Ardennes American Cemetery and Memorial

The American Battle Monuments Commission
Ardennes American Cemetery and Memorial

LOCATION

Ardennes Cemetery is situated near the southeast edge of the village of Neupre (formerly Neuville-en-Condroz), 12 miles southwest of Liège, Belgium. Highway N-63 from Liège to Marche or Dinant and Paris passes the main entrance. Excellent auto-routes lead to Liège from major cities in Belgium, the Netherlands and West Germany. Liège can be reached by train from Paris (Gare du Nord) in about 5½ hours, from Brussels in a little more than 1 hour, and from Germany via Aachen. Taxicabs are available from Liège station. Hotel accommodations are available in Liège.

HOURS

The cemetery is open daily to the public between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. (The cemetery is closed on January 1 and December 25. It is open on all other U.S. and host country holidays.)
During these hours, a staff member is always on duty at the Visitors’ Building to answer questions, and to escort relatives to gravesites and to the Tablets of the Missing.

HISTORY

Three months after the successful 6 June 1944 landings on the beaches of Normandy, Allied Forces were advancing much more rapidly than had been planned or expected. In the center, the U.S. First Army was sweeping through France with the U.S. Third Army on its right. By 8 September they had liberated Luxembourg, eastern Belgium, and Liège and were driving toward the German city of Aachen. On the left, the British Second Army had entered Brussels on 3 September and Antwerp the following day, as the Canadian First Army kept pace along the coast liberating Ostend and Bruges on successive days.

Patrols of the U.S. First Army crossed the German frontier in the Ardennes area on 11 September and the next day crossed the German frontier near Aachen. Moving eastward toward the Siegfried Line, they quickly encountered strong resistance. Almost simultaneously progress slowed all along the advancing Allied line as opposition stiffened. The retreating enemy finally had achieved a stabilized defensive line.

After the bold, but unsuccessful, airborne effort to establish crossings of the lower Rhine in late September, the main effort of the Allies was shifted to the center where the U.S. First Army, with strong air support from the U.S. Ninth Air Force, encircled Aachen which surrendered on 21 October. The U.S. Ninth Army, organized at Brest in Brittany, was shifted early in November from the right of the U.S. First Army to its left. Together they continued the attack to the Roer River against bitter opposition, especially in the dense Hurtgen Forest.

The Allied attacks were suddenly interrupted in the Ardennes on 16 December, when the enemy launched against the U.S. First and Third Armies its final major counteroffensive of the war. Popularly known as the “Battle of the Bulge,” it was officially designated the Ardennes-Alsace Campaign which included the second half of the enemy’s planned counteroffensive that was launched on New Year’s Eve in Alsace to the south against the U.S. Seventh Army and the French First Army. After furious struggles in bitterly cold weather, all of the attacks were halted.

As the enemy onslaughts in the Ardennes and Alsace were being brought to a halt, plans were being prepared and approved by the Allies establishing three major successive objectives: the destruction of enemy forces west of the Rhine, the seizure of bridgeheads across the river, then coordinated drives into the heart of Germany. The first phase commenced with an advance on 2 February 1945 by the U.S. First Army in the center to seize control of the upstream dams on the Roer River. In the north, the advance to the Rhine was to begin on 8 February with the Canadian First Army advancing to the southeast, to be followed two days later with a converging attack to the northeast by the U.S. Ninth Army. But on 10 February when the U.S. First Army reached the last and most important dam, it was discovered that the enemy had wrecked
the discharge valves during the previous night. The resultant heavy flow of water from the dams halted the U.S. Ninth Army on the north for two weeks.

On 23 February, the U.S. Ninth Army began its crossing of the Roer and the U.S. First Army renewed its advance to the Rhine. As the offensive gained momentum, it became a pursuit to destroy as many enemy units as possible before they could cross the Rhine. The U.S. First Army reached Cologne on 5 March; two days later it seized the only demolished bridge across the Rhine which was located at Remagen. By 10 March, the entire west bank of the Rhine was in Allied hands.

This unanticipated good fortune was exploited immediately. Additional troops were rushed to the area. By 21 March the bridgehead had expanded to a width of 20 miles and a depth of eight miles. The next day, 22 March, the U.S. Third Army made a surprise amphibious crossing of the Rhine at Oppenheim. On 23 and 24 March, the long-planned major amphibious and airborne assault crossing of the Rhine by the British Second, the Canadian First, and the U.S. Ninth Armies was carried out. Then in rapid succession, the U.S. First and the Third Armies broke out of their bridgeheads on 25 March, the U.S. Seventh Army crossed the Rhine near Worms on 26 March and the French First Army crossed it on 31 March, thus achieving the first two planned objectives. Four days later the encirclement of the Ruhr Valley was completed as all Allied Armies continued to advance into Germany on a broad front.

THE SITE

The Ardennes American Cemetery, 90% acres in extent, is one of fourteen permanent American World War II military cemeteries constructed on foreign soil by the American Battle Monuments Commission. The site was liberated on 8 September 1944 by the 1st Infantry Division. A temporary cemetery was established on the site on 8 February 1945. After the war, when the temporary cemeteries were disestablished by the Army, the remains of American military dead whose next of kin requested permanent interment overseas were moved to one of the fourteen permanent cemetery sites on foreign soil, usually the one which was closest to the temporary cemetery. There they were interred by the Graves Registration Service in the distinctive grave patterns proposed by the cemetery’s architect and approved by the Commission. The design and construction of all facilities at the permanent sites were the responsibility of the Commission, i.e., the chapel, museum, visitors’ building, superintendent’s quarters, service facilities, utilities and paths, roads and walls. The Commission was also responsible for the sculpture, landscaping and other improvements. Many of those interred here died during the enemy’s final major counteroffensive in the Ardennes in December 1944 and January 1945; they include some service troops who were fighting as infantry. Others gave their lives in the advance to the Rhine and across Germany, and in the strategic bombardment of Europe.

ARCHITECTS

Architects for the cemetery and memorial were Reinhard, Hofmeister & Walquist of New York City. The landscape architect was Richard K. Webel of Roslyn, Long Island.

GENERAL LAYOUT

The Ardennes American Cemetery is generally rectangular in shape. Its grave plots are arranged in the form of a Greek cross separated by two broad intersecting paths. The cemetery itself rests on a slope descending gently northward toward Neupre. To the south and east, it is enframed in woodland in which red and white oak, beech and ash predominate; its
west side is lined by an avenue of stately lindens (Tilia platyphylla) and its north boundary by informal tree groups. Entry is made into the cemetery through the main gate located on the north side of highway N-63. It is set within plantings of black and white pine (Pinus nigra Austriaca and Pinus strobus); its wing walls are backed by an evergreen hedge. Inside the main gate, a straight avenue bordered by horsechestnut (Aesculus hippocastanum) trees leads for 300 yards through woods to a broad green mall flanked on each side with parking spaces. At the far right (east) side is the Visitors' Building; on the left the Superintendent's house; the memorial is on the axis. From the parking area a flight of steps leads down to the memorial; this path divides to pass around the building and leads to the burial area beyond.

Beyond the woods to the west are the wells, reservoirs, and service building. Drinking water is treated in a purification system.

THE MEMORIAL

The memorial of English Portland Whitbed limestone is austerely rectangular in form. It projects on all sides beyond its base which, in turn, is set upon a Danube Gray granite podium reached by seven steps; these extend entirely around the building except where they are interrupted at the south end to permit access to the main door. The podium at the north end affords an impressive view of the burial area and of the countryside beyond.

Carved in high relief on the south facade of the memorial is an American eagle 17 feet high. Beside it are three figures symbolizing Justice, Liberty, and Truth; the composition is balanced by 13 stars representing the United States. This sculpture is from the design of C. Paul Jennewein of New York City; the work was executed by Jean Juge of Paris. The main doors to the memorial are of stainless steel and bear in relief the dates: 1941–1945.

The south, east, and west interior walls of the memorial are decorated with large maps composed of inlaid marble embracing a range of colors from white through cream and gray to black. Much of the lettering is of bronze; other topographical and military details are rendered in mosaic, or enameled or plated bronze. The map above the door records both the last great enemy offensive ARDENNES, popularly known as "The Battle of the Bulge," which took place during the winter of 1944–45, and also the subsequent advance of the Allied forces across the RHINELAND to the Rhine River; it measures 19 1/2 feet high by 22 1/2 feet long. Elaborating this map is an inscription in English, French, and Flemish, of which this is the English text:

ON 16 DECEMBER 1944 THE ENEMY MADE HIS LAST CONCERTED EFFORT TO STAVE OFF DEFEAT, UNLEASHING THREE ARMIES ON A NARROW FRONT. PREPARED IN GREATEST SECRECY AND LAUNCHED UNDER COVER OF FOG AND RAIN, HIS ATTACK IN THE ARDENNES WAS INITIALLY SUCCESSFUL. BREAKING THROUGH ON A 45-MILE FRONT, HIS FORCES PENETRATED OVER 60 MILES, BUT AMERICAN SOLDIERS, FIGHTING VALIANTLY, HELD THE CRITICAL SHOULDERS OF THE SALIENT.

REACTING PROMPTLY AND DECISIVELY, THE ALLIES RUSHED ALL AVAILABLE RESERVES TO THE SCENE. A FURIOUS STRUGGLE DEVELOPED AT THE ROAD CENTER OF ST. VITH WHERE THE ENEMY ADVANCE WAS STUBBORNLY DELAYED. AT BASTOGNE, ALTHOUGH SURROUNDED FOR FIVE DAYS, AMERICAN TROOPS, WITH THE HELP OF SUPPLIES DROPPED BY IX TROOP CARRIER COMMAND AIRCRAFT, MAINTAINED THEIR DEFENSE. WHILE THE FIRST ARMY
BLOCKED THE ENEMY'S EFFORTS TO
BREAK THROUGH TOWARD LIEGE AND
CROSS THE MEUSE, THE THIRD ARMY BY
A MASTERFUL CHANGE OF FRONT
TURNED NORTH AND ON 22 DECEMBER
COUNTERATTACKED THE SOUTHERN
FLANK OF THE PENETRATION. ON 23 DE-
CEMBER THE SKIES CLEARED, ENABLING
OUR EIGHTH AND NINTH AIR FORCES TO
ENTER THE BATTLE AND STRIKE AT THE
ENEMY ARMOR AND SUPPLY COLUMNS.
THE THIRD ARMY CONTINUED ITS AD-
VANCE, RELIEVING BASTOGNE ON 26
DECEMBER. THE FIRST ARMY'S COUN-
TERATTACK FROM THE NORTH CAME ON
31 JANUARY 1945. STRUGGLING FORWARD
AGAINST DETERMINED OPPOSITION,
ACROSS SNOW-COVERED MINE FIELDS IN
BITTERLY COLD WEATHER, THE THIRD
AND FIRST ARMIES MET AT HOUFFALIZE
ON THE 16TH. THE SALIENT WAS COM-
PLETLY REDUCED BY 25 JANUARY.
WHILE MAINTAINING THEIR ADVANCE
IN THE ARDENNES, AMERICAN TROOPS
NOW PUSHED DOWN THE ROER VALLEY.
ON 23 FEBRUARY, THE FIRST AND NINTH
ARMIES LAUNCHED THEIR ASSAULT
ACROSS THIS RIVER, WITH FIGHTERS AND
MEDIUM BOMBERS OF THE NINTH AIR
FORCE CLOSELY SUPPORTING THE FOR-
WARD UNITS. WITH THE ASCENSION OF
THE AMERICANS ON THE SOUTH AND WEST
AND THE BRITISH ON THE NORTH, AND
ATTACKED CONTINUOUSLY BY THE U.S.
AND BRITISH AIR FORCES, THE ENEMY
RETREATED ACROSS THE SEINE.
SUSTAINED BY THE HERCULEAN
ACHIEVEMENTS OF ARMY AND NAVY
SUPPLY PERSONNEL, THE ALLIED
GROUND AND AIR FORCES PURSUED
VIGOROUSLY. BY MID-SEPTEMBER THE
U.S. NINTH ARMY HAD LIBERATED BRESC;
THE FIRST ARMY HAD SWEEP THROUGH
FRANCE, BELGIUM AND LUXEMBOURG
AND WAS STANDING ON THE THRESH-
OLD OF GERMANY; THE THIRD ARMY
HAD REACHED THE MOSELLE AND HAD
JOINED FORCES WITH THE U.S. SEVENTH
AND FRENCH FIRST ARMIES ADVANCING
NORTHWARD FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN.
ON THE LEFT FLANK, BRITISH AND
CANADIAN TROOPS HAD ENTERED THE
NETHERLANDS. ON 17 SEPTEMBER THE IX
TROOP CARRIER COMMAND AND THE
ROYAL AIR FORCE DROPPED THREE AIR-
BORNE DIVISIONS IN THE NIJMEGEN-
ARNHEM AREA IN A BOLD BUT UNSUC-
CESSFUL ATTEMPT TO SEIZE THE CROSSINGS OF THE LOWER RHINE.


Ranged along each side of the map are six panels illustrating the combat arms; they are painted in black upon white Carrara marble, the background of each picture being cut back and gilted, recalling the golden finish of the ceiling. The subjects of these panels are (as one faces them) see page 9:

1. Heavy Bombers 1. Battlefield Communications
2. Naval Fire 2. Antiaircraft Artillery
3. Paratroopers 3. Medium Bombers
4. Battlefield Fire 4. Field Aid
5. Armor in Action 5. Infantry in Action

The map on the opposite (east) wall portrays the Services of Supply of the European Theater of Operations. The English version of its descriptive text reads:


THE ALLIED NAVIES PLAYED A VITAL ROLE BY SAFEGUARDING A CONTINUOUS FLOW OF TROOPS AND SUPPLIES ACROSS THE SEAS. THE LINE OF SUPPLY WAS DEVELOPED FIRST FROM THE ASSAULT BEACHES, THEN THROUGH CHAUNCEY AND LE HAVRE. WHEN ANwerp WAS OPENED IN LATE NOVEMBER AS THE MAIN LINE OF COMMUNICATION FOR THE 12TH AND 21ST ARMY GROUPS WAS SHIELDED TO THAT PORT. FROM THE SOUTH THE SUPPLY LINE FOR THE 6TH ARMY GROUP CAME UP THE RHONE VALLEY FROM MARSEILLES.


THE ADVANCE SECTIONS OPERATED IN DIRECT SUPPORT OF THE ARMIES, DRAWING SUPPLIES FROM THE BASE AND INTERMEDIATE SECTIONS. THESE SUPPLIES WERE FORWARDED TO THE COMBAT UNITS, AN EFFICIENT SYSTEM FOR THE HOSPITALIZATION AND EVACUATION OF THE SICK AND WOUNDED OPERATED CONTINUOUSLY. IN WORLD WAR II THE DECISIVE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUPPLY AND TECHNICAL SERVICES IN MODERN WARFARE WAS CLEARLY MANIFESTED.

This map also is embellished by 12 panels (see page 9) representing the Services of Supply, viz:

1. Atlantic Supply 1. Ordnance
2. Medical 2. Repair
4. Army 4. Railroad
5. Races Area Com- 5. Railroad
7. Operations 7. Communications
8. Railroad Operations 8. Air
10. Military Police- 10. Airfield
11. Traffic Control 11. Traffic Control
12. Engineer 12. Medical
13. Heavy Bridge 13. Heavy Bridge
Corps

The maps were designed by Dean Cornell of New York City from data prepared by The American Battle Monuments Commission. They were fabricated by the Pandolfini Company of Pietrasanta, Italy. The panels were both designed and executed by Dean Cornell.

12

13
At the far (north) end of the building is the chapel. The west wall bears the dedication:

1941–1945 IN PROUD REMEMBRANCE OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF HER SONS AND IN HUMBLE TRIBUTE TO THEIR SACRIFICES THIS MEMORIAL HAS BEEN ERECTED BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Engraved on the opposite wall is this prayer abridged from that ascribed to Cardinal Newman:

O LORD SUPPORT US ALL THE DAY LONG UNTIL THE SHADOWS LENGTHEN AND OUR WORK IS DONE. THEN IN THY MERCY GRANT US A SAFE LODGING AND A HOLY REST AND PEACE AT THE LAST.

Outlined in gilt metal against the white Carrara marble wall above the altar, and illuminated through the oculus in the ceiling is an angel, designed by Dean Cornwell and executed by Kersten-Leroy of Maastricht, The Netherlands.

The altar also is of Carrara marble. On each side of the chapel is a United States flag and a bronze screen into which have been cast the insignia of the principal military units which operated in Northwest Europe; viz., Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force; U.S. Strategic Air Forces in Europe; European Theater of Operations; 12th Army Group; 6th Army Group; Eighth Air Force; First Army; Ninth Air Force; Third Army; Seventh Army; Ninth Army. The chapel chairs and prie-dieu are of ebonized birchwood, fabricated in Rome, Italy by A. Patriarca.

To the right and left of the chapel are stainless steel doors leading outside to the north end of the memorial podium.

On the north facade of the memorial the shoulder insignia of the major military units again appear; here they are of colored mosaic set in the Portland Whitbed stone and grouped around a classic helmet. Beneath them is the inscription:

TO THE SILENT HOST WHO ENDURED ALL AND GAVE ALL THAT MANKIND MIGHT LIVE IN FREEDOM AND IN PEACE.

THE TABLETS OF THE MISSING

The names and particulars of 462 of our Missing are engraved in 12 large slabs of dark gray granite set slightly above the podium, 6 on each of the east and west sides of the memorial:

United States Army & Army Air Forces* .......................... 447
United States Navy .............................................. 15

These men gave their lives in the service of their country, but their remains have not been recovered and identified. Their names include men from 45 different States as well as the District of Columbia. Above these names this inscription is engraved upon the sides of the memorial:

HERE ARE RECORDED THE NAMES OF AMERICANS WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY AND WHO SLEEP IN UNKNOWN GRAVES AT 1941–1945

On the east side, this is added:

IN PROUD REMEMBRANCE OF THEIR VALOR

On the west side, this is added:

IN HUMBLE TRIBUTE TO THEIR SACRIFICE

Without confirmed information to the contrary, a War Department Administrative Review Board established the official date of death of those commemorated on the Tablets of the Missing as one year and a day from the date on which the individual was placed in Missing in action status.

The memorial podium is flanked by masses of rhododendrons bordered by dwarf roses and boxwood edging, and backed by clipped purple beech (Fagus sylvatica purpurea) hedges.

THE GRAVES AREA

From the base of the memorial podium a flight of broad steps leads down to the graves area. Here are buried 5,329 of our military Dead; three-fifths of whom were airmen.

These Dead, who gave their lives in our country's service, came from almost every State in the Union as well as from the District of Columbia, Canada, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Philippine Islands, and the British West Indies. Seven hundred seventy-seven of the headstones mark the graves of 792 "Unknowns." Among the headstones also are those of 11 instances in which 2 brothers are buried side by side. There are also three cases in which two identified airmen are buried in single graves; the headstones in these cases are inscribed: HERE REST IN HONORED GLORY TWO COMMANDERS IN ARMS. Bronze plaques bearing their names and particulars are set in the ground before the headstones.

The reentrants of the huge cross formed by the headstone pattern are planted with groups of oak, beech, hornbeam and tulip trees, intended to extend the natural woodland enfranement, and the entire burial area is surrounded on four sides by wide borders of shrub roses (Rosa rugosa).

At the east end of the central transverse path is a bronze figure symbolizing American youth, designed by C. Paul Jenzewein and cast by Bruno Bearzi of Florence, Italy.

The burial area and its axial path gently slope downward to the flagstaff and its platform at the north end of the cemetery. Groups of spruce (Picea excelsa) and Caucasian fir (Abies Nordmanniana) form the background for this feature. A transverse path leads westward to the linden avenue which intersects the path at the head of the burial area.

Construction of the cemetery and memorial was completed in 1962.

* It will be recalled that during World War II the Air Forces still formed part of the United States Army.
SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC
Upon request, and without cost, the following information and services are provided to family members and friends of those interred or commemorated at ABMC’s cemeteries and memorials:
• name, location and general information about the cemetery, monument or memorial;
• plot, row and grave number and, if applicable, memorialization site;
• authorization for issuance of fee-free passports for members of the immediate family traveling overseas specifically to visit an ABMC grave or memorialization site;
• a photograph of grave and/or memorialization sites affixed to a large color lithograph of the appropriate cemetery and memorial;
• best route and modes of travel in-country to cemetery or memorial site;
• general information about accommodations in the vicinity of the cemetery or memorial;
• arrangement for floral decoration of a grave or memorialization site. (Weather permitting, a color photograph of the floral decoration in place is provided to the donor).

Corozal American Cemetery, Corozal, Republic of Panama
THE AMERICAN
BATTLE MONUMENTS
COMMISSION
ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS MARCH 1923

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