

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES CATALOG

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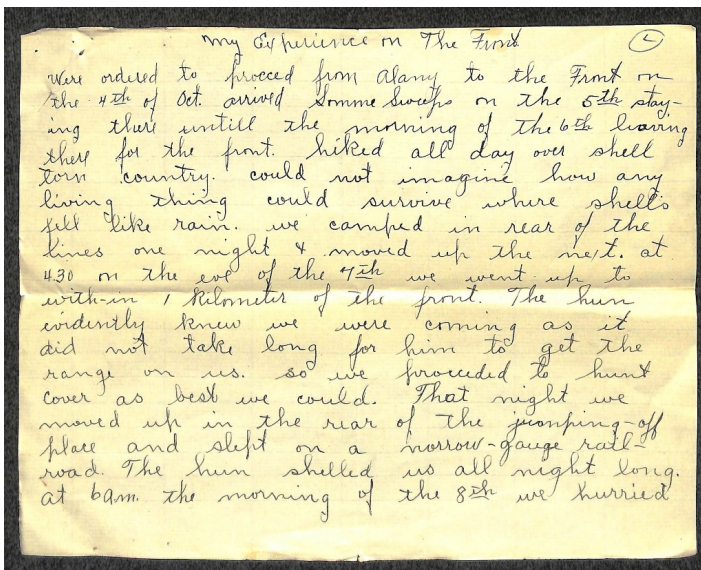
## Tales from the Trenches: World War I Division Records

Last April, the National Archives embarked on a two year commemoration of the United States' entry into World War I. We created a [World War I Centennial](#) portal which highlights educator and genealogy resources, articles, a multimedia timeline, [events and exhibits](#), and archival records documenting the U.S. experience in the conflict. And you helped make these records more accessible through our World War I [tagging and transcription missions](#).



Across the National Archives, archival units prioritized the digitization of World War I records. The series [Records of Divisions, 1917 - 1920](#) was recently digitized and added to the Catalog. Within this series, you will find remarkable and moving accounts of war through unit histories, station lists, operations reports, messages, field orders, correspondence, general orders, special orders, bulletins, and memorandums that document the service of each American Expeditionary Forces combat division during its participation in World War I.

We were especially moved by these descriptions of the battlefield by the soldiers who experienced the war first hand:



### **Sgt. Ernst Beseler**

*“The hun evidently knew we were coming as it did not take long for him to get the range on us. So we proceeded to hunt cover as best we could. That night we moved up in the rear of the jumping-off place and slept on a narrow-gauge railroad. The hun shelled us all night long.”*

### **Pvt. William R. Bird**

*“Being under shell fire for the first time doesn't excite one near as much as I had always thought, however no one has to tell you to get low, as we had always been instructed to do.”*

Prvt <sup>Wm</sup> R. Bird  
Co D, 132 M.I. Bn

AMERICAN  
Y.M.C.A.  
ON ACTIVE SERVICE  
WITH THE  
AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Nov 10 1918

Some of the things I observed during my first trip to the front. My Company, Company D, 132 M.I. Bn. moved up to the front October 7th leaving our kitchen and carts, the rest of the company led to position by a guide from the Marines. Being led to this position we were told to dig in, which was a new thing to us, we had not been given so very much instructions along this line. Being under shell fire for the first time doesn't excite one, near as much as I had always thought, however no one has to tell you to get low as we had always been instructed to do. On the morning of the eight we were told to get ready to go 'over the top'.

Nov 10-1918  
Battle of Argonne Forest.

On the night of Oct 7th B. Co 132nd M.I. received orders to advance to the Front. So after disposing of all our extra equipments by a small bunch of trees in a salvage dump we started for the Bash. We were all heavily loaded with extra ammunition and our M.I. equipments but after we finally arrived to the point where we were to be on the morning of Oct 8. we rested for several minutes for further orders. It was there where I saw my first man wounded. Feb 4 my

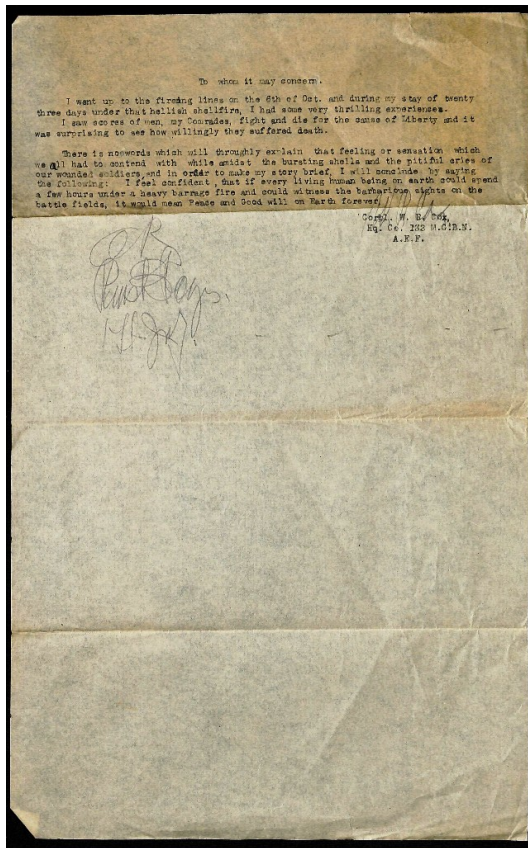
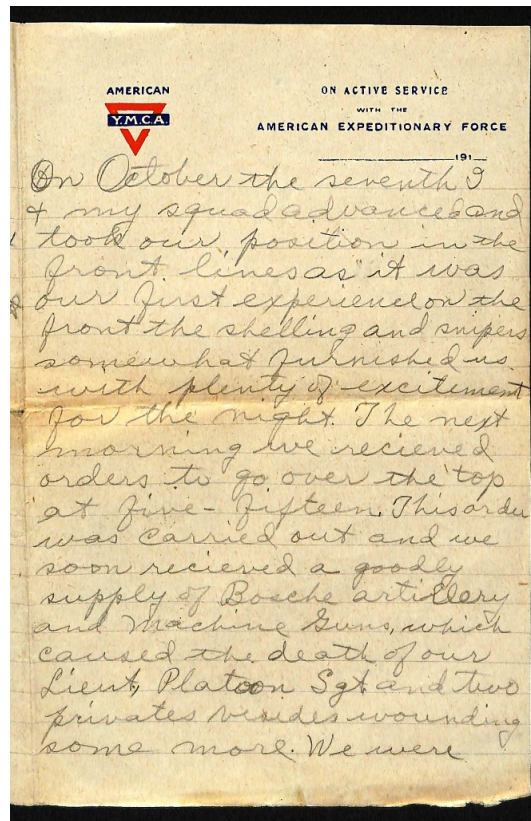
### Guy S. Conrad [Rank Unknown]

"We were all laying on top of the ground by a small railroad, when Captain Towey gave orders to move forward. We gathered our equipment and started, did not go far till the Captain got shot. The rest kept on going. Lt. Hudson took charge we advanced to a cluster of trees took shelling for five minutes then advanced further it was there where the Bash gave us Hell."

### Sgt. R. M. Boyce

"The next morning we received orders to

go over the top at five-fifteen. This order was carried out and we soon received a googly supply of Bosche artillery and machine guns, which caused the death of our Lieut., Platoon Sgt. and two privates besides wounding some more."



### Cpl. W. R. Cox

"There is no words which will thoroughly explain that feeling or sensation which we all had to contend with while amidst the bursting shells and the pitiful cries of our wounded soldiers and in order to make my story brief, I will conclude by saying the following: I feel confident, that if every living human being on earth could spend a few hours under a heavy barrage fire and could witness the barbarous sights on the battle fields, it would mean Peace and Good will on Earth forever."

These records are the focus of a [new transcription mission](#) for our citizen archivists (Records of Divisions, 1917-1920). Take a look! We hope you will explore these records and help transcribe them to make them more discoverable. Transcribing these records will

bring history to life and ensure the soldiers' stories will not be forgotten. Have you uncovered extraordinary or unexpected stories from these records? We'll share more stories as we find them on History Hub. Join us on [History Hub](#), or email us at [catalog@nara.gov](mailto:catalog@nara.gov) to tell us what you found!

## Public Programs

Interested in more stories from World War I? Take a look at these recent Public Programs from the National Archives on a variety of topics related to the Great War. Each presentation is recorded and available to watch at any time on our YouTube channel.



### **The Hello Girls: America's First Women Soldiers**

In 1918, the U.S. Army Signal Corps, at the insistence of General John J. Pershing, sent 223 American women to France because they were masters of the latest technology: the telephone switchboard. In her book, *The Hello Girls*, professor Elizabeth Cobbs reveals the challenges these courageous women faced in a war zone and under enemy fire to keep the U.S. army commanders connected with troops on the front lines.

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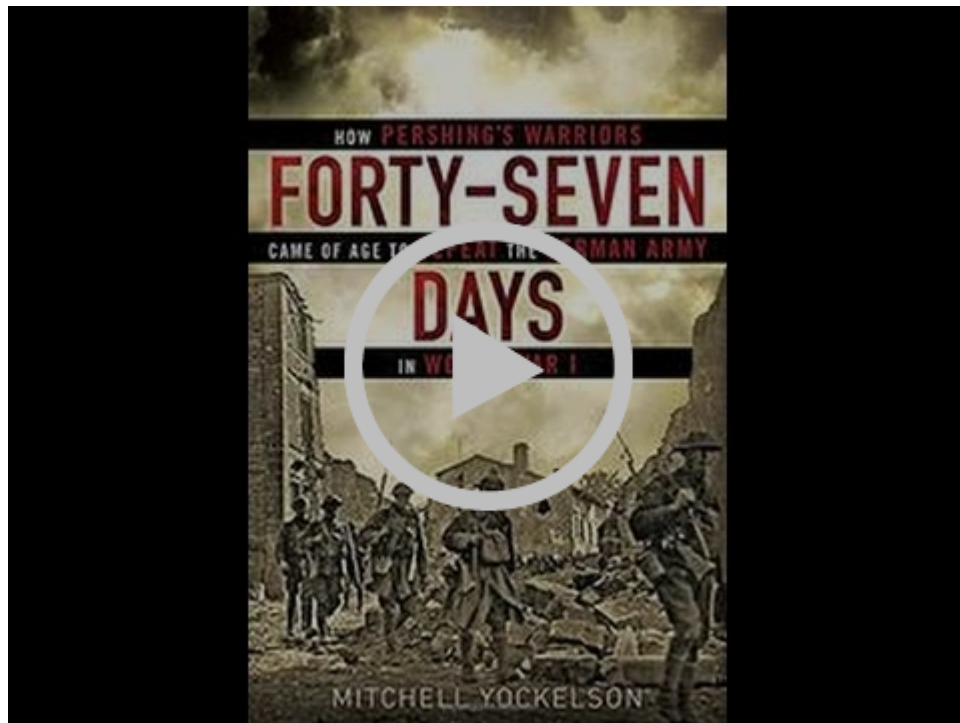
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### **From the Trenches of WWI to the November 2016 Elections: Race Relations in America**

Against the backdrop of the November 8 election, a panel will discuss race relations in our country, focusing on discrimination in the segregated military during World Wars I and II and the effort to posthumously award Medals of Honor to those who were denied them due to race. A bipartisan group of former Members of Congress join issue experts to look at key events in our nation's history and how they were influenced by race, as well as the role race played in the November 2016 elections. Moderated by Charlayne Hunter Gault, panelists include former Members of Congress Joe DioGuardi (R-NY) and Steve Horsford (D-NV); and Sam Fulwood, Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress.

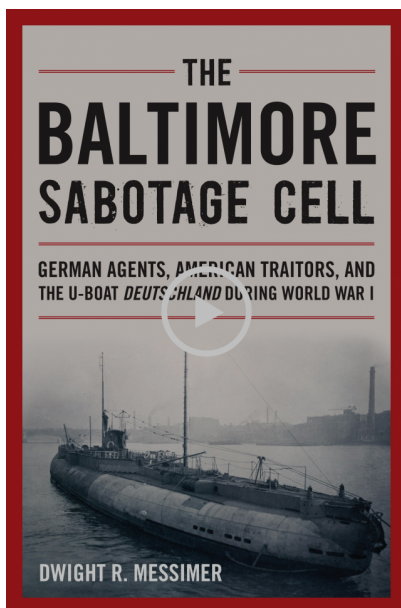
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## **Forty-Seven Days: How Pershing's Warriors Came of Age to Defeat the German Army in World War I**

The Battle of the Meuse-Argonne is the deadliest clash in American history: more than a million untested American soldiers went up against a better-trained and experienced German army, resulting in more than 26,000 deaths and leaving nearly 100,000 wounded. Yet in forty-seven days of intense combat, these Americans forced the Germans to surrender, bringing the First World War to an end. Historian Mitchell Yockelson tells how General John J. “Black Jack” Pershing’s exemplary leadership led to the unlikeliest of victories. A book signing follows the program.

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## **The Baltimore Sabotage Cell: German Agents, American Traitors, and the U-Boats Deutschland During World War I**

By the summer of 1915, Germany was faced with two major problems in fighting World War I: the British blockade and how to disrupt the British supply line across the Atlantic. Their solution was to create a U-boat fleet and employ German agents to carry out sabotage missions in the U.S. Dwight R. Messimer discusses these two solutions and one man behind them: Paul Hilken, in Baltimore.

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