



1917-1919 : THE AMERICAN ARMY IN SOLOGNE AND IN THE CHER VALLEY



MARCH TO DECEMBER 2017 CELEBRATION OF THE CENTENARY



AMBASSADE DES
ÉTATS-UNIS D'AMÉRIQUE



PRÉFACE



When the Pays de la vallée du Cher et du Romorantais asked me to write a few words for the brochure accompanying the celebration of the centennial of the American participation, I accepted with pleasure, for this is precisely the sort of activity to which I hope to contribute during my mission in France.

The United States was not prepared for large-scale war when it entered the First World War in 1917. During the re-election campaign of 1916, President Wilson favored neutrality and vowed to keep the United States out of the conflict. Thus, the United States had not prepared for war. In 1917, the regular army comprised only 121,000 soldiers, the National Guard 80,000 and the Marine Corps 13,000. The Americans had rifles but few machine guns or adequate artillery, and had virtually no mortars, grenades, semi-automatic assault weapons, tanks or airplanes. From April 1917, initially with French and British aid, a huge training program was begun to prepare for world war. By November 1918 the American Expeditionary Corps was comprised of four million men. They began arriving in France in June 1917 and at the time of the Armistice of November 11, 1919, two million American soldiers were fighting in France. The French admired their courage and welcomed them with grateful thanks.

By May 1918, the the vitality and training of the soliders of the American Expeditionary Forces commanded by General John J. Pershing became a decisive factor in the course of the war, but also in its peaceful conclusion. We must today transmit to future generations the remembrance of their sacrifice and their generosity.

Philip FRAYNE
Minister Counselor for Public Affairs
Embassy of the United States in France

In August 1917 the first soldiers of the American Corps of Engineers arrived in Gièvres and began construction of a huge supply camp, the General Intermediate Supply Depot (GISD). In the fall of 1917 the first troops of the 41st Division arrived in the Cher Valley, and our region moved to an American rhythm until 1919.

Although this episode is little known now, two of its major achievements are important. The first is the efficacy of the two camps in supporting the American troops at the front. General John Pershing, head of the American Expeditionary Force, noted this fact twice, once during an inspection trip to the camps and later in his memoir.

A second major result - aside from the technical mastery demonstrated by the rapid construction of the GISD, including a cold-storage plant second in size only to that of the world's largest in Chicago, and the number of soldiers trained in the camps of the 41st Division - was the friendship that evolved between the Doughboys and the population of the region. After initial observation of these men speaking a foreign language and having such a different, modern lifestyle, close ties with the local population became the rule. After the war, many soldiers kept in touch with the families that had welcomed them. Marriages were celebrated, and children born.

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the United States' entry into the war beside the allied forces, the associations and communities of the Pays de la vallée du Cher et du Romorantinais decided to celebrate this anniversary to mark its importance to both France and the United States. To honor the troops of the American Expeditionary Force a cultural celebration will take place from March to December 2017. This project was coordinated by the Syndicat Mixte du Pays de la vallée du Cher et du Romorantinais, which carries the distinction of "Pays d'art et d'histoire".

Throughout the region, varied events await you. They will shed light on this historic episode of the First World War, and, I hope, will strengthen the friendship between the people of France and the United States.

Claude CHANAL

President of the Pays de la vallée du Cher et du Romorantinais

Senator Jeanny LORGEUX

Mayor of Romorantin-Lanthenay

First Vice-President of the Senate Group for France-U.S. Relations

An Extraordinary Story

“LA FAYETTE WE ARE HERE !”

(Colonel Stanton - July 4, 1917)

In 1917, the First World War enters its third year of combat. France is exhausted. The German advance has been halted at Verdun, but the British attack, the Battle of the Somme, is a disaster. French troops under General Nivelle suffer heavy losses at the « Chemin des Dames », and the troops mutiny. The armistice Germany signs in December with newly-communist Russia allows Germany to transfer seasoned combatants from the eastern front toward the west.

Early in 1917, President Woodrow Wilson refuses to endorse U.S. entry into the war, despite the loss of American lives in the submarine war waged by the Germans. Two events, however, change the situation. First is Germany's decision to intensify submarine warfare, sinking without warning merchant ships in international waters. In an effort to avoid an American military response to these acts, Germany proposes financial aid to encourage Mexico to renew hostilities and attempt to reconquer Texas, Arizona and

New Mexico. The American reaction soon follows. After the sinking of three merchant ships on March 15, President Wilson asks Congress on April 2 « that it formally accept the status of belligerent which has thus been thrust upon it ». On April 6, Congress officially declares war on Germany.

The U.S. begins a huge war effort. Its army at the time is small and has no combat experience. Its only modern equipment consists of machine guns. When early volunteer enlistment is deemed insufficient, the Selective Service Act is passed and the draft of several million men begins. General John Pershing arrives in France in June, and the first soldiers of the U.S. 1st Division parade in Paris on July 4, where Colonel Stanton declares the arrival of U.S. troops before Lafayette's tomb.

The industrial and human might of the U.S. begins to mobilize. More than 24 million men enter the army in 1917 and 1918. The American Expeditionary Force eventually totals four million soldiers. This providential aid boosts the hope of the French civilian population and the allied armies, after three years of effort and suffering.

Within 18 months, the Americans create ports, camps and railroad lines, and bring over two million soldiers, tons of materiel, arms, munitions and food to France. General Pershing chooses Saint Nazaire in the Loire Atlantique Department as the base supply port. On August 9, a second base begins service at Bas-sens, in the Gironde, and finally in September an actual port city begins to rise near Brest. For each soldier who lands in France, one ton of materiel also arrives. Soon each port and each camp are connected by railroad lines, as far as Issur-Tille in the Côte d'Or in Burgundy, via Tours and Bourges.

The southern sector of the Loir-et-Cher Department becomes a key element in this military preparation. At Gièvres, beginning in August 1917, the army constructs an immense supply base capable of furnishing food, clothing, and technical, medical and communications equipment for an army of two million men. This depot is called the G.I.S.D. (General Intermediate Supply Depot). In February 1918 the first center for airplane assembly is built in Gièvres and Pruniers-en-Sologne, followed by a plant for automobile assembly, which reaches a total of 20,000 vehicles by 1919. More than 80,000 American men serve in these camps, alongside thousands of French,

Chinese, Annamite, Spanish and Portuguese workers, as well as German prisoners.

Gièvres and Pruniers-en-Sologne furnish supply and technical expertise. The sector comprising Noyers-sur-Cher/Saint-Aignan is occupied by the 41st Division and is a « replacement camp ». Its mission is to receive and maintain personnel, including classification, training, and assignment of soldiers to replace those wounded or killed in battle. All the Army corps are represented, from artillery to infantry, from elite Marine corps to cavalry, which is based in a former military relay station in Selles-sur-Cher. The soldiers live in tents or in private homes. Detachments of the 41st Division are quartered in all the communities near Saint-Aignan, Noyers-sur-Cher and Selles-sur-Cher. Overall, 500,000 troupes pass through camps of various sizes in these towns and villages of the Cher Valley and viticultural Sologne.

(Ref : *Les camps américains en Sologne et dans la vallée du Cher 1917-1919*, Musée de Sologne, Romorantin-Lanthenay, 2014).

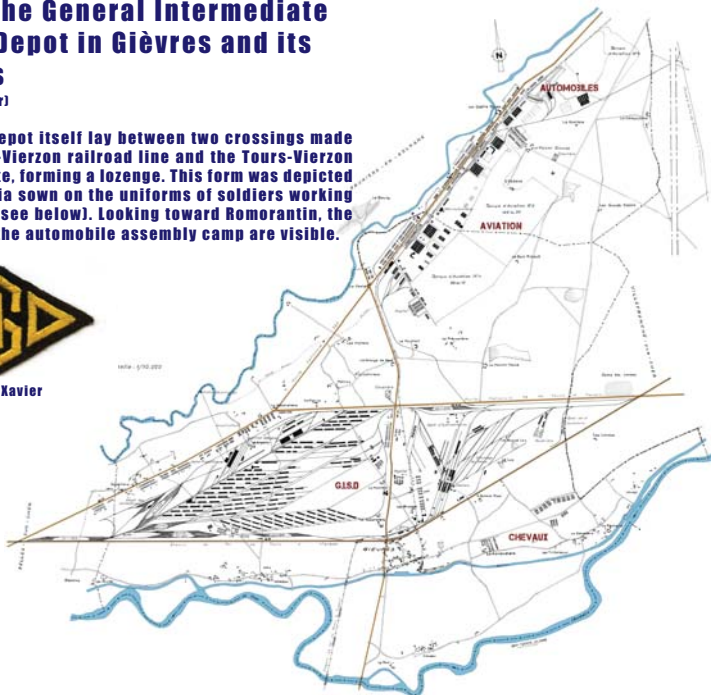
Map of the General Intermediate Supply Depot in Gièvres and its annexes

(Map : Guy Toyer)

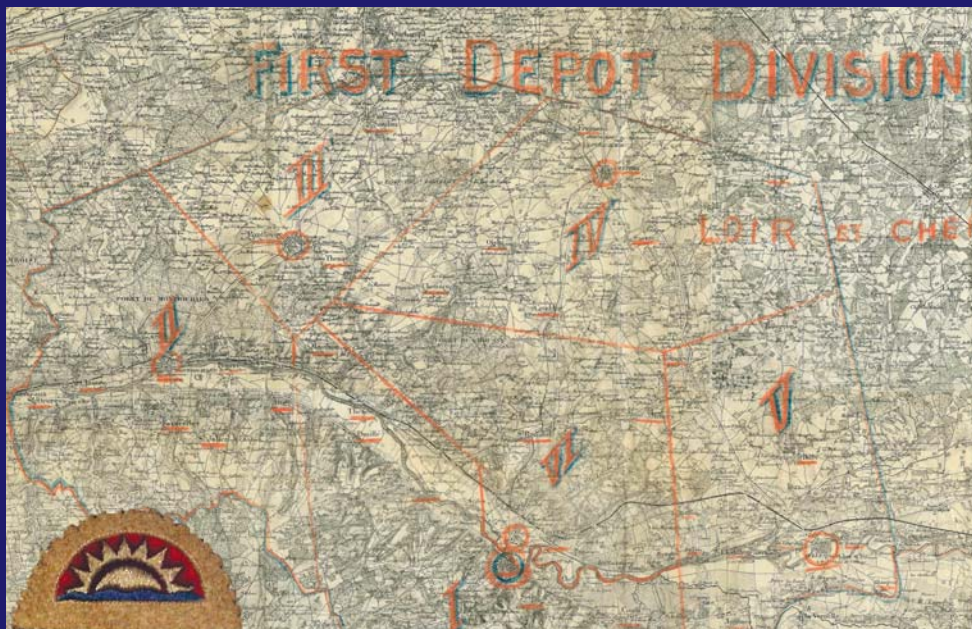
The supply depot itself lay between two crossings made by the Tours-Vierzon railroad line and the Tours-Vierzon National Route, forming a lozenge. This form was depicted in the insignia sown on the uniforms of soldiers working in the camp (see below). Looking toward Romorantin, the airbase and the automobile assembly camp are visible.



Collection Nicolas Xavier



Maximum extent of the 41st Division, called the "First depot division" from January 1918. The headquarters and the main camp were at Saint-Aignan and Noyers-sur-Cher, but the communities underlined in red also received soldiers lodged in tents or private houses (AEF Signal Corp. Nara. Collection Gièvres Souvenir Patrimoine et Culture).

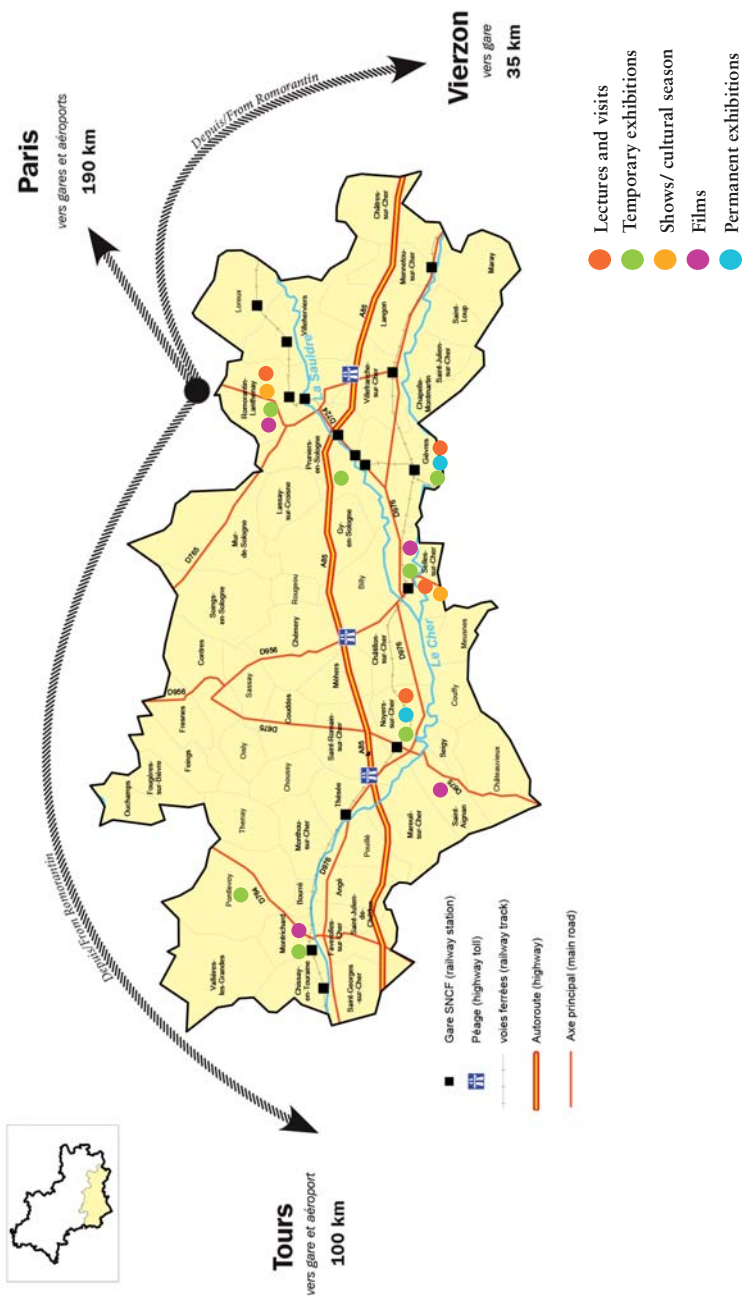


Insignia of the 41st Division, also called the "Sunset Division."

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Region of the Cher Valley and Romorantin





The American army also possessed a large number of automobiles and motorcycles. The arrival of soldiers in motor vehicles on the roads of the Cher Valley and Sologne greatly surprised the local population, which rarely saw such means of transport before the war ! (AEF Signal Corp. NARA. Collection Musée de Sologne)



DH4 airplane assembled in the airbase at Romorantin, 1918 (Walter J. Blinders)

Temporary Exhibitions

Romorantin-Lanthenay

The U.S. at the Matra Museum!

April 6 to November 11, 2017

Highlighting American vehicles, from early 1900 to the 1970s.

Musée automobile Matra

17 rue des Capucins

41200 Romorantin-Lanthenay

The Army and the Arts : World War 1 and Artistic Creativity

September 1 to 30, 2017

Worldwide panorama of creations (films, books, paintings, etc.) concerning World War 1.

Médiathèque

17 faubourg Saint-Roch

41200 Romorantin-Lanthenay

Gièvres - Pruniers-en-Sologne

Photo Exhibition

April 6 to September 1, 2017

(subject to approval)

Views of the airbase displayed along the border of the Romorantin-Pruniers-en-Sologne camp.

DA 273

RD 724 (road from Selles-sur-Cher to Romorantin-Lanthenay)

41130 Gièvres

Pontlevoy

The Americans in Pontlevoy

June 30 to to July 9, 2017

A traveling exhibition, "*The American camps in Sologne and in the Cher Valley. 1917-1919*", created by the Musée de Sologne in 2014, with additional items dating from the presence of the American army in the community.

Foyer rural

64 route de Montrichard

41400 Pontlevoy

Selles-sur-Cher

The Americans in Selles

June 15 to August 31, 2017

The exhibits of the Musée de Sologne, with additional modules, a scale model and items dating from the presence of the 41st Division in Selles.

Château de Selles-sur-Cher

Le château

41130 Selles-sur-Cher

Art in 1917

June 27 to July 09, 2017

The members of the Club d'art et loisirs créatif of Selles-sur-Cher show their impression of art produced in 1917, in reaction against the war.

Galerie Vagabonde

2 bis rue Pêcherie

41130 Selles-sur-Cher

Exhibition on « la Grande Guerre », World War I

September 1 to 15, 2017

Exhibition on World War I, from a large private collection.

Salle des Fêtes

Rue du Moulinet d'Hardemare
41130 Selles-sur-Cher

Noyers-sur-Cher and Gièvres

Street Exhibits

From July 1, 2017

Photo exhibits on the camps of the GISD and the 41st division.

Gièvres

1. Place de l'église
Route de Villefranches-sur-Cher (RD54)

2. Playground
Rue Victor Hugo
41130 Gièvres

Noyers-sur-Cher

Park, Town Hall
54 rue Nationale
41140 Noyers-sur-Cher

Montrichard

The Americans in Montrichard

September 11 to 23, 2017

The exhibits of the Sologne museum with, in addition, modules reflecting the presence of American troops in Montrichard.

Hôtel d'Effiat

7 rue Porte au Roi
41400 Montrichard

Noyers-sur-Cher

Exhibition on « la Grande Guerre », World War I

November 11, 2017

Exhibition on World War I, from a large private collection (*presented earlier in Selles-sur-Cher*).

Salle des Fêtes

Place Lucien Guerrier
41140 Noyers-sur-Cher

Pruniers-en-Sologne

Outdoor Exhibition

Septembre 1 to 30, 2017

(subject to approval)

The collections of the museum, evoking the history of the DA 273 air-base, from its construction by the American army, up to the 1950s, presented in an outdoor exhibition.

Pruniers-en-Sologne - Public Library (1st floor)

Place Mendès France
41200 Pruniers-en-Sologne

A collaboration with the « Printemps de la Photographie de Romorantin » is also under consideration. In 2017 (May 20 to June 5) the exhibit will feature American photographers.

A sports-themed art project may also be created by the secondary-school students of the local region, the « Pays de la vallée du Cher et du Romorantinais ».

Information regarding opening hours and entrance fees available in « Contacts », p. 21, 22, 23.



After the end of the war, soldiers were repatriated progressively. To occupy the troops still stationed in the Cher Valley and Sologne, sporting events were organized in Saint-Aignan. Here, the French boxer Georges Charpentier (in white) faces an American (AEF Signal Corps. NARA. Collection Musée de Sologne).



Concert by the military "Wisconsin Band" in the Cher Valley (AEF Signal Corps. NARA. Collection Musée de Sologne).

Shows and Concerts

Selles-sur-Cher

Journées festives (Festival Days)

July 8 and 9, 2017

Program :

- Equestrian performances, riders costumed as WW1 soldiers (relays, square dancing) by the « Écuries d'Arcadie ».
- Military camp
- Games : Simulated target practice
- Musical interludes : jazz, music, and songs of the time
- Meals served in a festive military atmosphere

Château de Selles-sur-Cher

Le château

41130 Selles-sur-Cher

Romorantin-Lanthenay

“Le Cœur à Barbe”(Érik Satie)

March 21, 6:30 p.m.

Lecture-concert. The works of Érik Satie ; musical compositions transcribed for the harp ; a dancer representing Suzanne Valadon and the voice of Roland Bertin, honorary member of the Comédie-Française.

Fabrique Normant - Auditorium

Avenue François Mitterrand

41200 Romorantin-Lanthenay

War and Music : Survival The years 1914 to 1920

March 25, 3:30 p.m.

Lecture-concert : Music and its setting, from World War 1 to the '20s.

Médiathèque

17 Faubourg Saint-Roch

41200 Romorantin-Lanthenay

American Music

June 10, 2017

Concert by the Union Musicale.

Parc town hall

20 Faubourg Saint-Roch

41200 Romorantin-Lanthenay

Concert

July 23, 2017, 6 p.m.

In association, the town of Romorantin-Lanthenay and the « *Jazz en Val de Cher* » festival.

Île de la Motte

(In case of rain, presentation in the auditorium of the Fabrique or at the Pyramide)

41200 Romorantin-Lanthenay

*Further information available
in Contacts, p.21, 22*

Films

*American films relating to World War 1, from the first to the most recent.
One french film has been selected to illustrate the horrors of war.*

5€ / film



Shoulder Arms



Wings



**Johnny
Got His Gun**

Shoulder Arms (1918)

Charles Chaplin (silent). US.

Charlie leaves to wage war against the Germans. He becomes a hero, or nearly

Showings

April 10, 2017, 9 p.m.

Cinéma le Palace

9 rue de la Résistance

41 200 Romorantin-Lanthenay

May 4, 2017, 8:30 p.m.

Cinéma le Studio

35 rue Jules Ferry

41130 Selles-sur-Cher

May 11, 2017, 8:30 p.m.

Cinéma le Régent

Boulevard Philippe-Auguste

41 400 Montrichard

Wings (1927)

William Wellman (silent). US.

Jack Powell is a young American who dreams of one thing, to fly.

Showing

June 26, 2017, 9 p.m.

Cinéma le Petit Casino

18 place Wilson

41110 Saint-Aignan

Les croix de bois (1932)

Raymond Bernard. France.

Inspired by the Roland Dorgeles' novel, the film tells about the everyday life of the french soldiers.

Showing

July 27, 2017, 6 p.m.

Cinéma le Régent

Boulevard Philippe-Auguste

41 400 Montrichard

July 27, 2017, 8:30 p.m.
Cinéma le Studio
35 rue Jules Ferry
41110 Selles-sur-Cher

August 21, 9 p.m.
Cinéma le Palace
35 rue Jules Ferry
41110 Selles-sur-Cher

Johnny Got His Gun (1971)

Dalton Trumbo. US.
During World War 1, a young soldier is wounded by a mine explosion, losing his arms, his legs and part of his face.

Showings

July 10, 2017, 9 p.m.
Cinéma le Palace
9 rue de la Résistance
41 200 Romorantin-Lanthenay

August 3, 2017, 6 p.m.
Cinéma le Régent
Boulevard Philippe-Auguste
41 400 Montrichard

August 10, 2017, 8:30 p.m.
Cinéma le Studio
35 rue Jules Ferry
41110 Selles-sur-Cher

Marie Curie, Woman on the Front (2014)

Alain Brunard. France-Belgium.
Starring : Dominique Reymond,
Fanny Dumont...
In 1914, Marie Curie, armed with her radiology equipment, leaves by car for the battle of the Marne.

Followed by discussion with Marie-Noëlle Himbert, co-scriptwriter of the film and author of “Marie Curie. Portait d’une femme engagée”, Actes Sud.

Showing

October 3, 2017, 6:30 p.m.
La Fabrique Normant - Auditorium
Avenue François Mitterrand
41200 Romorantin-Lanthenay

*Further information available in
Contacts p.21 et 22*

succeeded in getting his own name on line of them.

Lectures and Visit

Selles-sur-Cher

Lecture cycle by the Compagnons de Philippe de Béthune.

Speakers : Annie and Philippe Zwang, historians, former professors of the Paris IUFM, specialists in American history and the first World War.

The Americans before the War

July 22, 2017, 5 p.m.

A survey of the foundations of American democracy and the circumstances surrounding the entrance of the U.S. into the war in 1917.

Women and Children during the War

August 20, 2017, 5 p.m.

Although not on the Front, how were women and children affected by the first « Total War » in history ?

Château de Selles-sur-Cher

Le château

41130 Selles-sur-Cher

Romorantin-Lanthenay

Lecture cycle by the Amis du Musée de Sologne.

Speakers : Annick Perrot, Luc Durosoir, Maxime Schwartz (former members of the Pasteur Institute).

Musicians in World War 1, Luc Durosoir : « My violin Saved my Life »

September 19, 2017, 6:30 p.m.

Luc Durosoir will relate his father's life, forever devastated by World War 1. Lucien Durosoir, a talented violonist, had founded the "Quintette du Général Mangin" when he was at the front.

Le génie de Pasteur au secours des Poilus

October 10, 2017, 6:30 p.m.

Lecture presented by Maxime Schwartz and Annick Perrot, for the publication of their book, "Le génie de Pasteur au secours des Poilus".

Lecture and Concert

December 5, 2017, 6:30 p.m.

Speaker : Charles Tobermann.

French and american music before and during the war.

La Fabrique Normant - Auditorium

Avenue François Mitterrand

41200 Romorantin-Lanthenay

Noyers-sur-Cher

American Graffiti in the Quarries of the Aisne

November 10, 2017, 6 p.m.

Speakers: Gilles Thomas and Gilles Chauwin

Between assaults, French, German and American soldiers of the 26th Division stationed in the Aisne Department covered the walls of the quarries with graffiti. This lecture will compare these graffiti to those made by American soldiers on the tender freestone façades of private houses in the Cher Valley and in the freestone quarries of Noyers-sur-Cher.

Salle Polyvalente

54 rue Nationale

41140 Noyers-sur-Cher

Gièvres and Noyers-sur-Cher

Field Visit

October 8, 2017, 8 a.m.

The association « Gièvres Souvenir Patri-moine et Culture » offers a day-long visit to discover traces of the American camps in Gièvres and Noyers-sur-Cher.

Registration required.

Église de Gièvres

Place l'église

Route de Villefranches-sur-Cher (RD54)

41130 Gièvres

Further information available in

Contacts p.21 et 22

Officers of the GISD posing in front of one of the numerous barracks of the supply camp (AEF Signal Corps. NARA. Collection Musée de Sologne).





General John Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, inspecting the GIRD. Photo taken in front of the motors of the cold storage plant (NARA. Collection Gièvres Souvenir Patrimoine et Culture).



General view of the 41st Division camp at Noyers-sur-Cher from the Motte-Beaudouin mill. February 1919 (AEF - Signal Corps. NARA. Collection Musée de Sologne).

Permanent Exhibitions

Gièvres

City Library – Exhibition Hall

Opening October 7, 2017

In autumn 2017, the Gièvres library and museum move to a new address. The association « Gièvres Souvenir Patrimoine et Culture » will present the history of the GISD camp in a new permanent exhibition.

City Library – Exhibition Hall

Route de Villefranches-sur-Cher (RD54)
41130 Gièvres

*Further information available in
Contacts p.21, 22, 23*

Noyers-sur-Cher

Exhibition Area

From November 11, 2017

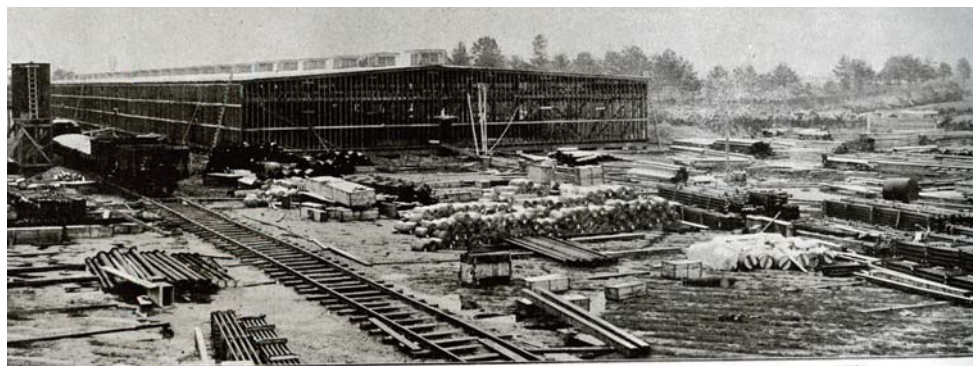
On November 11, 2017, the town of Noyers-sur-Cher will open a new permanent exhibition near the monument commemorating the 41st Division. It will depict the history of Noyers during World War 1 and the existence of the 41st Division in the community from 1917 to 1919.

In addition, a foot trail and a digital app will lead visitors to the graffiti left by the Doughboys on the facades and building blocks of local houses.

Aire de repos des Trois Provinces

Rue Saint-Lazare
41400 Noyers-sur-Cher

The GISD cold storage plant under construction. Original legend of the photo. To maintain secrecy concerning the location of supply camps and troops, names of the sites were voluntarily misleading : "Cold-storage plant built by the Americans on one of their bases, 'somewhere' in Southwest France" (AEF - Signal Corps. NARA. Collection Musée de Sologne)



Bâtiments frigorifiques construits par les Américains dans une de leurs bases, « quelque part » dans le Sud Ouest.

INSTALLATIONS AMÉRICAINES EN FRANCE

Photographies officielles de l'Armée américaine. — U. S. Signal Corps.

Partners and Contacts

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Doughboy in Noyers-sur-Cher (AEF - Signal Corps. NARA. Collection Musée de Sologne)

Cover :

1. Baptism of the first Liberty Airplane (May 1, 1918. AEF Signal Corp. NARA. Collection Musée de Sologne)

2. Insignia of the GISD (collection Nicolas Xavier)

3. Soldiers outside their tents in the 41st Division camp in Noyers-sur-Cher (AEF Signal Corp. NARA. Collection Musée de Sologne)

4. Insignia of the 41st Division

*Translation by Doreen Broneer
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www.franceusa.org*

To our American friends,

Remember, in 1914 war breaks out in Europe. France and Germany face each other in deadly trench warfare. But in the United States, neutrality holds sway. By January 1917, however, Germany is increasingly provoking America with intense submarine warfare, threatening the country's independence, limiting its exports and flouting its ideals. In response, President Woodrow Wilson asks Congress for a Declaration of War and it is approved on April 6, 1917.

An impressive war effort begins in the United States, and the first contingent of American soldiers arrives in Saint-Nazaire on June 26. An extensive infrastructure takes shape under the American Service of Supply Command (camps, depots, communication lines, transport), within much of France, but particularly in the Loir-et-Cher Department.

Among the many localities that welcome Uncle Sam's Doughboys, an outstanding example is the Cher Valley and in particular Gièvres. The U.S. Army Engineer Corps arrives in August 1917 and begins construction of an immense supply camp, including a cold storage plant that will supply food for American forces dispatched from Dunkerque to Italy.

It is important to remember this American aid to an embattled Europe, for this memory will overcome our forgetful nature.

For over 200 years America and France have based their national destinies on our shared values of liberty, justice and democracy. And whenever these values are challenged, both of our countries are forcefully intransigent in their defense.

Maréchal de Rochambeau, a native of Vendôme, was instrumental in freeing America in the 18th century ; later, in the 20th century, and within less than 30 years, American troops twice arrived in France, in 1917 and again in 1944, to fight a common enemy.

Let us remember this heritage, and let us transmit to future generations its solemn meaning and importance.

Jérôme Danard

National and Departmental President of France Etats-Unis

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