



From Training to the Trenches: The World War I Soldier Experience

Ohio Memory Resource Guide—www.ohiomemory.org



Introduction

On April 6, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson and Congress ended America's neutral stance in the global conflict of World War I, and mobilization measures already in process were accelerated to meet the new demand for trained soldiers. The United States federal government financed the construction of 16 U.S. Army and 16 National Guard training facilities across the country, including Camp Sherman in Ross County, Ohio. With over 2,000 buildings on its campus, including a hospital, library, movie theater and recreation hall, Camp Sherman could house up to 40,000 men and 12,000 horses or mules. By the end of the war, more than 120,000 soldiers passed through the camp, also referred to as "Ohio's Soldier Factory."

Other U.S. training camps included Camp Taylor in Kentucky, Camp Sheridan in Alabama, and Camp Dix in New Jersey. These training camps allowed the number of U.S. Armed Forces to increase from 350,000 personnel in April 1917 to nearly 4 million by the war's end in November 1918.

At these training camps, soldiers received four months of specialized training in areas such as artillery, riflery, various clerical and administrative duties and medical care. Soldiers were trained at an individual level in the U.S., and upon arriving in France, received training with their units to prepare for combat. This training covered basic military skills and operation as a unit (company, battalion, etc.); joining French battalions to gain combat experience on the front lines; and learning to operate as a division.¹

Ohioans supported the nation's involvement in the Great War in a variety of ways, including recruiting and training Ohio men, as well as men from across the United States. The training, combat, and other service engagements experienced by Ohio soldiers mirror those of soldiers throughout the country.

¹ Stewart, Richard W. ed. *American Military History Volume II; The United States in a Global Era, 1917-2008* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2010), 18-22, https://history.army.mil/html/books/030/30-22/CMH_Pub_30-22.pdf.





Suggested Search Strategies

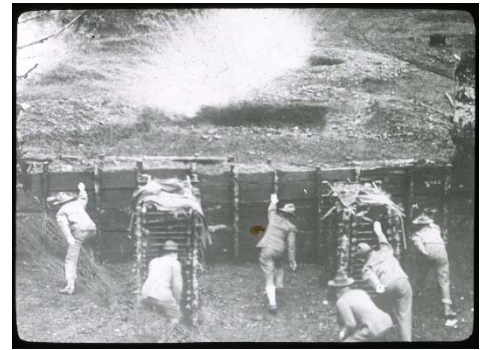
Try the following terms as an “all word” search: Military life; Military training; Soldiers; Soldiers – Correspondence; or Artillery and weapons.

Start your search in the [World War I in Ohio Collection](#) on the collection homepage. Broaden your search to all records on Ohio Memory by searching from the [Ohio Memory homepage](#).

Sample Items on Ohio Memory

Training and camp life

- [Grenade training lantern slide](#): Soldiers needed to be able to properly use various types of artillery and weapons, including rifles, machine guns, and grenades. (See right)
- [Barracks at Camp Sherman](#): This photograph shows how expansive Camp Sherman was.
- [Camp Sherman library photograph](#): The camp library opened on January 4, 1918, with 8,000 books on its shelves covering a diverse array of topics spanning popular fiction to plays to science and engineering. To learn more about the Library War Service, the founding organization of the Book-for-Every-Soldier Campaign, click [here](#).
- [Trench construction at Camp Sherman](#): Soldiers at Camp Sherman were taught how to dig and construct trenches; the men in this photograph cover a trench with logs. (See below)
- [802nd Pioneer Infantry Regiment photograph](#): African Americans played an important role in World War I, and many African American soldiers were trained at Camp Sherman, including the 802nd Pioneer Infantry.
- [Summer military camp in New Jersey photograph](#): During the summer of 1917, young men across the nation completed vigorous training in preparation for service overseas. These men dig trenches at a military camp in Princeton, New Jersey. Dalton Smith Hayes, grandson of former President Rutherford B. Hayes, attended this camp for training as a member of the Princeton Battalion.
- [Gas mask training stereograph](#): The caption of this stereograph reads “Soldiers About to Enter Tear-Gas Trench, Camp Dix, N.J.” Gas trainings taught soldiers how to properly wear gas masks by using fumes that would irritate but not damage their eyes.





Conflict Abroad

- [Italian soldiers in the Alps photographs](#): WWI research heavily focuses on the Western Front, with the Italian Front often forgotten. The rugged mountain terrain in this photograph provides a sense of the harsh natural environments soldiers sometimes faced.
- [Soldiers walk through European village photograph](#): Soldiers marched through Europe, moving from camp to camp and line to line, visiting many cities and towns and interacting with local peoples, just like the American troops walking through a village in this photograph, or walking fully equipped through a field in [this photograph](#).
- [Eddie Rickenbacker and the 94th Aero Squadron photograph](#): Columbus, Ohio, native Eddie Rickenbacker served as a combat pilot in the 94th Aero Squadron of the U.S. Army Air Service, one of the first American fighter squadrons to see combat on the Western Front. His exceptional flying and combat skills earned Rickenbacker the title Ace of Aces with 26 aerial victories. He is pictured kneeling in the lower left in the photograph above. To learn more, read [this Ohio Memory blog post](#), or view [more photographs](#) of Rickenbacker and the 94th. Captain William C. Lambert of Ironton, Ohio, was the second-ranking ace pilot in World War I. To learn more about Lambert, read [this post](#) on the National Museum of the U.S. Airforce website.
- [Lieutenant Webb C. Hayes II album](#): Webb C. Hayes II, grandson of former U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes, served in the U.S. Navy as executive officer of destroyer U.S.S. Trippe. Select pages from his [photograph album](#) show sailors, battleships, and casual scenes taken during World War I. To learn more about the U.S.S. Trippe and other U.S. naval ships, visit the [Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships \(DANFS\)](#).
- [Soldiers in shell craters stereograph](#): Stereographs are two nearly identical photographs mounted on cardboard. Viewed through a stereoscope, the two photographs come together as one image, with enough depth so that the image appears in 3-D. This stereograph shows soldiers taking cover in shell craters in France.
- [No Man's Land stereograph](#): During World War I, "No Man's Land" refers to the stretch of land between opposing trench systems. Following a battle, it would often be strewn with shell holes, weapons and bodies of wounded or deceased soldiers (see above). [This stereograph](#) shows barbed wire-covered trenches along the Bulgarian lines in Salonika, Greece.





- [Doyen P. Wardwell collection](#): As a junior at The Ohio State University, Wardwell enlisted in the army. He served as a combat pilot with the 103rd Aero Pursuit Squadron in France, conducting reconnaissance, pursuit, bombing, and escort missions. The collection includes [photographs and postcards](#), [his uniform and flying gear](#), and [military decorations](#). (See right)



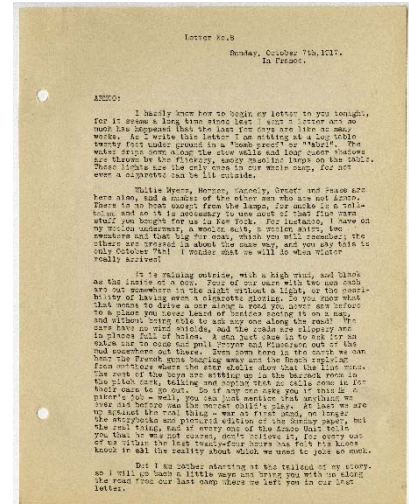
Letters

- [Harlan W. Johnson letters](#): Born in McConnelsville, Ohio, Johnson served on the Western Front in the 168th Aero Squadron as an aerial observer. His letters span his basic training at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, to Camp Sherman just outside Chillicothe, Ohio, the School of Military Aeronautics in Austin, Texas, arrival in France, and up to his death on October 28, 1918. Johnson's letters provide insights into military training practices, camp life, and aerial reconnaissance.
 - [Harlan W. Johnson letter to his mother, October 14, 1917](#): While experiencing the horrors of war abroad, some soldiers did not share the optimistic war-time sentiments that Harlan expresses in this letter. He informs his mother he purchased a \$100 Liberty Bond, contributing to his company's total of \$3,000 in bond subscriptions—their motto being "All our money and our lives if necessary."
 - [Harlan W. Johnson letter to his sister Rachel, January 6, 1918](#): Soldiers' correspondences with loved ones at home were heavily censored by designated army staff, for fear of interception by German spies. In this letter, Harlan notes that a German spy was discovered at his camp in Austin, Texas.
- [Claude and Joseph Gorrell letters](#): The service of brothers Joseph and Claude Gorrell (sometimes called Earl) are documented in a series of correspondence with their mother and sisters at home in East Cleveland, Ohio. Claude served in the 302nd Mechanic Rep Quartermaster Corps and the 328th Motor Transport Corps, and Joseph in the 303rd Motor Transport Corps. The Gorrell Family Papers Collection also includes [photographs](#) showing the Gorrell family, Claude and Joseph in uniform, and war scenes.
 - [Claude Gorrell letter to his mother, September 30, 1918](#): In case of interception by German spies, military censors clipped portions of Claude's letter that identify his location in France. (See above)
 - [Joseph Gorrell letter to his mother Jemima Gorrell, October 11, 1918](#): Joseph sends a coupon home to his mother so she can send him a package for Christmas. The coupon belonged to another soldier who passed away.





- [Armco Ambulance Corps letters](#): Shortly after the U.S. entered World War I, the [American Rolling Mill Company \(Armco\)](#) wanted to contribute to the war effort, and established the Armco Ambulance Corps, a unit of 15 employee volunteers. The Armco men served in the Norton-Harjes Ambulance Corps, another volunteer unit started by archaeologist and professor, Richard Norton. The Corps served in the Battle of La Malmaison, retreats of 1918, and the [Hundred Days Offensive](#), in [Section 646](#) alongside French Chasseurs Alpins and the decorated 2nd Moroccan Division. The Corps received many awards, both individually and as a unit, including the Croix de Guerre and the Fourragère.



- [Ebersole letter to Armco, October 7, 1917](#): The Corps are living in a bomb-proof bunker, as the Germans bombed their camp the night before. (See right)
 - ['Bud' Ebersole letter to Armco, October 20, 1917](#): Ebersole describes the horrible living conditions he and his men are enduring, as well as the tragedy and suffering they've witnessed.

Diaries and scrapbooks

- [Glenn Burkett scrapbooks](#): These scrapbooks provide a biographical sketch of Corporal Burkett and include his Army documentation, diary entries, news clippings, photographs, typed transcripts of letters he received, war songs, poems, and a map of France.
- [Ralph B. Evans diary and scrapbook](#): Evans served in the Quarter Master Corps, and later in Salvage Co. 1 of the U.S. Army Post Office 761. [His diary entries](#) span his voyage aboard the U.S.S. Transport Susquehanna to his honorable discharge at Camp Sherman. Compiled after his return home. [Evans' scrapbook](#) includes photographs, news clippings, postcards, poems, and military documentation relating to his time at Camp Sherman and his service in France.
- [Mary E. Gladwin diary](#): Gladwin's diary covers her service with the American Red Cross as a nurse in Belgrade, Serbia, 1914-1915, including the bombardment of Belgrade.
- [Mary Miller Hayes diary](#): Mary Miller Hayes, daughter-in-law of President Rutherford B. Hayes, kept this diary while traveling across Europe at the start of World War I in August and September 1914. Her diary provides insightful accounts of war-time sentiments across Europe, as well as her own exposure to the effects of war.
- [Vaughn Horner diary](#): Dating January 5 to July 24, 1918, Horner's diary describes his experience with the Armco Ambulance Corps as they retrieved wounded soldiers from the front lines and transported them to medical units and hospitals to receive treatment.
- [Cecil Smith diary](#): Smith served as 1st Lieutenant Chaplain of the 322nd Machine Gun Battalion. His diary begins shortly following his arrival at Camp Sherman and continues into his time in France where he counseled wounded soldiers and tended graves on-site.
- [Dalton Smith Hayes diary](#): In his diary, Hayes details his combat experiences in the renowned 42nd Rainbow Division in France.





Selected standards that these digital resources support include:

Ohio's New Learning Standards: Social Studies

American History (AH)

- AH.1: The use of primary and secondary sources of information includes an examination of the credibility of each source.
- AH.3: Historians analyze cause, effect, sequence and correlation in historical events, including multiple causation and long and short-term causal reactions.
- AH.14: As a result of overseas expansion, the Spanish-American War and World War I, the United States emerged as a world power.

Modern World History (MWH)

- MW.1: The use of primary and secondary sources of information includes an examination of the credibility of each source.
- MWH.3: Historians analyze cause, effect, sequence and correlation in historical events, including multiple causation and long- and short-term causal reactions.
- MWH.13: The causes of World War I included militarism, imperialism, nationalism and alliances.

Ohio's New Learning Standards: English and Language Arts

Literacy in History/Social Studies

- RH.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary or secondary sources.
- RH.6-8.5: Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).
- RH.6-8.6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's perspective or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).
- RH.6-8.7: Integrate visual information (e.g., charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
- RH.6-8.8: Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgement in a text.
- RH.9-10.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- RH.9-10.6: Compare the perspectives of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.
- RH.9-10.7: Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative or technical analysis in print or digital text.
- RH.9-10.9: Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.





- RH.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
- RH.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- RH.11-12.9: Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

- WHST.6-8.8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others, while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format or citation.
- WHST.9-10.8: Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
- WHST.11-12.8: Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

Additional Resources

- World War I Transcription Tool (<http://transcribe.ohiohistory.org/>)
- Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>)
- Ohio in World War I (<http://www.worldwar1centennial.org/index.php/ohio-in-ww1-home-page.html>)
- The United States World War I Centennial Commission (<https://www.worldwar1centennial.org/index.php>)
- World War I Union Bibliography (<http://www.ohiohistoryhost.org/wwibib/>)
- The National World War I Museum and Memorial (<https://www.theworldwar.org>)





Sources Cited

Archival Collections

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- Cecil Smith 83rd Infantry Collection. MSS 1612 AV. Ohio History Connection.
- Dalton Smith Hayes Collection. Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library & Museums.
- Edward V. Rickenbacker Photograph Collection. P 395. Ohio History Connection.
- Glenn Burkett Scrapbooks. Ac. 5613. Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library & Museums.
- Gorrell Family Papers. MSS 1027. Ohio History Connection.
- Harlan W. Johnson Papers. MSS 608. Ohio History Connection.
- Major Doyen P. Wardwell Collection. Hocking County Historical & Genealogical Society & Museum
- Mary E. Gladwin Papers. 99/116. University of Akron.
- Sergeant Ralph B. Evans Diary and Scrapbook. VOL 1318-1319. Ohio History Connection.
- Vaughn Horner Diary. VOL 1213. Ohio History Connection.
- Webb C. Hayes II Collection. Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library & Museums.
- Webb C. Hayes Photograph Collection. Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library & Museums.
- World War I Training Slides. AV 65. Ohio History Connection.
- World War I Photograph Collection. State Archives Series 2728 AV. Ohio History Connection.
- World War I Stereoview Collection. State Archives Series 1947 AV. Ohio History Connection.

Digital Resources

- "American Rolling Mill Company." *Ohio History Central*. Last modified September 1, 2017. http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/American_Rolling_Mill_Company.
- "Campaign Atlas To The Great War." *United States Military Academy West Point*. Accessed June 27, 2018. <https://www.westpoint.edu/history/SitePages/WWI.aspx>.
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