the Signal Corps, especially in the field of radio. Special emphasis was placed on experiments in air-to-ground communication. In 1918, Camp Vail had its own airfield, pilots, and fleet of planes. Vail also trained homing pigeons (used to carry messages on active battlefields), as well as their caretakers. These pigeons were used by the Army in the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne campaigns. Vail survived the Armistice and was renamed Fort Monmouth in 1925.

The Army set up General Hospitals at Lakewood, Cape May, and Colonia. Dix and Merritt had their own base hospitals. The units in Lakewood and Cape May utilized existing resort hotels. General Hospital No.9 occupied the Lakewood Hotel, the Florence-in-the-Pines Hotel and, for storage, the Aeolian building. After signing leases, the Army assumed control on January 10, 1918 and, following necessary adaptations, brought in the first patients on February 14. These were men who had come down with scarlet fever at Camp Merritt. With 1,000 beds, Hospital No.9 was a busy place through the spring of 1919, especially caring for returning veterans. Its role ended on May 31, 1919, when the 350 remaining patients were transferred to other facilities.

The Army's experience at Cape May was not as smooth. It leased the Hotel Cape May for General Hospital No.11, and took control in January, 1918. The hotel had been vacant for some time; its heating and plumbing systems were in poor shape. Repairs and renovations continued into the fall, so it could care for comparatively few patients during the interim. Its historian noted that "The general sanitary condition of the neighborhood was satisfactory ... though in summer the far-famed Jersey mosquitoes abounded in great numbers." By October, 1918, with 750 beds its daily census was about 600 patients. Hospital No.11 remained active through the spring of 1919,

again primarily caring for sick and wounded men returning from Europe. Army use ended on July 20, 1919, when its 428 patients were transferred elsewhere.

The most ambitious medical project in New Jersey was the construction of a complete hospital, capacity 1,000 beds, in the Colonia section of Woodbridge Township. General Hospital No.3 was located on the estate of Charles D. Freeman, who donated the land and his home to the cause. Construction began in February, 1918; on July 5 the hospital admitted its first patient. On August 1 it received seventeen men wounded during the famous battle of Chateau Thierry – the start of a steady stream from overseas. General Hospital No.3 focused on surgery and in particular on orthopedics. On January 1, 1919, it opened an artificial limb service, one of only two in the East. By April, 1919, its amputee census reached 750. Despite its modern facilities, which included an up-to-date x-ray laboratory, and an experienced staff, General Hospital No.3 was closed that October and its 613 patients transferred. In retrospect, one wonders why.

The large number of troops moving out from and back into Hoboken dictated the use of temporary embarkation/debarkation hospitals. One was in Hoboken itself, in cooperation with the city's St. Mary's Hospital. Another was in Secaucus, close by Laurel (Snake) Hill, using Hudson County facilities. There was also a temporary hospital on nearby Ellis Island.

The Army Ordnance Depot in Middlesex County was the largest on the East Coast. Known as Camp Raritan or the Raritan Arsenal, it was opened in February, 1918, along the north bank of the Raritan River. Its primary mission was to store and then ship munitions overseas. Eighty-five magazines were constructed to store artillery shells and powder; a dozen more to store high explosives. A two-thousand-foot dock was built along the river for vessels shipping these supplies. The dangerous environment meant that it was difficult to hire and keep a labor force: the civilian turnover rate was high. Raritan's busiest month was August, 1918, when it handled 66,510 tons of

war material. The work force that month ranged from 700-900 men per day. The Camp also featured an Ordnance training school, which in August had a total of 6,519 officers and men on hand. The Army made Raritan a permanent base in 1919, and Ordnance specialist schools were located there. The site is now the home of Middlesex County College.

There were two major Coast Artillery facilities in New Jersey, Fort Hancock and Fort Mott. Between 1890 and 1910 the Army constructed a modern artillery complex at Sandy Hook, Monmouth County. Designed to guard the entrance to New York harbor, in 1895 it was named after General Winfield Scott Hancock, a veteran of the Mexican and Civil Wars. On December 7, 1917, the Army organized the 57th Coast Artillery Regiment there. In May, 1918, the Regiment was sent to France, where it handled 155mm howitzers in support of the French Second Army and the American First Army. The Regiment returned to Fort Hancock in January, 1919, when all personnel, except for those in the Regular Army, were discharged. Fort Hancock ceased being an active Army post in 1974, when it became part of the Gateway National Recreation Area.

Fort Mott is located at Finn's Pont, Pennsville Township, Salem County. It was one of a trio of Coast Artillery fortifications built in the 1890s to control access to the upper Delaware River and thus protect the city and port of Philadelphia. Its two neighbors were Fort Delaware, on an island in the middle of the river, and Fort Du Pont on the Delaware shore. In 1897 the fort was given its name to honor a Civil War hero, Major General Gershom Mott, a New Jersey native. Fort Mott's personnel increased during 1917-1918 to about four hundred officers and enlisted men, with the newcomers housed in temporary wooden buildings. It became obsolete, as did its fellows, shortly after the war when Fort Saulsbury was constructed downriver. Beginning in 1922 the Army provided a small contingent of caretakers at Fort Mott. It is now a 124-acre State Park, which contains some of the old fortifications.

Chapter 8: The Navy, Coast Guard, and Marines

Once war was declared, New Jersey's young men scattered in all directions. The first to depart were members of the Naval Militia, who reported to the Brooklyn and Philadelphia Navy Yards on April 6 for a variety of assignments. Recruits for the Navy, Coast Guard, and Marines went as individuals or in small groups to various training camps. In the summer draftees began to be called to the colors. To trace their stories is beyond the scope of this work. The majority of New Jersey draftees and volunteers went to Camp Dix, home of the 78th Infantry Division. Most of her National Guard units were sent to Camp McClellan, Alabama, home of the 29th Infantry Division. After taking brief looks at the Navy, Coast Guard, and Marines, the focus here will be on the Western Front in 1918 and the story of these two Divisions.

By the time the United States entered the Great War, conflict among capital ships (dreadnoughts, battle cruisers, and armored cruisers) was over. There had been one major struggle between the warships of the British Grand Fleet and the German High Seas Fleet. This was the battle of Jutland, off the west coast of Denmark, May 31-June 1, 1916. Statistically it could be listed as a German victory. The British lost six battle and armored cruisers, and 6,094 men. The Germans lost two cruisers and 2,551 sailors. But the High Seas Fleet retreated to Wilhelmshaven, never to challenge the British again. The Grand Fleet retired to nurse its wounds and plan for the next battle: a battle that would never occur. In short, the jailer rattled his keys and the jailed did not try to escape again. Germany also had a dozen cruisers and gunboats in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, protecting her colonies and shipping. Once war began in the summer of 1914 they became commerce raiders. It was a brief experiment: most were destroyed before the end of that year.

Much to the disappointment of eager Admirals, the U.S. Navy's capital ships were all dressed up with no battles to fight.²⁹ Five dreadnoughts did cross the Atlantic to join the British

Grand Fleet; others went as a reserve force to Bantry Bay, Ireland. Boring duty. Three cruisers went to Gibraltar and devoted their time to escort work. Dangerous, but boring also. The crucial job for the Navy, 1917-1918, was ensuring that troops and cargos made it safely across the Atlantic to England and France. This involved three principal tasks: providing officers and crews, protecting convoys, and taking offensive actions against German submarines. The American merchant marine, despite accelerated vessel construction between 1914 and 1917, was unable to meet the war's new challenges. "It was one of the anomalies of this war due to our small deep sea marine that instead of merchant sailors being called upon to help man our battleships, the war fleet was called upon to help supply trained men for transports and freighters." Three hundred and eighty-four merchant ships eventually had Navy sailors aboard. These handled the guns installed to make the ships armed merchantmen, and functioned as radio operators and signalmen. In many cases the Navy had to provide officers and crews, e.g., for the German ocean liners seized in Hoboken and other ports, and then converted into troopships. The names of these vessels were usually changed: *Vaterland* to *Leviathan*, *Barbarossa* to *Mercury*, *Friedrich der Grosse* to *Huron*, et al. *Imperator* remained *Imperator*.

In April, 1917, U.S. Navy personnel totaled 65,777; eighteen months later there were 32,474 officers and 497,030 enlisted men. The fleet expanded from 197 vessels to 2,002 during the same period. To meet its training needs the Navy established a camp in each Naval District. The site chosen for the Fourth Naval District, headquartered in Philadelphia, was Cape May. Camp *Wissahickon* was opened there in the summer of 1917. The officer in charge was Lieutenant Paul Harrison of the Coast Guard. The camp's primary mission was to train guards and communications specialists for armed merchantmen. By Armistice it had processed some 7,000 sailors through its programs.

Troop transports went to Europe as part of convoys of four to twelve, which sailed to England and France at intervals of approximately a week. They were under the control of Vice Admiral Albert Gleaves, who was appointed “Commander of Convoy Operations in the Atlantic” on May 29, 1917. Most of the Navy’s destroyers were sent to Europe and based in Ireland, the south of England, and at Gibraltar. They provided cover for convoys entering the danger zone around the British Isles and France. Seaplanes assisted these surface vessels by scouting for enemy submarines. Escorting convoys across the Atlantic were cruisers, destroyers, and submarines. Cargo vessels also received Navy protection, but not to the extent given troopships. In order to minimize the U-boat menace, convoys followed zig-zag patterns, allowed no lights at night, and varied their crossing routes. Increasingly, vessels were painted in camouflage patterns, the so-called dazzle effect.

Only one transport was lost on the outward voyage from Hoboken to Europe: HMS *Tuscania*, sunk off the Irish coast on February 5, 1918, with the loss of 182 American soldiers. A British liner, HMS *Moldavia*, functioning as a transport, was sunk in the English Channel on May 23, 1918; this cost the lives of 56 Americans. The return trip was also dangerous. Three transports were sunk going back to the U.S.: the *Antilles* (67 lost), the *Covington* (6 lost), and the *Lincoln* (27 lost). Ironically, both the *Covington* and *Lincoln* were converted German ocean liners. Overall, when compared to cargo ships (an estimated 5,000 were sunk between 1914 and 1918) the movement of 2,079, 880 persons in troop transports was remarkable for its lack of tragedies. The convoy system had proved its worth. Between July 26, 1917 and October 5, 1918, 14,968 ships moved across the Atlantic, outward or inward bound. One hundred and eighteen were lost, or .79 per cent.

These results also reflected the Navy’s anti-submarine operations. One component was the

sub-chaser, the forerunner of World War II's PT boat. The U.S. sub-chaser fleet ultimately would total 303 vessels. Beginning in February, 1918, these ships were deployed to Europe and the Mediterranean: thirty to Cobh, Ireland; thirty-six to Plymouth, England; thirty-six to Corfu, a Mediterranean island. This last group helped the Allies control the shipping lanes into and out of the Adriatic Sea. Aggressive patrolling by American destroyers equipped with depth charges formed another part of the anti-sub campaign. This helped turn the English Channel, as well as the British and French coasts, into danger zones for German submarines. Related was the North Sea Barrage. This was an effort to deny U-boats access to the North Atlantic by creating a minefield from the Orkney Islands, north of Scotland, to Norway. The mines were the U.S. designed Mark 6, each containing three hundred pounds of TNT within a 34" sphere. Mines were anchored and then suspended by cables to specified depths. The John Roebling Company of Trenton was a major supplier of cables. Between June, 1918, and the end of that October, American and British minelayers placed over 70,000 mines, with 56,000 attributed to the U.S. Navy's work. The project was not complete when the Armistice brought it to a halt.

The year 1918 was still a rough one at sea, for the Germans continued to build submarines and use them aggressively. They developed large U-boats capable of crossing the Atlantic, laying mines, attacking American shipping and shore installations. On "Black Sunday," June 2, 1918, six vessels were sunk and two heavily damaged off the New Jersey coast. Nonetheless, the anti-sub campaign paid off, although the relative success of each component cannot be gauged accurately. From 1914 through 1916 the Germans lost forty-six submarines; the number in 1917 was sixty-three, in 1918 sixty-nine.

By November, 1918, Admiral Gleaves' Cruiser and Transport Force totaled twenty-four cruisers, forty-two transports, four hundred fifty-three cargo ships. Only one capital ship had been

sunk, the armored cruiser San Diego. It struck a mine off Long Island on the morning of July 19, 1918. Six lives were lost. "During the night ... the various vessels which had picked up the survivors arrived at the Port of Embarkation, Hoboken, N.J., where the ever-ready women of the Red Cross met them at the piers and supplied them with comfort kits and hot coffee before they were taken aboard other transports at the docks."

The modern U.S. Coast Guard was authorized by Act of Congress in January, 1915, combining the Life Saving Service and the Revenue Cutter Service. The Act stated that the Coast Guard "shall constitute a part of the military forces of the United States and ... shall operate under the Treasury Department in time of peace and operate as part of the Navy, subject to the orders of the Secretary of the Navy, in time of war or when the President shall so direct." On April 6, 1917, President Wilson issued an executive order making that transfer.

The Coast Guard's authorized strength in 1917 was 270 commissioned officers and 4,897 warrant officers, petty officers, and enlisted men. The organization had a variety of vessels, reflecting the diversity of its duties. Ships ranged from beach boats at life-guarding stations to harbor cutters and cruising cutters. The last group, with an average length of two hundred feet, were ocean-going vessels that could be used to patrol fishing grounds and be on iceberg lookout. The U.S. entry into the Great War did not radically change many of the Coast Guard's traditional duties. It still had to staff lighthouses, lightships and beach rescue stations, maintain coastal and harbor patrols, provide search and rescue service for vessels in distress, et al. New Jersey was in the Fourth Naval District; regional headquarters was in Asbury Park. Under regional jurisdiction were thirty-three Coast Guard stations along the Jersey shore.

The principal new obligation was convoy duty. After receiving additional armament and necessary updating, six cruising cutters were sent to Gibraltar during the late summer, early

autumn of 1917. During the next year they provided escort service for Mediterranean convoys, as well as those going to and from Gibraltar and the British Isles. In addition, converted yachts were stationed in French ports for coastal patrol. One of these, USS Rambler, was stationed at Brest. It assisted in rescue efforts on April 28, 1918, when the Florence H, an ammunition ship carrying 4,000 tons of smokeless powder, caught fire and sank in a French harbor. Other converted yachts, generally under Coast Guard supervision, did similar patrol work along U.S. coasts. By the summer of 1918 the service had increased in size to 228 commissioned officers, 412 warrant officers, and 5,920 enlisted men.

Two tragedies occurred in September, 1918. The cruising cutter USS Seneca was escorting a convoy, which included the British collier Wellington, from Wales to Gibraltar when the collier was struck in the bow by a German torpedo. The date was September 16. Believing that the ship could make it to port, the Captain of the Seneca sent twenty volunteers to help navigate her. These included seventeen-year old Boy First Class (apprentice seaman) James Nevins and Acting Machinist William Boyce, whose home was in Newark. Boyce took charge of the Wellington's engine room and soon had the ship under way. Unfortunately, the collier ran into a bad storm, foundered and sank. Eleven of the volunteers perished, including Nevins and Boyce. Posthumously, Nevins received the Navy Cross, Boyce the Distinguished Service Medal – one of only two awarded to Coast Guard men during the war. The second tragedy happened on September 26. The USS Tampa, a 190' cruising cutter, had completed its run as convoy escort from Gibraltar to Bristol. Heading back to its berth in Wales it was torpedoed by a German U-boat, exploded and sank. All hands – the crew of 111 and 16 civilian passengers – were lost. Three New Jerseyans were among that number: William Holland of Newark, Alexander Saldarini of Union Hill, and Edward Shanahan from Jersey City. The Tampa's commander, Captain Charles Satterlee,

posthumously became the other Coast Guard recipient of the Distinguished Service Medal.

A domestic disaster that brought the Coast Guard to the rescue took place in New Jersey on October 4-5, 1918. This was the fire and series of explosions at the T.A. Gillespie shell loading plant in the Morgan section of Sayreville. Because of the importance of the Port of New York to the war effort, the Coast Guard had a substantial presence in the area, including contingents at Perth Amboy and Sandy Hook. As soon as he heard the news, the port commandant, Captain Godfrey Carden, dispatched some two hundred men to the scene. As first responders they restored order, evacuated families from nearby neighborhoods, and began to bring out the dead and wounded. Until relieved by the Army, the Coast Guard secured the remaining buildings and assisted civilian refugees. One officer recalled: "All the way down to Perth Amboy, I observed miles and miles of refugees; in fact, they extended in one continuous line from the outer limits of South Amboy to Perth Amboy. Countless children, invalids, and aged people were being carried by the stronger ones and with the interspersed farm wagons loaded with families' earthly possessions, it made one think of what takes place in advance of a victorious army." The harbor cutter USS Takana came down from Manhattan to help vessels damaged by flying debris from the massive explosions. Twelve Coast Guard sailors subsequently received the Navy Cross for their "conspicuous act(s) of heroism and devotion to duty on the occasion of the disaster at the T.A. Gillespie Shell Loading Plant."

The Armistice brought little relief to the busy force. The Coast Guard had to handle ports trying to cope with the constant flow of troopships – supplemented by battleships, cruisers, and leased vessels – bringing the AEF back home. They did mine sweeping in the North Sea, and towed sub-chasers back across the Atlantic. Meanwhile, a major threat to its independence was taking place in the nation's capital. On December 14, 1918, a bill was introduced into the House

of Representatives to transfer the organization permanently from the Treasury Department to the Navy. After all, it was argued, the Coast Guard and Navy had worked well during the war. Why continue them as separate organizations? Hearings were held in the House during January and February, 1919. No immediate action was taken. The bill's opponents introduced a joint resolution at the end of February returning the Coast Guard. Again no conclusive action was taken. Politics then moved to the forefront. The new Secretary of the Treasury, Carter Glass, was a nine-term Congressman and a confidant of the President. Glass called in his chips and managed to stifle further action. He was helped by Congressmen from coastal districts, worried about the fate of local life-saving stations. When Wilson came back from Versailles, Glass lobbied vigorously for the return of the Coast Guard to his agency. On August 28, 1919, the President signed an executive order which effected this transfer.

When war began the U.S. Marines, then as now, were everywhere: aboard capital ships, protecting Navy Yards here and abroad, doing guard duty at ammunition depots (including Morris County's Lake Denmark Navy Depot), protecting overseas legations, et al. On April 6, 1917, the active duty strength of the Corps was 13,725 officers and men. By Armistice this had multiplied over five-fold to 72,963. Enlistments from New Jersey during this period amounted to 1,521. The popularity of the Marines meant they could be choosy – a man wanting to join the Corps had to have a minimum of twenty healthy teeth. Basic training was given at Parris Island, South Carolina; advanced training at Quantico, Virginia.

Wanting to be involved on the Western Front, the Navy volunteered a Marine regiment for service as infantry with the 1st Division, U.S. Army. Accordingly, the 5th Marine Regiment went to France with the Division in the summer of 1917. In October another Regiment, the 6th Marines, joined the 5th; both were transferred, as the 4th Marine Brigade, to the 2nd Division, U.S. Army.

This Brigade, including the 6th Marine Machine Gun Battalion which arrived in January, 1918, would be active throughout the rest of the war.

In early June, 1918, the 2nd Division was called upon to help the Allies repel the German drive to Paris. The Marines fought in defense of the Chateau-Thierry sector and, when the Allies went on the offensive, helped clear German troops out of Belleau Wood. American casualties were high: about 9,000 overall, with the Marines accounting for almost one-half of those killed and wounded. As the Allied attacks continued, the Marines were in action in the Aisne-Marne (Soissons) area. On July 28 the Brigade Commander, General John Lejeune, was placed in charge of the Army's 2nd Division, and would remain in command until that Division was demobilized in August, 1919. The 4th Brigade participated in the St. Mihiel offensive in mid-September, fought in Champagne in October, and in the Meuse-Argonne campaign, November 1-11. After a brief stint with the Army of Occupation, the Brigade returned stateside. The men usually came back in small detachments; the transfer was all but complete in early August. On August 3, 1919, the Brigade's Army assignment was ended and it came back under control of the Navy Department. The Brigade was demobilized that same month. As members of the AEF, Marines had suffered 2,851 deaths, with almost 1,500 killed in action. Most of the latter were casualties in the June operations. Lejeune would become Commandant of the Marine Corps, 1920-1929; in 1941 a camp in North Carolina was named in his honor.

Chapter 9: The Western Front in 1918

For Germany, the strategic history of its war effort is the story of big gambles that failed. In 1914 her leaders gambled on the success of the Schlieffen Plan, the scythe through northern France that would quickly bring the country to its knees. 1916 saw the Verdun campaign: attacks on French fortifications intended to bleed her to death. After some 350,000 casualties, that effort

was abandoned. In 1917 came unrestricted submarine warfare. Germany's leaders, Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff, knew this move might well bring America into the war. And it did. Their gamble was that the Allies would be defeated before the U.S. could make a difference. They were wrong. Shipping losses were indeed catastrophic: 881,000 gross tons in April, 1917. But the Allies didn't cave. Introducing the convoy system, with vessels guarded by British and American warships, trans-Atlantic shipping continued. In small numbers at first, American soldiers began to appear on the Western Front.

As Germany entered 1918, she faced a major positive, and a major negative. The positive was on the Eastern Front, where the Bolshevik Revolution brought fighting to a halt on December 5, 1917. In the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, March 3, 1918, Russia ceded substantial territories to the Central Powers. Although troops would be needed for occupation duty, many German soldiers could now be transferred to the Western Front. The negative was on the home front. Shortages of food, fuel, and other necessities; continuing military and civilian casualties; war weariness in general: all added up to crisis. Would Berlin follow St. Petersburg in revolt? Time was running out. It was imperative to take another big gamble. This would be the "Kaiserschlacht," or Emperor's battle, on the Western Front during the spring of 1918. In helping to halt this offensive, and in contributing to the counter-strokes that followed, America would make its military mark on the Great War.

On March 21, 1918, the Germans launched a series of attacks designed to defeat the Allies or at least make them accept a negotiated peace. The point of attack was the juncture between the British and French armies in the Somme River area. The sector was held by the British 5th Army, a depleted and exhausted foe. The aims were simple, probably too simple. Punch a hole in the Allied line, push the British back to the Channel ports, then drive towards Paris until the French

capitulated. Using the fluid tactics developed by General Oskar von Hutier, the Germans did punch that hole. They “staged a brief whirlwind artillery bombardment, followed instantly by extremely heavily armed, highly trained and well-motivated shock troops, who probed to find and then advance through weak spots in the defense.” The Germans routed the 5th Army and penetrated to a depth of forty miles, coming to a halt in early April near the village of Cantigny. The problems they now faced were repeats of 1914: the heavy casualties that accompany offensive action, the exhaustion of the soldiers, and the logistical nightmare of supplying rapidly advancing troops with food, ammunition, and replacements. In the twisted logic of an infantry war of movement, the farther you go the harder it is to maintain momentum.

On April 9, 1918, the Germans shifted their attention northwest, spending the month trying to push the British into the Channel ports. Tactical successes; strategic failure. After moving up supplies and reinforcements, they launched a new drive to Paris on May 27. This struggle would continue until August 6, the last throw of the dice in the big gamble. Meanwhile U.S. troops at last were crossing the Atlantic in large numbers: 120,072 in April; 247,714 in May; 280,434 in June. Except for rifles, they came over with little in the way of armaments. The American Expeditionary Force would depend primarily on the French to supply it with artillery, tanks, machine guns, and airplanes.

There was a continuing struggle between the AEF’s General John Pershing and Allied leaders over how best to utilize U.S. troops. On March 28 Ferdinand Foch of France had become Allied Supreme Commander, responsible for coordinating all defensive and offensive efforts. So it was Pershing and Foch who went head to head in the spring and summer of 1918. Foch wanted to feed the newly arriving Americans into existing Allied units. Pershing’s opposition was helped by intra-Allied dissension about who should be the recipients. Events then conspired to put a

temporary end to the squabble. The Americans had to go where they were needed most.

The 1st Division, sent to France the preceding summer, now entered the line just south of the village of Cantigny. To the surprise of the Germans, the doughboys went on the attack on May 28, captured the village and rebuffed the inevitable counterattacks. The U.S. 3rd Division helped the French defend the Marne River bridges; the 2nd and 3rd stopped the enemy at Chateau Thierry and drove them out of the Belleau Woods nearby. Paris was saved. Ludendorff tried to get his offensive going in mid-July – again in the Marne sector – but gave up and began to pull back. When the British broke through his lines at Amiens on August 8, Ludendorff – calling that day the “Black Friday of the German Army” – knew the big gamble had failed.

Ready to go on the offensive, Allied leaders were again dogged by dissension. Pershing tried to end the argument by creating the independent U.S. First Army on August 10. His aim was to take this force east of Verdun and attack a German salient called St. Mihiel, 150 miles east of Paris. He hoped to move from there into the province of Lorraine, capture the city of Metz, and cross the Rhine into the heart of Germany. Foch was incensed; he wanted to attack elsewhere. Finally, it was agreed that French and American troops first would pinch off the St. Mihiel bulge. After that they would go on the offensive, west of Verdun, around and through the Argonne Forest, cross the Meuse River, breach the Hindenburg defensive line, and move towards the city of Sedan. This was the site of a road and railroad complex crucial to the lateral movement of German troops and supplies, i.e., from one sector to another. The stage was now set for action by the American First Army, including the 29th and 78th Divisions.

Chapter 10: The Twenty-Ninth and Seventy-Eighth Divisions

After being called into federal service, most units of the New Jersey National Guard were sent to Camp McClellan, Alabama, and became part of the 29th Infantry Division. The men were

in for culture shock. Language was one item: Joisey accents and Southern drawls had little in common. Regional tastes were another: Tin Pan Alley vs. country music; Jersey corn and tomatoes vs. fatback and fried everything. Add in homesickness and the rigors of tent life and one can appreciate the morale problems which followed. Yankees and Rebels did agree on a significant name for the Division (the Blue and Gray) and the symbol of hope (entwined Ying and Yang) as its insignia.

Southerners must have been shocked, too, when they discovered their Alabama camp was named after a New Jersey General. George McClellan (1826-1885), a West Point graduate, had been appointed to command the Army of the Potomac when the Civil War began. In 1862 he was removed by President Lincoln, who found him lacking in aggressiveness. Undaunted, McClellan became the Democratic candidate for President in 1864. He carried only three States, including New Jersey. Very popular in his adopted State, McClellan was elected Governor of New Jersey in 1877, serving from 1878-1881.

Camp McClellan was located near the town of Anniston, northeast of Birmingham in the foothills of the Appalachians. Like other National Guard camps it was basically a “tent city,” with wooden buildings for mess halls, medical facilities, lavatories, and offices. It was built from scratch, starting on July 23, 1917. The Commanding Officer of the 29th, Major General Charles Morton, arrived on August 25 to find things still in process. Thereafter construction was a joint venture by soldiers and civilians. This occasioned some friction between well-paid civilian workers and the troops, whose \$30 a month pay – reduced by buying war bonds and sending money home—was a pittance. The camp was receiving units from Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, as well as New Jersey, totaling more than 27,000 by October. The locals did shower the troops with attention (traditional Southern hospitality). The YMCA, the Red Cross,

and a Soldiers Welfare Bureau provided services and entertainment. The *Anniston Evening Star* and *Daily Hot Blast*, the local newspaper, dedicated a special section to camp news. Teams from McClellan were invited to compete on the town's ball field: ladies could attend free of charge. For seventy-five cents the *Star* would sell any soldier an English-French dictionary "richly bound in durable textile leather." Hospitality was especially welcome during the winter months, exceptionally cold even in the South. Tent living was no picnic: the men resorted to cutting timber in the nearby woods for their campfires.

Camps like Dix, which dealt almost exclusively with draftees, could create their military organizations from bottom up. Not so McClellan. General Morton inherited a mish-mash of National Guard units, each with its own culture and traditions, which had to be blended into a unified fighting force. Much time in Alabama was thus spent on organizational problems. Units were shuffled from one part of camp to another as reorganization plan followed reorganization plan. For example, at this stage of the war there was little need on the Western Front for cavalry as cavalry. What to do then with the Essex Troop – the 102nd Cavalry – whose armory had been in the Roseville section of Newark? Its personnel were eventually split up, approximately half becoming military police, half artillerymen. Adding to the confusion was the periodic infusion of Regular Army troops and even draftees sent down from Camp Dix. The pages of the *Anniston Star* also recorded the names and destinations of men who were sent out of McClellan, some even back to New Jersey. The basic structure of the 29th was nonetheless worked out at McClellan. It consisted of two Infantry Brigades, the 57th and 58th, one Field Artillery Brigade, the 54th, and miscellaneous support units – engineer, signal, military police, medical, et al. Each Infantry Brigade in turn was composed of two Infantry Regiments and a Machine Gun Battalion. New Jerseyans were mostly in the 57th Brigade, assigned to its component 113th and 114th Infantry

Regiments and the 111th Machine Gun Battalion. Troops from the State also were placed in the 112th Heavy Field Artillery Regiment, the 104th Field Signal Battalion, the 104th Engineer Regiment, the 104th Military Police, and the 114th Field Hospital.

The fact that the National Guard was riddled with political appointments created other problems. A number of officers were physically, intellectually, and/or emotionally incapable of handling the demands of leadership in an Infantry Division. The history of the 29th contains many notations where officers were relieved of command or reassigned. Even the fifty-six-year-old General Morton was removed from his post at one point, declared physically unfit for overseas service. He was soon returned to office, however, and remained in command of the Division until the end of the war.

Instruction at McClellan was of uneven quality. Cadre could be seen reading their new manuals at night, prepping for the next day's lessons. The camp did benefit from training given by veterans sent over from England and France. They supervised the construction of a complete trench complex to orient the troops to the nature of trench warfare. The long months of training, the five-mile hikes, the boredom of life in rural Alabama – all had a negative impact on soldier morale. “Their pessimism . . . was shown when a certain evangelist came to Anniston and put up large signs: ‘Where will you spend eternity?’ Under one of the signs some wag had written the terse answer: ‘At Camp McClellan!’”

The Division finally went overseas in the late spring, early summer of 1918. The bulk of the troops sailed from Hoboken and Newport News on June 15; the remaining units from various ports by July 6. These were weeks when the Allies clamored for American soldiers and the Transport Service was doing its best to meet that demand. As a result, men were crowded into transports and compelled to endure long ocean voyages under deplorable conditions. They lived

in the holds of ships on bunks stacked in tiers of four or five. “Bunks were twenty-eight inches wide and six foot seven inches long; the men alternated sleeping head forward and head aft. The standard spacing between bunks was twenty-two inches and no mattresses were used.” Added attractions: the troops ate standing up with twenty minutes to finish their meals, slept with life jackets on, and mustered twice a day for abandon ship drills – drowning drills, according to soldier slang. During daytime ventilation was poor; at night portholes were closed so as not to attract U-boat attention. The smells were nauseating, food was bad, hygiene was worse. “The most powerful memory most of them (the troops) had was not the death-or-glory episodes of taking a machine gun nest by storm, nor even the delights of French vin blanc, but of the crowded, filthy conditions in which they travelled across the Atlantic Ocean to arrive at Brest or St. Nazaire.”

Things didn’t get much better in France. The soldiers were herded onto crude railroad box cars, labeled “40 hommes, 8 chevaux” – forty men or eight horses – and sent east. Reflecting on the odors, doughboys joked that the previous occupants must surely have been horses. The diary of one soldier is revealing:

July 18, 1918 – “Fall In!” The non-coms draw rations for their men – bright red cans of “monkey meat” (corned beef), smaller cans of beans and boxes of hard tack. They load us. After the struggle for preferred space subsides, we discover we have forty-seven men in our car. “All we need to be real comfortable is (sic) those 8 chevaux.”

July 19, 1918 – Next evening. There is no joy in life. Dirty, with an appetite that canned Willy can’t fix, and a thirst that an empty canteen only aggravates, we light another cigarette and cursing our naughtiest try to arrange shifts that will at least let half of us lie down half the night.

The 29th went literally to the end of the line on the Western Front – to the province of

Alsace near the fortress city of Belfort and the Swiss border. Headquarters was established fifty miles west of Belfort in Champlitte, Department of Haute Saone. The rationale for the location was sound. This sector, with the front line held by French troops, was comparatively quiet, and thus well suited for the advanced training undertaken by the Division. The 29th was then moved closer to the action, just northeast of Belfort. Units were rotated into the trenches where they were given orientations by experienced French officers and noncoms. This also introduced the men to the world of artillery shelling, trench raids, trench lice, and trench rats. When back in their base areas the men practiced open warfare maneuvers, including gas attacks and assaults on machine gun emplacements. These weeks also saw more command changes. Some officers were promoted and reassigned, others were relieved from duty because of poor health or poor performance. Such actions had their negative side: lack of familiarity between officers and men while they prepared for combat.

During the St. Mihiel campaign, September 12-16, the Division – still in the Belfort neighborhood – was ordered to send out raiding parties and patrols. The intent was to keep the Germans on the alert and in a defensive mood, so they wouldn't go to the relief of their comrades in the St. Mihiel salient. On September 23, the Division was pulled back and replaced by a French unit. It was sent northwest to participate in the Meuse-Argonne offensive, which began on September 26 along a front of twenty-five miles. Upon arriving in the sector, the 29th was held in reserve near Verdun and brought up to combat strength: 27,000 men, 10,000 animals. On the night of October 7, the Division marched thirteen miles to the designated jump-off place, just east of the Meuse River. This location was on the far right of the battlefield. At 5 a.m., October 8, the Division entered the fray. The 29th was ordered to push the Germans off high ground, called the *Cotes de Meuse*, overlooking the river, an action carried out with only modest success. The skilled and

coordinated use of machine guns, artillery, and poison gas by the Germans made progress extremely difficult. A three-week struggle followed as the Division gained and retained control of a section of the nearby forest. The enemy had well-prepared defenses, relying on snipers, as well as machine gun and mortar nests scattered all through the woods. Casualties were frightful. The Division lost 5,452 officers and men, October 8-30, including 405 killed in action and 1,636 gassed.

On October 27, the Division was relieved by the 79th Infantry and moved southeast to Verdun. Then it was back to a rest area to recuperate and reorganize. On November 10, the 29th was assigned to the new U.S. Second Army and ordered forward to join a proposed offensive against the city of Metz. Some units were already on the march when news of the Armistice was received. The troops were immediately recalled. It takes little imagination to appreciate their elation as they strolled back down the road and into camp.

“At first all were too dazed to adjust their minds to this new thing. But quickly there was formed the after-Armistice slogan of all the armies – ‘When do we go home?’” Unfortunately for the men of the 29th priority was given those units overseas the longest. This meant spending the winter and spring in France. The Division’s new headquarters was at Bourbonne des Bains, Department Haute Marne, about fifty miles west of Belfort. The men were required to continue physical and infantry training, for there was no guarantee the Armistice would last. Efforts were made to make the wait tolerable. The emphasis was on competitive sports – the 29th had an excellent boxing team and its football team went to the semi-finals of the First Army tournament. Travel leaves were granted; lucky soldiers visited Nice and Grenoble. Not so lucky were some military police from the Essex Troop who spent the spring in Germany doing occupation duty. There were also reviews and parades. One battalion of the 29th participated in the Christmas, 1918,

troop review by President Wilson. On March 24, 1919, there was a review by the AEF Commander. Ironic and symbolic: the Presidential review took place in the rain, General Pershing's in the mud.

On April 6, 1919, the 29th Division was relieved from duty with the First Army and sent west to Le Mans, now the site of a well-known auto race. Then it was on to St. Nazaire. Homeward bound, units of the Division left for Hoboken or Newport News between April 24 and May 13. Few complained about cramped quarters this time. After returning to the States, members of the Regular Army were reassigned, others went to camps near their homes to be mustered out. The Division was formally de-mobilized on May 30, 1919. It was reconstituted in February, 1941, for service in World War II.

Division records show that fifty-four men died stateside, forty-nine from disease, five from miscellaneous causes. Overseas 1,135 enlisted men were killed in action, died from wounds or other causes. Forty officers lost their lives. The Division commander, General Charles Morton, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and, from the French, the Croix de Guerre with two palms. He was placed in command of the Department of Hawaii immediately after the war, and of IX Corps from 1922-1925. He retired at that time, after forty-two years in the Army. General Morton died in 1933 and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery, as are his wife and father. The latter had also been a career Army officer. A troopship, General C.J. Morton, was commissioned in 1944 and saw service on both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. It functioned as a troopship during the Korean War and was removed from the list of active vessels in 1958.

The 78th Division was activated at Camp Dix on August 23, 1917. On August 27 a medical detachment arrived; 1,200 brand new Second Lieutenants came the next day, having completed their ninety days of orientation and training. Their first assignment: get the camp ready for the

draftees and volunteers. The first group of enlisted men arrived on September 5 to find construction continuing and confusion everywhere. The camp was soon rechristened Camp Delirious. The men were primarily draftees, roughly one-half from New Jersey, one-half from New York. The origin of the Division insignia, a lightning bolt on a blood red background, has a variety of explanations. The most intriguing: it was a tribute to “white lightning,” the moonshine distilled in the nearby Pine Barrens.

Building a cohesive organization of 20,000 men was a difficult undertaking. The problem started at the top: the Division had four different commanding officers before the Army settled on Major General James McRae on April 20, 1918. McRae would remain in charge for the duration of the 78th's active service. The Army periodically cannibalized the Division during its stay at Dix to fill up units being sent overseas and to provide replacements for organizations already there. In one such move eight hundred men were transferred to the 82nd Division. Finally, in the spring of 1918, after months of training and the blending of new men into the Division's components, the 78th was ready to go overseas. Its basic composition: two Infantry Brigades (the 155th and 156th) and one Artillery Brigade (the 153rd). The 155th consisted of two Infantry Regiments (the 309th and 310th) and the 308th Machine Gun Battalion. The 156th: 311th and 312th Infantry, plus the 309th Machine Gun Battalion. The 153rd: 307th and 308th Field Artillery (75mm), 309th Field Artillery (155mm.), and the 303rd Trench Mortar Battery.

The Division embarked from Hoboken and other ports on May 12, convoyed up at Halifax, Nova Scotia, and then sailed to ports in the south of England. From there the Infantry moved across the Channel to Calais, the Artillery to Le Havre. The two would not be recombined until the Meuse-Argonne offensive. An advanced training period of two months followed behind the British lines in northwest France, i.e., in Flanders and Arras. As part of this regimen small groups of men

were sent on four-day tours of the front lines. The instructors were British, so also were the military slang and the food. One soldier complained that he had consumed a life-time supply of tea, cheese, and jam.

In late August, the Division began to move southeast into what had become the American sector. (On August 10, General Pershing achieved his organizational goal by creating an independent U.S. First Army and planning its actions. General Foch remained in overall command of the Allied and Associated forces.) In part the trip was by rail in 40 *hommes-8 chevaux* box cars, “the majority of which had either square or hexagonal wheels,” or so claimed the troops. Part was in camions, trucks driven by French Indo-Chinese (Vietnamese). Part adhered to infantry tradition: slogging by foot at night through rain and mud, sleeping in open fields, and subsisting on canned corned beef and hard tack. One big reward upon reaching their assigned areas was going back on American rations of meat and potatoes. The army had set up horse-drawn mobile field kitchens to provide hot food for the tired and hungry troops.

Pershing’s initial strategic objective, designed to prove the worth of the First Army, was elimination of the St. Mihiel salient. This was a bulge in the eastern part of the front line, opposite the province of Lorraine, which dated back to the German offensive of 1914. The campaign was a joint American-French operation, with the Americans on the southeast and the French on the northwest face of the salient. On the far right of the American front was I Corps, with the 82nd, 90th, 5th and 2nd Divisions deployed in order from right to left. The 78th Infantry (155th and 156th Brigades) was assigned as Corps Reserve; the Artillery (153rd) as support for the 90th Division. At 1 a.m. on September 12, the attack began in pouring rain. The results exceeded all expectations. Within two days the key objectives were achieved; on September 16 the battle was officially declared over.

The 78th moved forward as the units in front of them advanced through the salient. On September 15 it relieved the 2nd and 5th Divisions in what was known as the Limey sector. The Division remained there for the next three weeks in what was essentially a holding operation. Trenches were dug in anticipation of major counter-attacks, which did not materialize. Not that this was a quiet place. Artillery bombardment, airplane strafing, and harassing patrols kept the Americans on edge. The 78th in turn sent out aggressive patrols, intended to disrupt any planned German action, to obtain information for the artillery, and to seize prisoners. Relaxation was impossible.

The men of the 78th also experienced the traumas of battle, including roll calls and burial details. It was hard to stand in line and listen to the names of the dead, wounded, and missing being read: these were yesterday's buddies. No less disheartening was to bring back corpses, take off their identity tags, and bury them in shallow pits while the Chaplain said a few prayers.

The four years the Germans used to construct defenses in depth would also haunt U.S. troops in their next assignments – working with the French to clear the Argonne forest, assault the city of Sedan, and penetrate Germany's major defensive complex, the Hindenburg Line. The battle, known to history as Meuse-Argonne, was one of a series of simultaneous moves on the Western Front designed to break German military and political resistance and end the war. The battlefield was a rough triangle, with a base of some twenty-five miles stretching from the Meuse River, near Verdun, westward towards the province of Champagne. The apex pointed towards Sedan. Nature made it a great place to defend, a daunting place to attack. "To these natural slopes and forests the Germans had added dugouts, trenches, concrete emplacements, jungles of barbed wire, well concealed machine-gun pits with perfectly interlocking fields of fire, and heavily camouflaged artillery positions. In four years the French had shied away from even thinking about attacking

such an efficiently defended area.”

On October 4, the 78th was relieved of its St. Mihiel position at the town of Thiaucourt, near the center of the salient. It was ordered to join the Meuse-Argonne offensive, which had started on September 26 when nine American Divisions attacked in line along an eighteen-mile front. The men of the 78th marched for three days and three nights to reach their designated position. This was in the rear of the 77th Division, which was fighting alongside the French on the far left of the American sector. Besides tired troops, General McRae had additional personnel problems. On October 14 he received fourteen hundred replacements, and had to assign them immediately to existing units. The influenza pandemic was raging and claiming victims in the cold, wet weeks of early autumn. The 78th was ordered to replace the 77th and on the night of October 15-16 the transfer was made. Given no rest, McRae’s troops went on the offensive that same morning. Their strategic objectives were the town and citadel of Grand Pre, and the Bois des Loges, woods just north of town. Both targets were well sited and well-fortified defensive positions, on high ground with sweeping views of the surrounding terrain. The 78th had its own artillery now – the 153rd Brigade having moved in to support the attack. On the first day footholds were established in town and woods, but that was about all. Days of hand-to-hand fighting followed, with major progress made in town, little in the Bois des Loges. Exercising command in these woods proved almost impossible. The battle disintegrated into back-and-forth struggles among small groups of Americans and Germans. “Often one of these (American) groups would work its way well into the German lines and then, finding it was alone, would have to fight its way back again. Casualties were extremely heavy, and it was not uncommon to find sergeants in charge of companies” Exhausted and depleted, the troops just tried to maintain their positions from October 20-23.

On October 23 the battle started up again. This was the day when Sergeant Sawelson

performed the heroic acts which would earn him a posthumous Medal of Honor. Acts of courage were many.

(General) McRae asked that a buck private named Parker C. Dunn (also) be awarded the Medal of Honor. His battalion was pinned down October 23 facing extinction beneath the hill that had rebuffed the French at Talma. The open crossings were swept from three sides, bullets kicking up muddy divots from three directions. The battalion commander refused to send any of his runners back, knowing it would be a fatal enterprise. Private Dunn ... insisted on trying. All watched him set out, darting like a quail. He was down with a wound and then up again. Once more he was down, and then on his feet staggering toward Regimental. When he reached the third crossfire, Private Dunn did not get up again. When word came that night for the battalion to withdraw to a less exposed position, troops disputed their officers. To withdraw ... was letting Parkey down. So it was reinforced, machine gunners gaining some high ground. "Any youse guys from Joisey?" were the whispers in the night.

Within two days Grand Pre and its citadel were in U.S. hands, and the front was extended into the Bois de Bourgogne, northwest of town. Again a pause. Then, attacks on November 1, to clear the enemy from Boise des Loges and Bois de Bourgogne. Stiff resistance; machine gun nests everywhere. But then dramatic change, for overnight the Germans pulled out and headed north to Sedan. The 78th went in pursuit, but were hampered by stubborn rear guard action and mines placed in the roads. On November 5, the 42nd "Rainbow" Division arrived to take over the chase. "Thus ended the war for the Seventy-eighth Division, except for the 153rd Artillery Brigade, which continued the advance in support of the 42nd Division. Another kind of road march began the night of the fifth. It was a happy march for men, tired with two months' almost continuous fighting."

They had paid a high price. The 78th lost 4,989 men in the Meuse-Argonne battle – killed, wounded, and missing. Of the dead, 16 were officers, 785 were enlisted men. Its overall service record with the AEF: 17 days in quiet sectors, 21 in active sectors.

Leaving the Meuse-Argonne area the troops headed south. Moving by stages they soon arrived at their destination, Department Cote d' Or, about one hundred and thirty miles southeast of Paris. Division headquarters was at Semur-en-Auxois, with other units billeted in nearby villages. Here the Division followed a post-Armistice routine similar to that of other Army units. Approximately a month was spent continuing infantry training, ordered by General Pershing as a precautionary strategy in case the Armistice was compromised. Winter and spring followed with activities designed to make time pass trouble-free. There were organized sports, vocational schools to teach civilian skills, entertainment offered by the Red Cross, YMCA, Knights of Columbus, and other organizations. On March 1, Margaret Wilson, the President's daughter, arrived with her group of singers, dancers, and comedians. Very popular were dances arranged with the local maidens. Even more popular were ten-day leaves to Nice, Monaco, and other vacation spots. A few soldiers were even sent to England and Switzerland to visit relatives. At the end of February came word that the 78th was fifteenth on the list of organizations slated to go stateside. Not the best of news, but at least the men could send concrete information to their anxious families.

The Division held a formal review for General Pershing on March 26, a sure sign that departure was in the offing. Another month passed, however, before that long-awaited move took place. Most of the men shipped out from Bordeaux. The Artillery and some additional units left from Marseilles, where Italian ships had been made available. Stateside, the troops received clearance and discharge either at Camp Dix or Camp Merritt. Military police hustled them homeward, not wanting the soldiers to crowd into New York City and cause trouble by rowdy

behavior. Home towns were in fact ready to celebrate. Parades were held in Newark, Camden, Atlantic City, New Brunswick, et al, followed by banquets, interminable speeches, fireworks, and the other trappings of American celebratory culture. The beginning of the New Year and the new decade saw things quiet down. They had to: statutory prohibition had gone into effect on July 1, 1919; the 18th amendment went into play on January 16, 1920.

The 78th was demobilized in July, 1919. It became a Reserve Division in 1921, and was called back into active service in August, 1942. Division records from the Great War show that 35 officers were killed in action, or died from wounds and other causes. Two died from disease. Comparable figures for enlisted men: 1,144 killed in action, died from wounds or other causes; 186 lost to disease. General McRae received the Distinguished Service Cross in recognition of his record of outstanding leadership. Between the wars at various times he commanded the Army's II Corps, V Corps, IX Corps, and the Philippine Department. General McRae died in California in 1940. A troopship named in his honor, the General J.H. McRae, launched in 1944, had a busy life in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters. She was decommissioned in February, 1946.

Epilogue

Taking stock: overall casualties in the Great War were appalling. One estimate is eleven million military and seven million civilian deaths. Guesstimates of deaths worldwide from the influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 start at ten million. U.S. military deaths are listed at 116,708, with the majority suffered during the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne battles. The U.S. government breaks down this total as: Army, 106,378; Navy, 7,287; Marines 2,851; Coast Guard 192. Approximately 250,000 Americans were wounded or gassed. Sad figures, but U.S. troops were generally spared the blood and mud of trench warfare, as well as such days as July 1, 1916, the opening of an Allied assault along the Somme front. The British suffered 60,000 casualties on that

one day, including 20,000 killed; German losses were comparable.

Shortly after the war ended, a detailed description of Camden County casualties was made by the County's Publicity and Historical Committee, headed by Frank Sheridan. It can be considered as representative of the larger New Jersey picture. Camden recorded one hundred and thirty-five deaths, including one woman. The lady was nurse Elizabeth Weimann, who died from influenza five days before the Armistice. Sixty-two men were killed in action or died from wounds. Most of the deaths occurred in the Meuse-Argonne campaign. Sixty-two others died from disease, with Spanish influenza and pneumonia the principal culprits. The rest died from miscellaneous causes such as airplane accidents, or were lost at sea. The total deaths recorded for the State of New Jersey in the Great War: 3,836.

Returning servicemen were greeted enthusiastically with parades, banquets, and family celebrations. Unfortunately, political conflict over the Versailles Treaty and the League of Nations took attention away from the honors the servicemen deserved. The Great War soon began to fade from the nation's consciousness. Lack of interest, for example, brought about a quick end to the New Jersey State Militia and the Militia Reserve. Veterans faced more than parades and banquets. Trying to find jobs and adjusting to civilian life were often disheartening. Help came from such organizations as the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The Legion had been active, 1915-1917, as a patriotic organization, part of the Preparedness Movement. It was reconstituted in Paris in 1919 as a Great War veterans' association. The VFW had been established in 1913 for veterans of the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection. In the aftermath of the Great War, both organizations fed off the American tradition of club life. They provided places where men could relax and reminisce about the big adventure in their lives. The Legion and VFW did charitable work and fought for veterans' benefits, especially a cash "bonus." This last

proved highly controversial. In May, 1924, Congress passed a bonus bill, the World War Adjustment Compensation Act, which pleased few. The terms were not overly generous: the maximum payout for a person with only stateside service was \$500; with service overseas, \$625. Eligible veterans were given a certificate, tantamount to a twenty-year life insurance policy, which could be redeemed for cash in 1945. Controversy continued for over a decade, including a disastrous “bonus march” in 1932 in the nation’s capital. Finally, Congress in 1936 replaced the certificates with Treasury bonds, redeemable at any time.

Looking at New Jersey’s post-war economy, some war industries just shut down. Shell loading was one. The Belcoville plant became a temporary Ordnance storage depot; Amatol was abandoned and soon was swallowed up by the Pine Barrens. Some businesses scaled back, but retained their focus. The Eisner Company continued as a manufacturer of uniforms, concentrating on its Boy Scout contracts. Bayonne’s ELCO (Electric Launch Company) returned to its pre-war business, building yachts and commercial vessels. Kearny’s Federal Shipyards and Camden’s New York Shipbuilding did receive a few government contracts, but depended on orders from the private sector to survive. With secure, well established markets, the Singer Sewing Machine and Victor Talking Machine companies prospered. Corporations with foresight moved in new directions. Witness the Du Ponts. They had gone into the chemical business because the British blockade shut off German imports of toluene, a key ingredient in the explosive TNT. After the war they invested heavily in chemical research and production: dyestuffs, paint and varnishes, cellulose, et al. The Du Ponts had large profits from their munitions industries, surplus facilities at Parlin, Deepwater, Haskell, and Carney’s Point, and aggressive management. In 1917 they built an indigo plant at Deepwater; Parlin was the location selected for paint and varnish factories. Wrote one commentator: “Pierre (Du Pont)’s realization that the war was a temporary condition had ...

an extremely important consequence. It turned the company to exploring peacetime uses for its war-created facilities and skills. Such exploration would transform the Du Pont Company from being the nation's largest explosives manufacturer into its largest chemical producer." New Jersey was but one beneficiary.

There were other winners. New Jersey's work in cellulose and bakelite gave her a head start in the post-war plastics business. The skills developed by the State's machinists during the war would be strong contributors to the success of a variety of manufacturing interests. But there were losers as well. At the end of the war New Jersey was still a leader in motion picture production with eleven studios, including five in Fort Lee. Within a few years Hollywood had taken over, never to relinquish its dominance. New Jersey's bustling business in beer and ale was hit hard by the 18th Amendment. In 1918 the State had twenty-seven breweries, including thirteen in Newark. The Feigenspan brewery's trademark was P.O.N. – the Pride of Newark. Significantly, New Jersey provided a meaningless ratification vote for the 18th Amendment in March, 1922 (more than two years after the Amendment became effective). The Submarine Boat Company had a wartime contract with the U.S. to build 150 cargo ships. Its 1918 work force totaled 10,000. By 1922 it had shut down; almost all the freighters were scrapped during the next half-dozen years.

The New Jersey economy benefited from a surge of immigrants immediately after the war. But anti-alien and anti-Bolshevik – "Red Scare" – feelings curbed that. The Emergency Quota Act, passed by Congress in 1921, limited a country's annual number of legal immigrants to 3% of the total foreign born from that country living in the U.S. in 1910. Adversely affecting the countries of southern and eastern Europe, the Act led to a two-thirds reduction in immigration, 1920-1922. On a more positive note: another Congressional action in 1921 was the authorization of a bi-state compact creating the Port of New York Authority. Chaos and congestion in the port, especially in

the war's concluding stages, brought about protests from the military, businessmen, and the general public. Rapid development of the auto age also pointed to the need for fundamental changes. Ferryboats just couldn't handle the cars and trucks trying to cross the Hudson River. The new agency began linking New Jersey and New York into a metropolitan area with its bridges and tunnels. Another byproduct of the auto age was the establishment in 1921 of the New Jersey State Police as a highway patrol and protector of rural areas. Otherwise, New Jersey government – in tune with the nation's "Return to Normalcy" – went back to its old life style. Progressivism had run its course; even the anti-monopoly laws of the Wilson governorship were repealed by 1920. In the meantime, Delaware had replaced New Jersey as the Mother of Trusts. It would not be until 1947 that the State would adopt a new Constitution and begin to overhaul its governmental system.

One pillar of the Progressive Era did survive – women's suffrage. There were two major organizations active during the war years. The leading group, headed by Carrie Chapman Catt, was the National Women's Suffrage Association. Although initially pacifist, it became a supporter of the war effort and encouraged all women to do the same. The National Women's Party, led by New Jersey's Alice Paul, turned to protests and demonstrations, focusing on the Capitol and White House. President Wilson, whether out of embarrassment or sympathy or both, spoke out in favor of the cause in his January, 1918, State of the Union address. He claimed a Constitutional Amendment was a necessary war measure. The House of Representatives responded that same month; the Senate did not give its approval until June, 1919. The 19th Amendment was ratified in the required number of states by August, 1920. The New Jersey legislature had given its approval in February.

It is difficult to gauge the long-range impact of the Great War on the people of New Jersey. After all, it was only a brief period – some seventeen months – in the history of our State. Its subtle

effects were swallowed up by anxiety to return to “normalcy” and an accompanying surge of isolationist sentiment. The latter was maintained well into the 1930s by a conviction that the nation’s crusade had been in vain, that Europe had learned little from four years of horrific death and destruction. Below the surface, however, came reluctant acceptance of the nature of 20th century warfare – that it was total national war and would be accompanied by conscription, hate propaganda, rapid conversion of a nation’s economy and society into wartime modes, and the slaughter of both civilians and the military. Subtly and sadly, then, the Great War trained us for World War II.

The final resting places for many New Jersey veterans lost in the Great War are in the St. Mihiel American Cemetery or the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery. Both are impressive sites, well maintained by the American Battle Monuments Commission. The Meuse-Argonne Cemetery is northwest of Verdun, and is the largest American military cemetery in Europe. Within its 130 acres are the graves of 14,246 war dead, 486 of whom are unknown soldiers. The former is located near Thiaucourt, in the center of the old salient, and has 4,153 graves. It also contains the sculptured figure of an American officer in field uniform. Above his head is engraved: “Il Dort, Loins des Siens, Dans la Douce Terre de France.” He sleeps far from his family in the gentle earth of France.

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