Message of the Meuse-Argonne Monuments

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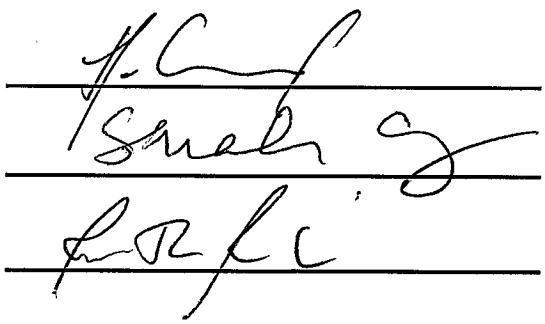

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Introduction

War memorials are one of the oldest forms of records. More than four thousand years ago, Mesopotamian kings began decorating stones with reliefs to commemorate their victories. In the millennia since, leaders and states from all over the globe have used memorials to celebrate their successes, or commemorate their dead. These monuments have become some of the most iconic and famous images in western culture. From classical Greece to Napoleonic Europe, to our own modern states, monuments have played an important role in chronicling the history of cultures, and ensuring that future generations learn about the military accomplishments of their predecessors. [1]

This universal use of war memorials speaks to the basic psychological and socio-political importance of these symbols. They serve to both glorify the dead, and celebrate the values of the society who builds them. Though these themes are common to all war memorials, each era and culture portrays them in a distinctive way. In doing so, they give us a glimpse into their world view. This thesis will look at an American cemetery and monument, collectively known as the Meuse-Argonne memorials, which were erected in France in the decades following the First World War. The design choices made in the construction of these monuments offer a unique view into how the United States viewed itself and its involvement in the First World War during the interwar years. In addition, they offer insight into the way that the United States wanted to be viewed, and remembered, by the rest of the world.

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[1] Some of these works include the Greek Serpent column at Delphi, Trajan's Colum and the Arch of Constantine in Rome, the Arch de Triumph in Paris, Trafalgar square in London, the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C.

Prior Scholarship

This topic falls at the intersection of three main areas of research: the study of the First World War, American culture during the interwar period, and the study of memory and battle monuments. The First World War, also known as the Great War was fought between the Central Powers and the Triple Entente or Allies from 1914 until 1918.[2] The war was characterized by long periods of stalemate, where the troops of both armies remained semi-permanently entrenched along long lines of defense.[3] For the common soldier this meant spending months in various trenches at the front, surrounded on three sides by mud walls. Conditions in the trenches were terrible: they were often filled with standing water, rats, and lice.[4]

Industrialization and the development of new technologies had a profound impact on the nature of the war. Poison gas, machine guns, and new forms of artillery all dramatically increased the amount of bloodshed in the conflict. These new technologies were decidedly one sided: they benefited the defenders far more than the attackers. This led to a pattern of large scale offensives where thousands of soldiers from an attacking army would advance through No-Man's land, only to be mowed down by the weapons of the defenders before a return to the stalemate. On the first day of the Battle of the Somme alone, nearly twenty thousand British soldiers died, and another thirty thousand were wounded.[5]

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[2] The Central Powers included Germany, The Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, and Bulgaria. Allied Powers included France, Russia, British Empire, United States, Belgium, Montenegro, Serbia, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Romania, Greece

[3] John Keegan. *The First World War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000). 37.

[4] Paul Fussell. *The Great War and Modern Memory.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975). 19.

[5] G.J. Myers. *A World Undone: The Story of the Great War, 1914-18.* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000) 14.

Years of fighting with these new weapons destroyed the countryside surrounding the trench lines, turning fields into moonscapes of craters and flattening entire villages and cities.[6] Ninety years later, regions of heavy fighting in Belgium and France are still pock-marked from repeated shellings during the war. Major themes of the Great War included loss, lack of individuality, the high price of victory, and silence. Many soldiers and later writers have discussed how the war experience was also characterized by the tension between traditional society and modernity, a reinterpretation of religion, and the reoccurring images of destruction and order.[7]

Among the scholars who study the First World War, there is a growing number who believe that military maps and reports cannot provide a full picture of the wartime experience. Some of these scholars have tried to understand the complexities of the Great War and the reaction to it during the interwar years by examining works of art. Modris Ekstein is one such historian. His book, *The Rites of Spring,* is named for a pre-war ballet, and is divided into "acts." Through his descriptions of the battles he offers a vivid picture of the character of the First World War, and the role that modern technology played in it. He follows the psychological shift in Europe from idealistic optimism, to cynicism and resignation. As he says in the introduction,

> This is a book about death and destruction. It is a discourse on graveyards. As such it is also, however, a book on "becoming." It is a book about the emergence, in the first half of this century, of our modern consciousness...and about the significance of the Great War in the development of that consciousness.[8]

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[6] Ibid, 6
[7] Ibid, 12
[8] Modris Ekstein. *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age.* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2000). xiv.

Scholars such as Ekstein follow an approach similar to the one that I used to examine the Meuse-Argonne memorials; by looking at the artwork produced about and around the war, they are able to gain insights into the people's reactions to the war, and the psychological effect that it had on them.

Paul Fussell has also used art to examine the First World War and interwar period. In *The Great War and Modern Memory*, he analyzes of the literature of the time period to help his readers understand what the war was like, the kind of psychological impact that it had on those involved, and why and how it changed the western world. He tries to use this literature to offer a glimpse into the British war experience,

> And I have been concerned with something more: the way the dynamics and iconography of the Great War have proved crucial political, rhetorical, and artistic determinants on subsequent life. At the same time the war was relying on inherited myth, it was generating new myth, and that myth is part of the fiber of our own lives.

Fussell argues that people understood the war in terms of familiar stories and symbols from the pre-war era. He shows how authors writing about the war used tradition as a reference point to connect their readers to the experience. In doing so, these authors also altered the existing myths by infusing them with associations of the Great War. This relationship between traditional symbols and the war was crucial to the development of the Meuse-Argonne memorials.

The Great War and the United States

The United States entered the war on the side of the Allies on April 6, 1917. Up until that point Americans had been divided about how to react to the Great War raging in Europe. While the official policy of the United States had been one of isolationism, the nation had become increasingly entangled in the war long before its actual entry. U. S.

merchant ships were delivering munitions and food shipments to Britain, and a number of these "neutral" ships were sunk by German U-Boats. It was Germany's return to the use of unrestricted submarine warfare that finally triggers the United State's declaration of war.[9]

America's entry into the war made the Allies' victory all but inevitable. This was due to the sheer number of troops, food, and supplies that the United States was able to add to the war effort.[10] The Central Powers attempted one last major push in spring of 1918, in hopes that they could win the war before the United States became fully mobilized. Beginning in August of 1918, the Allies launched a major series of counteroffensives, collectively referred to as the Hundred Days Offensive. This included the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. These offensives ultimately reached their goal of outflanking the German Hindenburg Line, and thus forcing Germany to surrender.[11]

The Meuse-Argonne Offensive, named for the river and forest in France where it was fought, was the largest battle ever fought by American troops up to that point in history, and involved more than 600,000 American troops. This counteroffensive, which was fought by both American and French troops between September 26th and November 10th of 1918, is widely considered to be the turning point of the war. The nature of the landscape (forested and hilly, with a number of rivers running through it) made the region a good defensive position for the Germans, who held it, and increased the Allied bloodshed necessary to take the ground.[12]

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[9] Ibid, 322.
[10] Fussell, 209
[11] Myers, 308
[12] Ibid, 257

Despite the strong German position, the Allied forces decided that it was necessary to take this land because of the important German railways that ran through the area, bringing supplies up to their troops in the trenches along the western front. Montfaucon was the first in a series of large hills that dominated the terrain between the Allied position, and their eventual goal of the Hindenburg Line. Troops were brought into the region during night hours, and through a combination of surprise and sheer numbers they were able to take Montfaucon from the Germans on the 27th of September after a bitter fight.[13]

In the following month the U.S. forces continued to push forward, taking the heights at Cunel, Romagne, St. Juvin, and eventually the Barricourt Heights. By the 4th of November the American Expeditionary Force had crossed the Meuse River in pursuit of the retreating German Army. The American forces took control of the German railways, which caused the German army to seek an armistice just a few days later on November 11th.[14] The war was officially brought to a close when Germany was forced to sign the notoriously harsh Treaty of Versailles on June 28th of the following year.[15] This "war of attrition" bled the European nations involved nearly dry. The bloodshed and carnage was on a scale which had never before been seen. Over the course of four years, more than sixteen million military and civilian lives were lost as a result of the war. Germany suffered the greatest loss of life, losing nearly two and a half million men. Despite its late entry into the war, the United States lost 117,465 men, and another 205,690 were wounded.[16]

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[13] Ibid, 238
[14] Ibid, 243
[15] Keegan, 226.
[16] Ibid, 230

The United State's involvement in the war had profound effects on its culture during decades which followed. In *Culture As History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century,* Warren Sussman discusses cultural changes in the U.S. during the interwar period, and ties some of those changes to the American war experience. The loss of life and destruction that characterized the war resulted in mass disillusionment and a general mood of uprooted insecurity. Despite her victory, America's confidence in her own ability to shape her own destiny was badly shaken by the war. This period is well known for the "modernist" intellectual elite, who rejected all past sources of authority as a result of the war. However, the vast majority of Americans were turning back to those same sources of traditional authority in a desperate effort to find some sense of orientation and stability. Fundamentalist Christianity, traditional romantic literature, and Greco-Roman styles of architecture all became increasingly popular during this period. During the interwar years, the United States was also assuming a place as a world power. The United States became increasingly involved in foreign affairs and global trade. While the United States never had an "empire" on the scale of the Great Power of Europe, America increasingly began to exercise indirect imperialism, by pressuring foreign states into acting in accordance with its wishes. [17]

The Meuse-Argonne Monuments

In the decades following the war the nations who had been involved sought ways to commemorate the acts of their soldiers through memorials and war cemeteries. In the United States these efforts began in 1919 under the control of the War Department. In

[17] Elizabeth Grossman. "Architecture for a Public Client: The Monuments and Chapels of the American Battle Monuments Commission." *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians.* Vol. 43, No. 2 (May 1984): 122.

1923 the project was transferred to the newly established American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC). The seven member commission was chaired by General Pershing, who had commanded the American Expeditionary Force during the war. The other six members included a senator, a congressman, representatives from three veteran's organizations, as well as a representative from the Gold Star Mothers. Major X. H. Price, who had previously served as a member of the Battle Monuments Board, acted as the commission secretary.[18]

Of the six cemeteries and eleven monuments that the ABMC planned to build abroad, the Meuse-Argonne cemetery and monument were the largest. Both are located in a remote part of the French countryside, in the area where the offensive took place. The cemetery had existed, at least in a temporary form, since mid-way through the offensive, in October of 1918. The one hundred thirty and a half acres on which it is located was eventually given to the U.S. by the French government, as was the land on which the Montfaucon statue is located. The ABMC hired Paul Cret as the consulting architect for these projects. Cret was a French immigrant and prominent architect who had already worked in the same capacity for a number of war memorials within the United States. Through Cret's recommendation the ABMC selected Louis Ayers of the York and Sawyer architectural firm as the architect for the cemetery and the structures in it, and John Russell Pope to design the Montfaucon monument. Both Pope and Ayers were well known architects who specialized in classical design.[19]

Elizabeth Grossman has studied the specific interactions between the ABMC, the architects they used, and the public for which they constructed the memorials. In her

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[18] Grossman, 120. The Gold Star Mothers was a group of women who had lost a son in the war.
[19] American Battle Monuments Commission. "Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery and Memorial." http://www.abmc.gov/cemeteries/cemeteries/ma_base.pdf: 1.

article "Architecture for a Public Client: The Monuments and Chapels of the American Battle Monuments Commission," she explains, "The American Battle Monuments Commission had to balance the diverse, if not conflicting, interests of military specialists, veterans, and artists." While she does not analyze any of the memorials herself, her work is helpful in understanding the relationship between the artists and the members of the commission, as well as some of the mechanics of how the commission and the architects made their decisions.[20]

The Meuse-Argonne cemetery is a large rectangle, which slopes down toward a single entrance which runs from east to west through the property (Fig. 7). On the south side of this road are the graves and a memorial chapel. On the other side is a visitor center and service area. In the road is double lined by beech trees, and in the center is a large, circular pool with a fountain. The cemetery is enclosed by a stone wall. Each soldier has an individual grave, which is uniformly marked with either a white marble Latin cross or Star of David. These graves are laid out in perfectly straight rows in eight rectangular plots, each framed by linden trees. The Romanesque memorial chapel is located on the highest ground of the cemetery and its walls are engraved with the names of the missing from the offensive. The chapel also features statues, pillars, columns, and stained glass windows with themes relate to the war.[21]

The Montfaucon statue was completed in 1933 (Fig. 4). The pillar-shaped statue is 180 feet tall and made of Baveno granite.[22] It incorporates a number of Greco-roman and military images in the outside design. On the inside is a spiral staircase with 234 steps leading to an observation deck at the top. This observation deck includes a battle map of

[20] Grossman, 120
[21] American Battle Monuments Commission, 7
[22] Ibid, 5

the region, with arrows pointing out to the surrounding countryside. A number of inscriptions, including a passage by the Commander in Chief of the American Expeditionary Force, General Pershing , are etched into the walls. Next to the monument are the leftover ruins of a stone monastery which dates back to the 6th century (Fig. 5). The monastery was used as a defensive position in numerous wars over the centuries, and it was largely destroyed during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.[23]

War memorials such as these represent a type of collective memory, where a community comes together to create an official or group memory of an event. For this reason, war memorials provide a unique view into the psyche of the society who erects them. The decisions that a society makes about how to preserve the memory of the event, from the location, to the structure they place there, speaks a great deal about both the values of that society, and the way that society views the event. Certain aspects of the past will always be more heavily emphasized, while others may be glossed over or hidden completely. Memorials do not always represent a factual account of what the event they commemorate was actually like. However, the way that a society chooses to portray an event, in a lasting public statement, says a great deal about they *way* that they wish it to be remembered. Great works of art are poignant because they are able to express concepts when words fail. Art is a universal language which allows the communication of certain universal human themes to people of different times and cultures. Modern war memorials are unique among such works of art, because they are meant to represent the outlook of an entire nation, rather than just one individual artist.[24]

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[23] Ibid, 9.
[24] Winters, 138

The study of war memory is a relatively new but growing field of historical research, where scholars analyze the ways in which societies try to memorialize conflicts. In James Mayo's *War Memorials as Political Memory,* he argues that "Strengths and weaknesses of a society are demonstrated in war, and these qualities are often mirrored in the memorials to its wars." In this work he discusses the reasons that we build memorials, and the purposes that they serve. His work looks at different ways of memorializing a conflict, as well as the implications of those differences. It gives a very broad overview of war memorials, but without much in depth analysis of specific memorials. Instead, he uses these memorials as examples of the larger trends in the study of remembrance.[25] Alex King offers a similar, yet more narrow and in depth look at British memorials in *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance.* Like Mayo, he is more focused on general themes, patterns, and purposes of these war memorials, but by limiting his study to British World War I memorials he is able to analyze these works much more in terms of their time period. He argues that these memorials reflect the values, and general outlook of Britain during the interwar years.

Like King's work, most of the existing scholarship on the memory of the First World War focuses on the impact that it had in Europe. These works tend to emphasize the European war experience, and European changes during the interwar era. While this provides some helpful parallels, there are also significant limitations to trying to apply the conclusions they reach about interwar culture to the United States. First, the American war experience was distinctly different from that of the European belligerents. America's late entry into the war meant that the American population did not have the same level of

[25] Mayo, 62

war weariness, disillusionment, and bitterness as Europeans. The United States also suffered significantly less loss of life and economic hardship than the European nations.[26]

The scholarship that does look specifically at American interwar culture tend to emphasize the changes that took place, rather than the way that the war impacted those changes, or how those changes reflect the U.S. reaction to its involvement in the war. They offer very little analysis on the war memorials of the era. The scholarship that does deal with American war memorials focuses primarily on monuments located within the United States, and usually deals with memorials from conflicts other than the Great War. While these sources are helpful for understanding the kind of iconography, themes, and purposes that apply most specifically to American memorial representations, they fail to contextualize World War I monuments in terms of what the nation was experiencing during the interwar years. They focus instead on parallels between these monuments and memorials from other historical periods. They are more interested in the evolution of memorial art than in reading specific monuments.

In this paper I will attempt to address this gap in the scholarship by examining the way that the Meuse-Argonne memorials reflect American society during the interwar years. I will analyze the structures, layouts, and symbols of these memorials to determine what image of America and the war that the ABMC was trying to project. It would of course be a gross oversimplification to try to claim that these monuments represent the outlook and sentiments of every American during the interwar years. In a population as large and diverse as the one in the United States, there will naturally be a wide range of

[26] Including civilian deaths, the United States lost 117,465 and had 206,690 wounded during the War. The statistics for the other Great Powers are exponentially greater. Great Britain had 994,138 deaths and 1,663,435 wounded. France had 1,697,800 deaths and 2,090,212 wounded. In Germany the losses were even greater, with 2,476,897 dead and another 4,247,143 wounded.

experiences and reactions. This paper is meant instead to give a sense of the national pulse: to pinpoint certain collective themes which were more or less able to transcend those differences.

To understand the significance of the commission's choices in planning the Meuse-Argonne memorials I examined seventeen additional war memorials and military cemeteries. I looked at the layout of the two major cemeteries of the American civil war era, Gettysburg and Arlington, to get a sense of how American war memorials changed and evolved between the two wars. I also looked at other American World War I monuments in order to draw comparisons and find patterns. In addition, I've studied the layout and imagery on the major memorials erected by France, Germany, and Great Britain to the Great War. I have personally visited both of the Meuse-Argonne memorials, as well as the majority of other sites that I compare them to. For the sites I wasn't able to visit, I've look at photos and read scholarship analyzing the impact of their design choices.

The American Battle Monuments Commission kept careful records of their decision making and planning for the Meuse-Argonne memorials. I've looked through more than two hundred sketches, plans, and photos used by the architects throughout the planning and construction period. I've also examined more than a hundred letters sent between various commission members, as well as to the architects of the memorials. These letters gave me insight into the specific concerns and goals that the commission members had for the monuments.

By synthesizing these sources, I was able to identify several specific messages that the memorials were designed to deliver. In Chapter One I outline the main purposes

of the Meuse-Argonne memorials, and define the audiences from whom the ABMC intended these messages. I also explain how the choice of location for these memorials was directly influenced by the commission's main objectives. The second chapter looks at how the commission tried to depict an image of America in these memorials. It discusses how the design choices were used to express values of liberal democracy, such as individualism and equality. Chapter Two also examines the way that the memorials reflect America's new position as a world power. In the final chapter I look at how religious and military imagery were used to frame the memory of the war. This third chapter looks at the ways that the commission used traditional imagery to both celebrate America's victory, and mourn her losses.

Chapter 1: The Purpose of the Meuse-Argonne Memorials

All memorials share the primary purpose of commemorating an event, person, or group. However, memorials can also serve additional practical roles for the society which builds them. For instance, a memorial hospital is named so as to remind people of an event, but it also serves an important role in that community's health care. Similarly, it is common for public buildings to be named for people or events that the community wishes to have remembered. James Mayo refers to these practical uses as a monument's utility. Whether or not the committee building the monument decides to imbed the memorial in everyday civilian life affects the meaning of the memorial, as well as the way that the society interacts with that memorial.[27]

The Meuse-Argonne cemetery has a unique sort of utility. On a practical level, the U.S. had to find a way to deal with the thousands of dead American bodies scattered across France. A military cemetery in the region served the function of providing a place to bury many of these men. However, this utility is distinct from the other sorts of practical roles that memorials tend to play. A cemetery is not "useful" to the community in the same way that a hospital or a new court house would be. Since societies use cemeteries as a way to remember the dead, utility of a cemetery is still closely tied to its role of commemoration. In a way, the utility of the cemetery resulted from the very desire to commemorate these men.

Prior to the American Civil War, soldiers were commonly buried in mass graves near the site of the battle. They were almost never reburied following the war, and it was extremely rare that a body would ever be brought back home for burial. The notion of

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[27] Mayo, James. "War Memorials as Political Memory." *Geographical Review* 28. 1(1988). 28.

building a military cemetery stems from a relatively modern desire to remember these men by providing them with a known and permanent burial place.[28] The Montfaucon memorial lacks even this quasi-utility of the cemetery. The monument serves absolutely no practical purpose, nor was it designed to. It is located in a remote part of the French countryside, off of the main roads. The floor space inside is small, so it could not hold groups of any size. These features mean that its sole function is to be a commemorative object.

The fact that the commission chose to build memorials to this offensive with no other real practical function for civilian life means that the primary purpose of these monuments was to communicate a message. The majority of this paper will be dedicated to unraveling the multiple layers of that message, and examining why the ABMC was interested in framing its message the way that it did. Just as an author selects a synonym or a certain phrase for the special effect it will have on the readers, the commission and the architects involved in the planning and construction of these memorials carefully selected forms and symbols that would best convey their message.

Dual Messages

The form that the Meuse-Argonne memorials ultimately took was influenced by a myriad of competing factors. The commission spent years planning the location and design of these memorials. Throughout their construction, the commission continued to tweak elements of their design. To understand why these monuments took the final form that they did, it is necessary first to understand the motivating factors behind their

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[28] Foote, Kenneth E. *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy.* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997). 143.

construction. James Mayo describes the primary purposes of World War I monuments as twofold,

> Americans wanted a steadfast, national image, but they had to adapt to new circumstance which provided the opportunity to enhance that image. Americans thought that memorials for World War I dead were necessary tributes, and they also found these monuments to be good ways to express their nationalistic pride.[29]

These are the two roles the monuments needed to fill: to heal American wounds, and to project an American image. Doing both of these things simultaneous was the great balancing act with which the commission had to grapple.

The World War I memorials provided the U.S. with its first opportunity to plant large scale, permanent national propaganda on foreign soil. It was an opportunity to send a message- not only to American citizens- but to the entire world about what America embodied. At the time these memorials were planned, the First World War as still considered the Great War, the War to End All Wars. In other words, the members of the commission had little reason to think they would soon get another opportunity to broadcast these types of messages across European soil. For these reasons it was important that memorials represent the values and characteristics which were central to the American concept of self.

The monuments certainly do no represent the reality of what America was like in the interwar years, nor were they meant to. Like all forms of propaganda, they were meant to represent the very best about America: the ideal. This meant glossing over of certain aspects of American life, or the war experience. However, doing so does not make these monuments any less revealing about the period. They show the values Americans thought were most important, and the concepts the ABMC considered to be the core of

[29] Mayo, 79

the American identity. For example, Even though flagrant examples of racial and gender inequality can be found in American society during this time period, the fact that the commission wanted to project an image of equality on these monuments shows that Americans considered equality to be central in defining what it was to be American.

It would be a cynical oversimplification to claim that the only real motivation behind building these memorials was a nationalistic egoism. The U.S. was still acutely feeling the losses of the war during these years. For the many Americans who had served in or lost loved ones to the war, the desire to honor their memory was very personal and very real.[30] The majority of the commission's members had served in the military during the war; these men had seen the losses and devastation of the war first hand. Internal letters from commission members also reflect a genuine concern for how mothers of deceased soldiers would receive the monuments.[31] The original and primary purpose of the memorials was to commemorate the dead. But if remembering the dead was the "why" behind their construction, the second purpose of these monuments- the desire to project an image of America- became a large part of the "how." The commission sought to balance these two objectives so that they could take advantage of a national advertising opportunity without sacrificing the original intent of the monuments. The memorials had to simultaneously be a message about the men and the nation.

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[30] Kathleen Drowne and Patrick Huber. *American Popular Culture Through History: The 1920s.* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004). 19.

[31] X. H. Price. Price to Lt. North. November 23, 1925. American Battle Monuments Commission. National Archives, College Park.

Choice of Location

Choosing the location for the Montfaucon memorial is an interesting example of how the commission tried to balance these two objectives. The commission started out with the broadly defined aim of creating a statue in the vicinity of the cemetery it was planning outside Romagne, France to celebrate the U.S.'s success in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. This offensive spanned miles of French countryside, and the commission could have put this statue in any number of places. The decision to place the monument on Montfaucon is telling for a number of reasons.

The fact that the commission decided to dedicate this monument abroad, on the actual land where fighting had taken place, rather than back home in the U.S., signals several important things about the aims of the commission in creating this memorial. When a monument is placed in a space marked off from the normal activities of the community who builds it, it affects the message that the monument sends to its viewers. It non-verbally indicates that the event being remembered is special, different and deserving of reverence. When a monument is incorporated into a society's normal living space, it becomes familiar. Originally, it may serve as a more constant reminder to members of the community that the event has happened, but after a while it loses the ability to evoke strong emotions. When we drive past a cemetery everyday on our way home, it becomes just another well-known patch in the fabric of the landscape, and we stop thinking about the people buried there.[32] Putting both the cemetery and the monument in the French countryside guaranteed that Americans would never reach this level of familiar complacency with these memorials. The very distance and effort

[32] Mayo, 70

involved in visiting them makes the journey a sort of pilgrimage, and reinforces the idea that the events and men they celebrate are sacred.

Why build on Montfaucon?

The commission sent crews of men to carefully survey a number of potential sites for their monument to the Meuse-Argonne offensive. Their files reveal dozens of aerial photographs where property lines have been drawn in with red ink (Fig. 6). Their notes show they were also aware of who owned each portion of the land, and their correspondence indicates that they did not wait for the French government to offer them a specific plot to build their monument on. Instead, they went to the French knowing exactly what they wanted: the Montfaucon hill. They made this choice for several reasons.

In order to fulfill the commission's goal of commemorating the men who had fought on this front they had to select a location of significance to the offensive. This could be a place where an unusually large number of men died, or a primary objective which was taken, or a spot where an exceptionally heroic act took place. It should be stressed that these were necessary, but not sufficient reasons to pick a location. Montfaucon was one of the main objectives during the early parts of the offensive, but it was still one of *many* such objectives.[33] The commission was able to meet this first goal of commemorating the men by choosing Montfaucon, but its reasons for choosing Montfaucon over a number of other equally important battle sites has much more to do with their desire to project a message about America.

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[33] Keegan, 178

The commission was extremely deliberate and careful in selecting Montfaucon as the site of this memorial. It was chosen despite a number of obstacles and objections to its use. First, in choosing Montfaucon the commission ran the risk of appearing to favor the contribution of certain troops. Much of this can be seen in the letters between Major Price, and Lieutenant North. Though General Pershing was the chairman of the committee, it was Major Price who made many of the daily decisions during the planning process. In these letters Price advises North, who was in France negotiating the use of land for American memorials. In one letter to North, Price writes, "It seems to be by having this monument on 79th Division territory that they are getting far more commemoration than they deserve for their operation in the vicinity."[34]

The decision to use this hill anyway is significant. When commemorating an event of this scale, where so many men died, it was incredibly important to avoid appearing biased in favor of any one group. This was especially true in the decades following the war, when emotions were still running high. The commission ran a serious risk of receiving a negative public reaction, or even having the monuments appear illegitimate in the eyes of the American public if they appeared to be built to favor one group.[35] If the commission's sole interest had been commemorating the men who fought in the war, then this consideration might have been enough to rule out Montfaucon as the site for the memorial. Clearly, there were factors at play here which trumped desire to give equal treatment to the memories of all the men involved in the offensive.

Another obstacle to building on this site was the French government's hesitancy to let the U.S. use Montfaucon for a memorial. Letters and internal memos from the

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[34] X. H. Price. Price to Lt. North. July 23, 1926. Ltr No. 307-W. American Battle Monuments Commission. National Archives, College Park.
[35] Foote, 128

ABMC indicate how important they felt it was for them to receive control over the land on top of Montfaucon. The ABMC had done extensive research to determine who owned the land they were looking to acquire. In its pamphlet on the memorials the ABMC states only that, "the use of the land on which it rests has been granted by the French government free of charge or taxation in perpetuity, as an expression of its gratitude to the United States," but the correspondence of the commission paint a much more complex picture. [36]

Though there had been historical precedents in previous European wars for the mass burials of foreign soldiers, French law apparently made no provision for granting land to war allies in perpetuity. The one hundred thirty and a half acres on which the Meuse-Argonne cemetery was built was still the personal property of various French farmers. It had to be purchased, and the farmers relocated before the land could be granted to the U.S. Furthermore, the Montfaucon Hill on which the United States wished to build the other memorial had centuries of French history. Since it was the highest point in the area, it had been involved in numerous battles dating back as far as the late seventh century. It also contained the remains of a medieval monastery and cemetery. Getting the French to grant them the land despite all these considerations was no easy task.

The French government claimed not to want to give up Montfaucon Hill out of concern for the medieval ruins on the hill. This seems like a rather dubious reason. First of all, these ruins would only be of minor historical significance for a country like France, where it's hard to go 10 miles without running into a church, a museum, or a

[36] American Battle Monuments Commission, 3

battlefield. Secondly, the structure had been severely bombed during the offensive, and all that was left standing were a few support columns and bits of the walls (Fig. 5).[37]

It's much more likely that the French didn't want to give the land to the United States for the exact same reason we wanted to use it: because Montfaucon is the highest point in the area. Both the commission and the French government knew that any monument placed there could be seen for miles (Fig. 32). Since the French has very little involvement in taking this specific hill they could hardly argue that they needed it for their own war memorial. They also risked looking ungrateful if they flatly denied the United States the use of this location. So their solution was to create petty bureaucratic obstacles and raise a competing claim to the hilltop because of its "significance" to French history. Major Price's letters show increasing frustration with these French claims. In one letter he complains, "Vestiges ought not to interfere with the erection of our memorial."[38]

Other letters between North and Price show that they did not believe the reasons that the French were giving to keep the hill top, "If they mention maintaining the aspect of the hill as it was during the war, you could point out that the Triangulation Tower and new house have already destroyed it to a considerable extent."[39] This comment suggests that the French were claiming that they did not want a memorial on the hill because they wanted to leave it in its post-offensive state of destruction, as a way to remind people of the war. This is an equally weak and transparent reason not to grant the land. The vast

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[37] X. H. Price. Price to North. August 3, 1927. Ltr No. 628-P. American Battle Monuments Commission. National Archives, College Park.
[38] X. H. Price. Price to North. August 19, 1926. Ltr No. 318-W. . American Battle Monuments Commission. National Archives, College Park.
[39] X. H. Price. Price to North . June 15, 1926. Ltr. 280-W. American Battle Monuments Commission. National Archives, College Park.

majority of the French countryside had been torn apart by the war. If France had really wanted to allow the landscape to stay as it was during the war then the country would have perpetually looked like a churned up moonscape (Fig. 3). Price recognizes that their real concern is with allowing a foreign nation- even an ally- to erect a colossal (and permanent) piece of propaganda on a French hilltop. Price tries to alleviate this fear, writing, "We expect to include the French divisions along with the American divisions on both the St Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne monuments. We also expect to make all of our inscriptions of such a nature that they will not be disagreeable to the French."[40]

The French were naturally skeptical of Prices claim. Such skepticism was not unfounded; the completed monuments make only passing reference to the French and their contribution. Further correspondence shows that the French were concerned about the nature of the monument that the United States intended to erect. The Prefet de la Meuse told the commission that, "before he could give his approval to the granting of the site, he would like to have a sketch showing in general outline, or in silhouette, the nature of the monument." Price writes to North that, "It will be impossible to present a design for the Montfaucon monument until we have sufficient assurance hat the site desired can be obtained. You can assure those concerned, however, that the design of the monument will be submitted for their approval later on." This comment indicates two things. First, it shows that the French wanted to see what the monument was going to look like before letting the U.S. have the land. This desire completely undermines their claim that they

[40] Ibid, 1

wanted to keep the hill for "historical reasons" since they are willing to let the United States have the hill if they decide that the monument is to their liking. [41]

The second part of Price's comment suggests that the French had reason to be suspicious of the American's aims. Despite all of Price's promises that the monument will incorporate the French contribution to the offensive, and that it won't be "disagreeable to the French," he still refuses to let them see the architectural plans until the land has been granted. This suggests that he knows that the French will find the monument objectionable. This is another indication that the ABMC was not just innocently trying to commemorate the fallen men. Furthermore, the United States did not want to build this monument on French-owned soil, or to lease the land from the French. They negotiated to get the property perpetually transferred to American ownership. This indicates both that commission wanted to insure the permanence of this monument, as well as their intuition that what they were planning to build would not be agreeable to the French. They wanted the grant before they began construction so that the French could not interfere or stop them once they saw the true nature of the memorial. Clearly, the commission did not intend to make the memorial quiet or humble. This monument was meant to be an imposing part of the French landscape (Fig. 4).

Shaping Memory: Sanctification and Obliteration

Once the commission had secured the sites for these two memorials, they had to make a number of decisions about how to treat the sites. They made specific decisions about what elements they would add, alter, or preserve at each place. Altering landscapes

[41]Thomas North. North to Price. May 25, 1926. Ltr. 280-W and X. H. Price. Price to North, June 26, 1926. No. 339-P. American Battle Monuments Commission. National Archives, College Park.

where violent actions have occurred can serve one of four primary purposes: sanctification, designation, rectification, or obliteration. Each one reflects a different reaction and attitude towards the memory of the violent events. The Meuse-Argonne memorial sites involve an interesting blend of sanctification and obliteration. Obliteration involves trying to remove all physical signs that the events have taken place. This happens when a society wants to forget about the event that took place. They attempt to do so by literally erasing the physical evidence that the action ever occurred. Obliteration is a way for societies to deal with events that they consider too painful and shameful to be rehashed. [42]

Sanctification on the other hand involves marking off the site where the action took place and making it "sacred." Sanctification occurs when a community wants to preserve, rather than erase, the memory of the violent event. While obliterated sites evoke a sense of shame, the sanctified spots are associated with events for which the community feels a sense of pride. These sites are often marked with an objects meant to permanently remind visitors of the violent actions that have taken place. Such places often become sites of ritualistic dedication; they provide a physical space the community to come together in the act of remembrance. By marking off the space as separate and special, the community tries to ensure that the memory will be kept "alive" even after no one is left who personally remembers the event.[43]

The commission's desire to sanctify these memorial sites is obvious. They erected large stone structures at both sites. The scale of these structures draws attention to the sites and signals their importance. The use of stone- both literally and symbolically a

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[42]Foote, 7
[43] Ibid, 9

material of permanence- shows the intention to for these sites to play a lasting role in American memory. The fact that the structure at the Meuse-Argonne cemetery is a chapel even more explicitly suggests that this site is sacred and holy. The stone fence which surrounds the entire circumference of the cemetery physically signals to the viewer that this are is separate and special from the surrounding landscape.

While sanctifying theses sites, the commission was simultaneously obliterating certain aspects of the memory. Both the cemetery and Montfaucon monument are on perfectly smooth and manicured green lawns (Fig 4 & 9). This required significant erasures of the scars that the offensive had left on the landscape. The war left the area looking like a moonscape. Explosives of all forms and sizes had churned up the ground- leaving huge pock marks and uprooting trees. Trench lines cut long, jagged scars into the earth for miles. Even today, more than ninety years after the conflict, you can still see evidence of the destruction in the uneven ground in many parts of this region. Within the cemetery, commission went beyond just restoring the landscape to its pre-war appearance. The commission reformatted the land into gentle and unnaturally perfect slopes.

The treatment of the land surrounding the Montfaucon monument shows the same desire to downplay, though not deny, the nature of the war. The Montfaucon hill where the monument is located saw heavy fighting during the war, and the landscaping was badly torn up. The commission decided to smooth out the landscape approaching the monument. The ground slopes gently upward, and is covered only in a flat carpet of grass. In the center of this slope is a wide, white stone staircase. Interestingly, this clean slope and wide staircase is one of the few elements shared by all three of Pope's

suggested designs for the memorial (Fig 1 & 2). The resulting image that the viewer receives when approaching the monument is one of peace, structure, and order.

Yet the commission did not choose to cover up all the scars that the fighting had left on landscape surrounding this monument. In the wooded area behind the Montfaucon memorial contains the remnants of trench lines and cement structures that were used during the war. By allowing these relics to remain, the commission made the conscious choice not to deny or conceal the realities of the First World War. At the same time, no effort has been made to draw the public's attention to these structures. The forest has been allowed grow back up around them, and nothing has been done to try to preserve or maintain them. Additionally, there are no signs around the memorial site indicating that they are there. Clearly the filthy, brutal realities of trench warfare are not aspects that the commission wanted to focus in its remembrance of the offensive. Americans seem much more comfortable dealing with militarism in vague, abstract symbols.[44]

Perhaps even more symbolic is the treatment of the medieval monastery that had occupied the hill since the sixth century. Rather than rebuilding or demolishing the bombed out remains of this structure, the ABMC chose to leave the ruins exactly as they were. This creates a powerful visual symbol for the First World War itself: an image of traditional western civilization, which has been torn to shreds by the modern, mechanistic nature of the conflict. This is the only imagery at the site that really speaks to the destruction of the battle, and the fact that the values and traditions that were torn apart in the war can never really be repaired. It represents everything about the conflict that could not be smoothed over. It suggests that even as America was trying to build a symbol of peace, structure and order, it had to do so in the shadow of memories of the brutal chaos

[44] This point will be addressed more fully in Chapter 3

of war. While the commission tried to reassure the American public with the memorial it built, it recognized that it could not deny that alternative, darker message about the war.[45]

While the commission did leave the monastery, they purposely did not make it a central or obvious part of the monument's landscaping. The commission clearly felt some discomfort with this very concrete symbol of the war's destructive nature. The alternations they made to the site's layout reflect this. Originally, the Montfaucon monument was to face west, towards the United States. However, this would have made the ruins far too visible. After deciding to keep the ruins, the commission actually shifted the orientation of the entire monument so that it faced south "in the direction of the American advance" instead.[46] As a result, the monastery is hidden behind the monument as you approach it. Only once a visitor has climbed the tower, or walked around the entire monument are they able to see the ruins. This design change suggests that the commission was trying to both preserve *and* hide aspects of the First World War.

At first it may seem incongruous for the commission to simultaneously try to sanctify and obliterate these sites. Doing both shows the equivocal relationship that Americans felt towards the war and their own involvement in it. While they wanted to permanently preserve the memory of the men who had served, and the sacrifice those men had made, they also wanted to forget about the horrific destruction and brutal violence of the war. The elements of sanctification at these sites are closely tied to the men themselves: the stone monuments preserve their names, and the results of their actions. At the same time, obliteration is used to gloss over the way in which these results were reached. The man-made perfection of the landscaping denies that anything violent

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[45] Grossman, 128

[46] Nov 8, 1927. Record of Proceedings. American Battle Monuments Commission. National Archives, College Park.

or destructive ever occurred at either of these locations. Instead it asserts America's ability to control and shape both nature and its own destiny as it sees fit. Order has triumphed over chaos, free will over the power of fate. In other words, the commission was trying to offer a sterilized version of the war to viewers. It was the men, not the violence, that they wanted to focus on.

This equivocal, hesitant treatment of the war also shows the limitations of approaching these monuments simply as controlled messages that the commission was trying to project. As careful, rational, and planned as many elements of the memorials seem, they have nonetheless been subconsciously blended with emotion. It is foolish to pretend that any human choices are ever made in a vacuum. The feelings, biases, and general world view of the creators will always infuse themselves into the work. This is true of even the most sterile projects. For a project as emotionally charged as a war memorial, during a period as tumultuous as the interwar years, this is especially true. These non-rational elements reveal a lot about the American mindset during the period.

In many ways the messages of the memorials were colored by America's experiences in the war. Certain themes of the era are woven subconsciously through the designs. Unlike the purposeful and conscious messages about the soldiers and America, these messages have more to do with the issues that Americans were grappling with during this period. These subtler themes speak to the anxieties of the interwar years: the confused disillusionment that stemmed from the war, and the desire to believe that man still was the master of his own destiny. Such themes may have had little to do with the intended messages of the monuments, and must be viewed somewhat separately from those aims. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize these themes in order to understand

why the memorials took the form that they ultimately did, and to better understand what they can teach us about interwar America.

Order is one of the major themes stressed in the design and layout of these monuments. The Great War revealed man's power to destroy, and the battered, churned up earth was a lasting reminder of that power. By removing those scars in the landscape, and turning the land instead into a perfectly smooth green slope, the commission was affirming man's ability to also create peace and stability. In fact, at both memorial sites the landscape goes beyond what could be considered natural: the hills are all equally sloped on all sides, and the grass is mowed to a regulation height. In doing so, the commission visually reasserts man's ability to control his environment and destiny. Changing the war-torn landscape may have been an attempt to fulfill a need to physically assert the power of order over chaos, rather than a desire to obliterate the shameful reminders of violence.[47] It may not even be a question of either/or; through refashioning the landscape the commission may have been simultaneously addressing both of these psychological needs.

Conclusion:

The commission had two primary purposes in building these memorials: to commemorate the men who served in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, and to project a message about America. These two purposes are linked to the two groups that the commission was trying to serve. The first group was composed of those directly affected by the conflict. This included veterans and their loved ones. The second group was the wider world audience who would see these memorials. This would include anyone who might see these memorials at anytime in the future. Certainly ABMC expected this group

[47] Foote, 87

to include future generations of Americans, but they also build it with the intention that people from other cultures would see these monuments and come to certain conclusions about what America was, and what its involvement in the war had entailed. The commission tried to balance these two purposes as they carefully crafted the messages of the memorials.

The choice of location for both the cemetery and the Montfaucon monument reflect the ABMC's attempts to serve both of these functions. The memorials are located on land important to the offensive itself, in order to properly remember the men who fought. The prominent location of Montfaucon amplifies its ability to project the commission's messages to the second group. The treatment of the land where they build these monuments reflect their desire to make these spaces sacred. However, their tendency to remove evidence of the conflict points to their uneasiness with the violent nature of the offensive.

Chapter 2: Messages of the Monuments

Values of a Liberal Democracy

One of the main messages the memorials convey is linked to the core values of liberal democracy. Liberal democratic governments are based on two main principles. The first is that all citizens (or at least all citizens who have been granted voting rights) are equal under the law. In theory, if not in practice, these systems support the idea that a billionaire is no better than a beggar, just as a general is no better than a common solider. The other main principle is the importance of the individual, and the stress placed on the protection of individual rights. In other words, these systems profess to believe that the state cannot subvert the freedoms of an individual to the good of the collective unless they have a compelling reason to do so.[48]

The way that America tried to project the idea of individual is particularly interesting in war monuments since so many aspects of the war experience were antithetical to the idea of individualism. Much of this has to do with the inherent nature of warfare. On the battlefield, a strict hierarchy of command has to be enforced. That means that the desires and rights of the individuals are far less important than the goals of the collective. This phenomenon was even more pronounced during the First World War because of the defensive nature of trench warfare. Technological advancements during World War I required even greater coordination of the men and left less room for decision making on the part of individual soldiers. The most important factor in victory was quantity, not quality: the ability to throw more men, more machine gun rounds, and

[48] Stephen P. Turner. *Liberal Democracy 3.0.* (New York: Sage Publications, 2003). ix.

more bombs at the enemy. The type of warfare eroded the personal identities of the soldiers- each one was merely a faceless number in an ocean of steel and flesh. [49]

Historically, a state of war is also closely tied to the curtailment of individual freedoms in the interest of national security. But the First World War was also the first total war. Total war means that every available resource of a nation is used for the war effort: the purpose of agriculture becomes feeding the solider, the goal of textile companies is to produce uniforms, and the production of munitions trumps the creation of consumer goods. This meant the government was interfering in areas of civilian life which had always been considered private and protected from such intervention. Americans became accustomed to food rations and shortages of other goods. Women left the home to take over industrial jobs left open by deployed men. The overwhelming societal message during the war told Americans that it was their duty to aid the war effort in any and every way possible. [50]

For the same reasons that the war experience had eroded individualism, it also reinforced the idea of equality. Men from all regions and socioeconomic backgrounds were drafted into the army. The draft itself is a mechanism of equality, since everyone within a certain age range has an equal chance of being called up. The soldiers all dressed the same, ate the same food, and shared similar experiences in the trenches. More than anything, it was the profusion of death that served as the greatest reminder of equality: death was everywhere, and it struck without rhyme or reason. A man's chance of survival had more to do with luck than with his character or his fighting ability.[51]

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[49] Ekstein, 133
[50] Sussman, 125
[51] Ekstein, 87

Equality in the Meuse-Argonne Cemetery Design

Because of these realities, it was far easier for the commission to represent equality than individualism in the memorials. Neither memorial recognizes the contribution of any one man over any others. This is in stark contrast to the memorials of the American Civil War. A number of Civil War battlefields have been preserved and turned into national parks. These sites are filled with statues of individual commanders from the war. Such statues are notably missing from the Meuse-Argonne memorial sites.

Equality is main theme of the grave layout at the Meuse-Argonne cemetery. First, there is equality in the grave markers. Each tombstone is the exact same height, composed of the exact same material, and differ only in that a Star of David is given to Jewish soldiers rather than a cross (Fig. 10). The unidentified soldiers are given the exact same tombstone as everyone else. Each tombstone is in one of the perfectly aligned rows and columns in a field full of graves. The graves are all equally spaced out, and no preference of tombstone type or grave location is given, regardless of social, political, or military rank. This choice was not unique to the Meuse-Argonne cemetery. When individual, or semi-individual graves were used in German, French, British, or Belgian cemeteries for the First World War, they also use identical grave markers for all men, and equal spacing between graves.

The British actually originated many of the concepts behind the grave layouts used at the Meuse-Argonne and other military cemeteries. During the war they began keeping records on the burials of both known and unknown men so that they could notify families of their son's burial. Many of those families began requesting pictures of their son's grave sites, which left the British government in an uncomfortable situation: most

of the graves were marked by wooden crosses in muddy, war torn areas. These would hardly have been images of solace. To solve this problem, they formed the Commonwealth Military Cemetery and Memorial Commission (CMCMC) in 1917 while the war was still raging.[52]

The CMCMC replaced the wooden grave markers with either stone crosses or rectangles, depending on the site. Their simple cemetery layouts stressed permanence and equality. When necessary, bodies were reburied so that the plots were in neat, straight rows and columns. They decided that all the tombstones would be uniform, regardless of civilian or military class. Unknown soldiers were given tombstones identical to those used for identifiable soldiers, with a line which Rudyard Kipling selected from Ecclesiastes, "Their name liveth for evermore." [53]

Since this equality of the grave is so universal to World War I cemeteries, it seems to be more a hallmark of the era than a particularly "American" or "democratic" notion of war cemeteries. It was arguable a manifestation of the nature of the egalitarian nature of the war itself, rather than a proclamation about political values. However, it should also be noted that all of these nations had some degree of democratic governance. Without an example of a completely autocratic western nation with World War I cemeteries, it's hard to know for certain what factors impacted this method of grave layout.

Compared to the British, the United States was able to take far more time planning and considering the exact way that they wanted the Meuse-Argonne cemetery to

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[52] Major Edwin Gibson and Ward, G. Kingsley. *Courage Remembered: The Story Behind the Construction and Maintenance of the Commonwealth Military Cemeteries and Memorials of the Wars of 1914-18 and 1939-1945.* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989). 49.
[53] Ibid, 51

look. The CMCMC had to begin its work during the war, sending out squads of men to war-torn areas which were no longer part of the front. Their task mainly consisted of reburying men in smaller cemeteries which had organically developed throughout the war.[54] The British cemeteries were also far more spread out and numerous, since they had been fighting in the war longer on more fronts than the U.S. The United States on the other hand was able to design the Meuse-Argonne cemetery after the war. Since the Meuse-Argonne was one of just a few major offensives, and since it had happened late in the war, they were able to plan one massive cemetery, rather than multiple smaller ones. They were also able to look to British examples to help guide their decisions about the cemetery design. For these reasons every aspect of the cemetery was selected with care, and can be considered a reflection of the message that the U.S. was trying to send.

The grave layout at Meuse-Argonne indicates a sense of national identity. In the cemetery at Gettysburg, for example, the graves are arranged according to the soldier's state of origin. In other words, all the men of New York are buried together and the state from which they came is prominently displayed (Fig. 23). This makes their primary identity "New Yorkers" rather than Americans. The Meuse-Argonne plots could have been laid out in a similar fashion. They also could have chosen to arrange the plots by regiment or military rank. Instead, the layout is completely random. Not even the unknown soldiers are segregated into a separate part of the cemetery. This symbolizes the men's identity as Americans first, and only secondarily members of other groups.

The commission made a similar decision in organizing the names of the missing men on the outside walls of the cemetery's chapel. In this case, the commission decided to arrange the names alphabetically. Correspondence at the commission reveals that the

[54] Gibson and Ward, 50

plan had originally been to organize the names by divisions, "the arrangement made by the architect was to group the names by divisions."[55] Displaying them alphabetically plays the same role as randomizing the grave placements- it suggests that the only group identity that matters is that of "American Soldiers." Here the choice was also influenced by practical considerations. Price wrote about his personal reasons for preferring the alphabetical arrangement:

> Due mainly to the grouping by units, it is necessary at the Menin Gate memorial for the British to have available an index of the units. In spite of this fact I spent half an hour trying to locate a certain name and then gave it up, still not being fully sure whether or not it was on the monument.[56]

This comment is important for a number of reasons. First, it shows that members of the commission were visiting the memorials other nations had erected and their decisions were influenced by these memorials. It also shows a concern for how viewers would perceive the monument. The fact that the more practical arrangement of names was chosen is another indicator that the commission was trying to balance the two purposes of the memorials. An arrangement by divisions, as done at Ypres with the Menin Gate, would better commemorate the nature of the war. However, the alphabetical arrangement is better able to serve the needs of those who would visit the site (Fig 17).

The Value of the Individual

While many of the cemeteries created by World War I participants are designed to stress equality, the United States is unique in the emphasis that it placed on the

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[55] X. H. Price. Price to York & Sawyer. August, 10 1926. American Battle Monuments Commission. National Archives, College Park.
[56] X. H. Price. Price to York & Sawyer. Sept 23, 1928. American Battle Monuments Commission. National Archives, College Park.

importance of each individual solider. First, the ABMC chose to give every single man his own tombstone. This differs from both France and Germany, who used mass and semi-individual graves in their cemeteries. The Germans blended these two grave types at the Langemark Cemetery outside Ypres, Belgium (Fig. 21). Near the entrance is a black structure over a mass grave, known as the Comrades' Grave. It contains the bodies of nearly 25,000 Germans. Another 10,000 soldiers are buried in under flat, black tomb stones, with 8 men to each stone. In a separate part of the cemetery are the graves of 3,000 school children who died during one of the battles (Fig. 22). For comparison, only about 14,000 men are buried in the entire Meuse-Argonne Cemetery. Langemarck is typical of German World War I cemeteries, in which almost every solider shares a tombstone with at least one, and often more men.

The German tombstones are also far easier to maintain than white marble crosses used by the U.S. The flat, black German stones do not require the same amount of cleaning to keep their appearance pristine. In addition, the general yard work such as mowing associated with cemetery upkeep is far simpler with these flat, square stones. This may originally have had to do with Germany's status as a loser of the war, and the economic weakness during the interwar years. The Germans had fought the war on foreign soil, and were limited by the amount of land that Belgium, a nation who they had invaded, was willing to give them for their cemetery. The deaths at Ypres also began much earlier in the war than the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, which meant that Langemarck began as an ad hoc place to bury the dead during battle.[57] However, it should be remembered that just over twenty years after they lost the first war, Germany

[57] Martin Marix Evans. *Passchendaele and the Battles of Ypres.*(London: Osprey Publishing, 1998). 41.

was once again occupying France and Belgium. During this time they could have, and did not, expand the cemeteries or add individual tombstones.

The Douaumont Ossuaire outside Verdun, France is an example of how the French blended individual and mass graves at their cemeteries. The Ossuaire itself is an oval shaped church built over the bones of 130,000 unknown French and German soldiers (Fig. 18). Additionally, there are white crosses marking individual graves to known soldiers on the land surrounding the Ossuaire. Like the Germans, the French had some very practical reasons for using mass graves. Both nations had sustained far greater casualties during the war than the United States, and burying all of these men presented a number of challenges. The French were not limited in acreage by any foreign government, since the Ossuaire was built on French soil. However, they did have to contend with the unfathomable death toll from Verdun. If they had tried to lay out all 130,000 of these bodies in individual plots, it would have taken hundreds of acres. The nature of the fighting at Verdun also meant that it was impossible in many cases to distinguish between the French and German soldiers. A mass grave was the most practical burial solution.

Even though the United States did not have many of these same limitations, it is still significant that it chose to only use individual graves in its cemeteries. The cemetery was not completed until 1933, well into the Great Depression. It is telling that even though the nation was facing its most severe economic crisis of all time, the choice was still made to spend the considerable extra money needed for individual burial and grave markers.

Based on the European precedents, the United States could have easily justified the decision to erect similar structures over mass graves, especially for the unknown men. These men could have been buried together under the cemetery's chapel, instead of being spread out amongst the other graves. The chapel at Meuse-Argonne is different from the one at Douaumont for precisely this reason. Because the chapel is not a grave marker, its only purpose is to provide an additional space for the commemoration of the dead. It is a memorial in the truest since- a space that has been set aside purely for the living to go to and remember the past. The chapel can be seen as an attempt by the commission to meet needs of those visiting the site, rather than of the dead.

Scale: A Projection of Wealth and Strength

The United States emerged from the First World War with a new position in the global community. In terms of both economic and military strength, the U.S. had proved itself to be on par, if not stronger, than the European Great Powers. Even before entry into the conflict, U.S. had been the major financer of the allied war effort. The surge of manpower and weaponry that they added proved decisive in their ultimate victory. America's prominent role in the Paris Peace Conference was further confirmation that it had become a major player on the world stage. The Commission wanted to erect war memorials that would reflect America's new found position. Europe was already dotted with over a millennia's worth of monuments from the various civilizations which had risen to prominence over the years. For the first time, The U.S. had an opportunity to plant themselves within that tradition - as the heirs of the customs and values of western civilization.[58]

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[58] Margret Malamud. *Ancient Rome and Modern America.* (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2009). 43.

Monuments and cemeteries can be visually large in two separate ways. A monument focuses attention on a single object, which dwarfs us with its height and width in the same way that a mountain would. A cemetery, on the other hand, overwhelms the viewer with the vastness of the land that it covers. It leaves the viewer with a feeling of smallness akin to what they would feel if they were standing beside the ocean.

Each of the victorious nations involved in the First World War erected at least one large scale monument and cemetery to their veterans. In some cases, such as the French Douaumont Ossuaire at Verdun, the memorial and the cemetery were combined into a single entity. More often, the large scale memorials were placed somewhere separate from the large military cemeteries. This separation draws even more attention to the tremendous size of the largest memorials and cemeteries. If they are placed together, they run the risk of distracting from one another, and thus neutralizing the impact that the size of each would have on the viewer. A mountain rising up out of the ocean would make both the ocean and the mountain seem less impressive: either the size of the mountain would be lost in the vastness of the water, or the water looks less vast beneath the height of the mountain. Separating out these two elements allows each be the largest, and most visually overwhelming thing that the viewer sees. At Douaumont, for instance, the sheer size of the Ossuaire leaves the 15,000 individual graves in front of it looking like a small family plot rather than a military cemetery (Fig 18).

The commission made a conscious choice to erect American monuments on an enormous scale, using costly materials and complex landscaping designs which would require expensive upkeep. This sends a message both about the wealth and importance of America, as well as the importance that Americans placed on the memory of the war. The

height of the Meuse-Argonne memorials dwarfs even some of the largest European monuments. At 180 feet, Montfaucon is taller than the British Thiepval (Fig. 28) and Menin Gate memorials (Fig. 20) , the Canadian Vimy Ridge (Fig. 29) and St. Julien memorials, and even the tower of the French Douaumont Ossuaire. Not surprisingly, the Germans built no large scale monuments.[59]

The commission chose the overall Montfaucon memorial design even before securing the use of the Montfaucon location. In fact, the commission had become so determine to erect this specific monument that they even began considering alternative locations to build it when the French continued to stall. Despite their promises to the French, they selected the largest and tallest of the potential designs (Fig 1 & 2). The commission picked this colossal Montfaucon monument design by a nearly unanimous vote. Only Mrs. Bently, the representative of the Gold Star Mothers, voted against this towering design. The ABMC then requested that architect John Russell Pope make the monument an additional 20 feet taller than his original suggestion. They might even have tried to increase its size more, if not for the complaints from the architects involved. Pope expressed a good deal of hesitation in fulfilling the request to add to the monument's height, since the added size actually put the pillar beyond the normal dimensions for a Doric column. Ultimately such artistic considerations were tossed aside, and the column was elongated to meet the commission's request. Their willingness to override the architect indicates just how important the scale of this monument was to the ABMC (Fig 32).[60]

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[59] Thiepval is 45 meters, the Menin Gate is 80 feet, Vimy Ridge is 27 meters, and St Julian is 11 meters

[60] X. H. Price. Price to Sawyer and York. June 23, 1926. American Battle Monuments Commission. National Archives, College Park.

Letters between members of the commission indicate that the imposing size of the Montfaucon monument caused tension with the French government. Not only was the American memorial located on the highest point in the area, but it was would also be the tallest structure in the region. Combined, these two factors would make it the most imposing feature in the landscape. Even though this was a gift of land within an allied nation, it is still a blunt, unapologetic projection of American strength on foreign soil. It is understandable how, even in their gratitude, the French would be uncomfortable with such an image towering over their countryside.

Likewise, the Meuse Argonne cemetery is far larger in terms of acreage than the major war cemeteries of any of the other belligerents. This is impressive, given that both Britain and France had a far greater number of men to bury in such cemeteries than the U.S. did. Rather than have one sprawling, massive cemetery, these two nations opted for multiple smaller cemeteries and mass graves. Their decision to so likely had to do with practicality- they had fought the war for much longer, and covering a far greater area than the U.S. had. This meant that by the war's end, each nation had already developed a number of ad-hoc military cemeteries. The British in particular preferred to keep these smaller cemeteries.[61]

The scale of the war cemetery was clearly important to the United States in a way that it was not to other nations. The United States decided to bring all the fallen from the entire region to a single location. Doing so has a profound effect on the viewer's perception of the Meuse-Argonne cemetery. It spans one hundred thirty and a half acres,

[61] Gibson and Kingsley explain that in many cases, British soldiers risks their lives to bring the bodies of their fallen comrades back to these ad-hoc cemeteries. During the war they were promised that any bodies brought back would be able to eternally lie in peace in these cemeteries. After the war the British government wanted to honor these promises and thus kept the cemeteries where they had formed.

the vast majority of which is covered by the grave plots. As a result, a visitor feels literally engulfed by the enormity of the losses of the war as they wander down the rows of white crosses. As with the Montfaucon memorial, the United States consciously chose to emphasize scale in the cemetery (Fig. 6).

Scale is important for several reasons. First, 'big' visually implies 'important.' By building something much larger than the viewer, the builder is visually indicating to that person that the event for which the memorial was built dwarfs the individual. Without ever explicitly saying so, a large scale memorial communicates that this event is legendary, superhuman. Large scale monuments also indicate that the nation building it has the wealth and resources available for just a project. This is especially true for monuments like the Meuse-Argonne which have very little utility or public use. This means that the monuments were in no way an "investment;" they would never generate any income, or even contribute to their own upkeep. Instead they would require constant infusions of funds from the United States to keep them in pristine condition. By creating monuments like these, the United States was demonstration that it had an abundance of resources to expend on such projects.

Using such enormous scale for these projects met both of the commission's goals for these monuments. Through building such large and expensive monuments, the commission was visually communicating to those affected by the war that the United States placed great importance on their contribution and the sacrifice of their loved ones. These monuments served as proof that the cause these men had died for was great enough to justify such monuments- and that the nation for whom they had made such sacrifices

would not forget their contributions. The scale of the monuments asserts that the war itself was not a pointless bloodletting- that it had a purpose and it was worth dying for.

The scale of these monuments also allows them to project important messages about the America. The size of these monuments indicates America's status as both a political and economic world power. The fact that they could erect something of this size so far from their own territory implies the wide-reaching powers of the U.S. Their size is meant to communicate America's position as a world power. Conversely, their scale may indicate the U.S.'s insecurity in having this new position. The United States may have felt the need to build the biggest monuments on the tallest hills in order to "prove" that they actually were a great power.[62]

In addition to using large scale, various other visual tricks were employed by the commission to magnify the effect. One method of manipulation is to place a memorial either on a hill top, or a flat plane with little or no landscaping around them. This prevents anything from distracting the viewer from the monument, and the short, flat green grass emphasizes the height of the monument. The notion of scale is reemphasized at Montfaucon by placing the monument atop the highest hill in the area.

Cemeteries can create similar visual effects through repetition. The repeated white headstones at Meuse-Argonne, each uniformly spaced give the impression that the graves stretch on infinitely. Even the linear layout of the cemetery helps to emphasize the scale. Though the British Tyne Cot cemetery contains nearly as many headstones as Meuse-Argonne, it doesn't have the same sense of overwhelming size (Fig. 26). The British interrupt the graves in multiple places with large statues. They also use a rounded- grave layout on one side of the cemetery. In addition, roses or other flower are planted in front

[62] Nash, 37

of the graves. These plants have a vastly different effect than the square-hedged trees of the Meuse-Argonne cemetery. These elements of Tyne Cot break up the uniformity of the grave lines, and give the viewer's eye unique points to focus on. This allows the viewer to become distracted from the scale of the cemetery.

The ABMC also used the technique of listing the names of the missing together on monuments to give the impression of scale (Fig. 17). The repetition of letters conveys the same sense of innumerability as the identical graves across a field. Coating the outer walls of the chapel at the Meuse-Argonne cemetery with names visually reinforces the sense of tremendous loss that the viewer gets when looking out on the cemetery. The letters on the wall take the place of the body, which is absent. In doing so, these lists give a physicality to the otherwise non-existent body. This turns the loss of that man from an abstract idea to something tangible that takes up space in the physical world. These lists are far more effective than numbers in conveying the scale of the destruction and loss. Actually seeing the endless letters inscribed in stone give the viewer a much clearer sense of how great the loss of life really was. This may account for the universal use of such lists in World War I memorials.[63]

Creating lists of the names of the missing men also fulfilled both goals that the commission had for these memorials. The lists help the memorials speak to the psychological needs of those affected by the war by making it clear that the sacrifice of those who died would not be forgotten. The missing have no known graves, which means that there is no spot where their loved once could go to remember them. These lists create a space for remembrance. The fact that these names are all together in a public space also

[63] Every nation uses a list of the missing on at least one monument. Examples include the Menin Gate, Douamont Ossuary, and Langemarck mass grave

creates the sense that it communal, in addition to private loss. The lists give their society a way to come together to remember the fallen. The lists also send a message to viewers about the relationship between the state and its citizens. Such lists stress the importance that the nation places on its individual soldiers. The fact that each and every name has been remembered and recorded shows that the nation values the individual lives of each of its citizens.

Material Expense

Another way that the U.S. indicated their wealth through these memorials was in the materials that used to construct them. Stone is of course a favorite material for building memorials, since in conveys a sense of permanence. Historically, stone monuments have become closely linked with the idea of an advanced civilization. From the time of the Egyptians, stone monuments have served as proof that the state had the financial, intellectual, and bureaucratic resources necessary to plan and build such structures. Cutting and moving stone is one of the oldest methods of proving the strength of one's state.

The Meuse-Argonne monuments are largely constructed of light colored stone. This includes Neuville Coquiller for the chapel, white marble for the tomb stones, and Baveno granite for the Montfaucon monument. Their light color means that all the stone surfaces require extensive and expensive maintenance. The AMBC budgeted $665,757 for the completion of the Montfaucon monument. The materials alone cost 6,078,816 francs. The vast majority of this was spent purchasing, and transporting the stone to the site. The Chapel was also built using costly stone. The interior walls is made of

Salamander stone, and the floor is Levante marble. Once again, the vast majority of the cost of building the Chapel came from the expense of the stone and its transportation.[64]

Symbols of Tradition

The psychological effect of the First World War- both for those who served, and those who remained at home- cannot be overemphasized. Before the war most Americans looked optimistically towards the future. There was a widespread belief in the idea of the self-made "Enlightenment man". This meant that most Americans thought that men were rational beings, capable of controlling themselves, their environment, and their destiny. They believed that science, technology, and industry held the keys to improving the quality of their own lives, and that of their children. The war changed that. Americans watched as "civilized" nations, including their own, battered each other into oblivion on the battlefield. They saw first hand how the products of science and industrialization, like the machine gun and poison gas, could be used to destroy rather than create. After the war, there was a predominating sense that things would never be the same again- that western civilization itself might be on the brink of collapse.[65]

Reactions to the war took a number of different forms. The interwar years are well known for the new, progressive movements of the era. We tend to remember those years for the progressive new forms of art, music and literature, as well as for lax moral standards and new ideas about women's role in society. Disillusionment with the war caused many members of the intellectual elite to turn away from traditional values and

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[64] Cost Summary. May 1, 1930. American Battle Monuments Commission. National Archives, College Park.

[65] Roderick Nash. *The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930.* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co). 12.

practices. As familiar as these trends are today, the reality was that they were only embraced by a small, but prominent, portion of society. The vast majority of Americans confronted the pessimism of the age by seeking comfort in the stability of tradition. They reacted to the horrors of the conflict by clinging more desperately than ever to the pre-war certainties. While "lost generation" writer such as Hemmingway and Fitzgerald were made famous by rejecting tradition, the bestselling books of the decade were actually straightforward stories of good conquering evil, and American values prevailing in the end. Fundamentalist Christianity became more mainstream as Americans looked for reassurance in religious axioms. Interwar America was actually characterized by a deep current of conservatism.[66]

This urge for tradition is echoed in the style and iconography of the Meuse-Argonne memorials. By relying on designs that had existed in western civilization for hundreds of years, the monuments create visual continuity to the past. These familiar forms served to comfort interwar viewers, because they suggest that the war hasn't actually changed anything, and that all the old values and beliefs still hold true.

Among all the traditional cultures of western civilization, Rome was especially resonant with Americans of this era. As America built its own "empire" at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, it began to see itself as the modern heir of the Roman legacy. Romans had a slightly different view of empire than modern states like Great Britain. For the Romans, "empire" was more about authority than territorial holdings. When Rome gave orders, even to areas outside of its direct influence, it expected its wishes to be respected and obeyed. This sort of indirect-imperialism

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[66]Ibid, 12

provided a good historical parallel the role that America increasingly saw itself in during this period.[67]

During the decades leading up to the war, almost all new public buildings were erected in Greco-Roman style. This trend was especially strong in Washington D.C. and New York City, the nation's political and financial capitals. Engineers of the City-Beautiful movement made frequent use of materials such as white marble, and forms such as the arch and column in their work. Such architectural forms lent a sense of culture and nobility to the buildings, by visually tying them to the greatness of the Roman Empire. Malamud explains why Roman examples were so popular for American memorials, "The metaphorical power of architecture as a symbolic system helped bestow upon American culture a genealogy and a legitimacy, placing it at the pinnacle of a trajectory that reached back through the more recent European empires to the Renaissance and ultimately to Greco-Roman antiquity." These forms lent the young nation all prestige and culture which were widely associated with Rome. [68]

Montfaucon

The use of Greco-Roman architectural styles and iconography is a clear example of the desire create a since of cultural stability through visual connection to the cultural past. The Montfaucon statue (Fig. 4) takes the shape of a Doric column, a symbol easily associated with the roots of western civilization.[69] Though numerous societies have used columns in their architecture, the characteristic fluting and simple capital of this column make it easily recognizable as Greco-Roman. The commission chose to build the column

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[67] Mary T. Boatwright, Daniel J. Gargola, and Richard J.A. Talbert. *The Romans: From Village to Empire.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). 379.
[68] Malamud, 162
[69] Ibid, 5

out of plain, undecorated white granite. Though Greek and Roman temples were actually garishly painted, the paint faded over the centuries, and it was commonly believed during the interwar years that their buildings had always been stark, undecorated white stone.[70] The decision to treat the Montfaucon memorial in similar fashion is another indicator of the desire to create cultural continuity. Additionally, the column itself is a symbol of stabilization- its practical role in architecture is to provide structural support.

On top of the column is the statue of a woman, who represents liberty. This notion of personifying a value or concept as a woman itself is Greek, and was later adopted by the Romans. Both societies had prominently displayed statues of Nike, or Victory. Here it is not just the concept, but also the style of the statue that mimics the Greco-Roman examples. Rather than depicting Liberty as a woman in contemporary clothing or appearance, she is wears a toga and her hair is up in the traditional way that the Romans used to depict concepts. Everything else about the woman, from the peaceful yet stern expression on her face, to her graceful dimensions, are a replication of the standard mode of classic statuary.

The font used for inscriptions of the monument also indicates a connection to Rome. In Latin, the letters "U" and "V" could often times be substituted for one another, and in the written form both usually appeared as V's.[71] Likewise, the inscriptions from the Montfaucon monument use V's where there would otherwise be a "U" in the English word. Though the language of the inscription on Montfaucon is not particularly Roman, it does rely heavily on concepts and words that are reminiscent of the more chivalric

[70] Boatwright, 37
[71] Ibid, xii

conception of war that predominated before the Great War. For instance, General Pershing describes the fight in the following way:

> The battle was prosecuted with an unselfish and heroic spirit of courage and fortitude which demanded eventual victory. Physically strong, virile and aggressive, the morale of the American solider during this most trying period was superb. In their devotion, their valor, and their loyal fulfillment of their obligations, the officers and men of the American Expeditionary Force have left a heritage of which those who follow may ever be proud.[72]

This depiction emphasizes the character of the American troops as the primary cause of victory. This notion harks back to the pre-war era when people believed that it was the élan, or heroic fighting spirit of the soldiers, rather than the industrial-military capacity that caused certain states to win wars over others. Even though the massive bloodlettings at Verdun and Ypres had disproved this notion during the war, Pershing still embraces the idea. Phrases having to do with the character of the soldiers predominate the text.[73]

In the passage, Pershing emphasizes internal characteristics of the men, such as a "heroic spirit of courage" as well as characteristics traditionally associated with masculinity and warriors such as "physically strong, virile, and aggressive." It isn't just that Pershing notes that the American men had these characteristics, he also explicitly links such attributes to the success of the campaign by saying they, "demanded eventual victory." Such language suggests that victory was a foregone conclusion because the American troops where physically and spiritually superior to their German foes. The quotation makes no mention of the role of superior numbers, strategy, or technology in America's success. In fact, there is not a single reference to technology or any other characteristics of modern warfare in the entire inscription. It could just as easily have

[72] Montfaucon memorial
[73] Fussell, 38

been written about a castle siege during the crusades, or one of Caesar's campaigns in Gaul.

The phrase "demanded eventual victory" also reflects a continued belief in the Enlightenment man. Pershing relies on this traditional notion that chance plays no role in the outcome of events. Instead, they are determined by a seemingly contradictory notion that man is the master of his own fate, and also that victory was pre-determined in the America's favor by divine will. This itself is actually a very Roman notion. The Romans believed that their strong, agrarian and masculine values caused their success and ability to take over the known world. They simultaneously held that due to these virtues, the gods had pre-ordained that they should do so. This made their conquest and expansion the natural and right course of events.[74] This view became prevalent again with a slightly new twist in late nineteenth and early twentieth century America. Social Darwinism could interpret the results of the war as validation that Americans and American culture was indeed superior. The notion that struggle was an integral part of progress suggested that America's victory was a natural step in its journey towards world power.[75]

Carved into each flute at the bottom of the pillar is a fasci (Fig. 33). A fasci is a Roman symbol of power. During the era of the Roman republic they were associated with the two consuls, the political and military leaders of the city. During imperial times they became more closely associated with the emperor, and more generally with Roman imperialism. There are two types of fasces- those representing peaceful power, and those representing the power to make war. The axe heads on the fasces depicted on

[74] Boatwright, 223
[75] Malamund, 14

Montfaucon indicate that these are the latter.[76] The result is a visual message indicating that the United States is a conquering military power. It is an image of victory rather than peace. American was not the only nation fascinated with this Roman symbol of power during this time period. The word "fascism" is actually derived from these fasces. Though Mussolini was already in power when the Montfaucon monument was erected, his regime and the symbols associated with it had not yet taken on the negative connotations that they would in the years which followed. The absence of fasces from American monuments of the Second World War indicate that they had taken on a new meaning by that time.[77]

The fact these fasces are the only explicitly militaristic symbols on the entire war memorial also speaks to the discomfort Americans felt in the modern nature of the war. The machine guns, barbed wire and trench lines that dominated the real landscapes of the war are all absent from the memorial. This shows that America had not yet come to terms with the nature of the war. They used the fasces to euphemistically suggest the violence of war, but in a way that reminds the viewers of an age when personal valor was still paramount. It also makes the violence of war seem unreal – like a 'bed-time story' battle where the conquering hero faces great peril and a horde of faceless barbarians, but where the hero is never hurt or killed. Such a depiction would have appealed to the traditionally-minded American public during these years.

The Chapel at the Meuse-Argonne Cemetery

The primary architectural messages of the Romanesque Chapel are tradition and stability (Fig 12). Romanesque architecture was the dominate style of building for

[76] Boatwright, 51
[77] Nash, 47

churches across Europe between the fifth and thirteenth centuries. It served as a bridge between the earlier classical Roman building styles, and the later Gothic cathedrals. Unlike these two airier forms of architecture, the Romanesque style has a very solid, blocky feel. Its stability relies on thick walls, rather than columns or buttresses. The interiors of such buildings tend to be dark, due to the scarcity and small size of the windows.[78]

Ayers also provided the ABMC with a design for a classical Greco-Roman style chapel, but they chose the Romanesque instead. They believed that the Romanesque design would better stand the test of time, and that it was also more fitting for the serious nature of the structure.[79] The result is a building that is neither grand nor ornate, but has a simple, timeless and solid façade that suggests a continuity between the past, present and future. Its single story, rectangular shape further reinforces this idea of solemn, immovable stability. Clearly this is a building of mourning rather than celebration. The repeating archways and simple columns in the front of the building reinforce the idea of continuity. The façade is not complex or distracting. The central portion is higher than the rest, but not significantly so. Leading up to the chapel is a wide staircase very similar to the one at the Montfaucon memorial.

Conclusion

The Meuse-Argonne memorials visually communicate a number of messages about the values and mindset of the United States during the interwar years. These shared values include those closely associated with a liberal democratic government. The emphasis that the United States placed on democratic values in these works show that the nation was proud of its heritage as the first democratic state of the modern age. The

[78] Boatwright, 430
[79] Votes and correspondence of the American Battle Monuments Commission

design of these memorials indicate that both the concept of equality, as well as placing a high value on each citizen were integral to the American concept of self during this period. The commission was able to convey these values in a way that spoke to both of their intended audiences. For those affected by the war, they reaffirmed the importance that their nation placed on their contribution, and they also showed outside viewers the type of relationship that a democracy has with its citizens.

The U.S. used both scale and Greco-Roman iconography to display its new status as a world power in these memorials. Building the biggest memorials with expensive materials allowed them to prove their economic might. Doing so on foreign soil, rather than back home, showed that they were also a powerful political force. The use of Greco-Roman styles visually linked the United States to the cultural prestige, and imperial superiority of ancient Rome. They used such symbols to imply that America was the heir to the Roman legacy. Greco-Roman and other traditional forms also served to calm the post-war anxiety felt by many Americans. In a time when everything seemed frighteningly new and negative, the commission turned to old standards to help reassure viewers that there really was no break from the past.

Chapter 3: Religious and Military Imagery

Religious Iconography

Religious images dominate the Meuse-Argonne cemetery. From the grave markers that line the fields, to the chapel on the cemetery hilltop, it is impossible for any visitor to ignore the theme of religion. Such imagery serves to communicate a variety of things to the viewer. By using both subtle and explicitly Judeo-Christian symbols and inscriptions, the commission was about to deliver complex messages in simplified forms to both of its two main audiences.

Religious imagery was one way in which the commission was able to offer psychological comfort to those who were personally affected by the war. Much like the Greco-Roman iconography, the religious symbols create a visual link to the past. Americans during the interwar years were concerned and frightened by the upheaval and change that characterized those decades. For a generation of Americans who felt rootless and adrift, this connection to the past provided an important sense of stability. Using these old images in a new cemetery implies that there has been no break with the past. They create a sense of visual continuity.[80]

Religion had a very strong hold over the American populace during the interwar years. The 1920's saw a rise in fundamentalist and evangelical Christianity, especially in the rural parts of the United States. Not only were more people practicing Christianity across the nation, but those who were tended to adhere even more strongly to the religious practices and values than their predecessors in the previous generation. As Nash explains, this was a direct response to the chaos and uncertainty of the war, "Americans

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[80] Nash, 153

nervously clung to old-time religion. The Bible served as a comforting, unquestioned absolute. Here was stability in an age of seeming change, security in a time of nervousness."[81] During the First World War there was a similar increase in the religious fervor of the men fighting in the war. Many men wore homemade religious amulets, or visited make-shift crosses or shrines near the battlefields to help cope with the terrors and uncertainties of war. This increase in spirituality both at home and at the front meant that the religious images of the cemetery would have been especially powerful to Americans during that period. [82]

Christianity offered a number of pre-made images that communicated ideas that the commission wanted to express in their memorials. The cross is the most obvious example. The cross is a simple symbol that has become loaded with meanings over the years, many of which they could expect the average American during the era to readily understand and appreciate. The cross symbolizes sacrifice- the idea that Jesus suffered and died for the sake of all humanity. A parallel could easily be drawn to the sacrifice that the soldiers buried in the cemetery had made; by giving up their lives, they had "saved" America, or at the very least ensured a better future for their fellow countrymen. The cross also symbolizes resurrection, suggesting that the men buried there are not really dead, but instead have been reborn in heaven. This was naturally a very comforting thought to anyone who had lost a loved one in the conflict. The cross also provides a sense of comfort by simply reminding Christian viewers of their God. The idea that the universe is run by a loving, rational being contradicted the interwar fear that life was completely irrational and random.

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[81] Ibid, 147

[82] Nicholas J. Saunders. "Crucifix, Calvary and Cross: Materiality and Spirituality in the Great War Landscapes." *World Archaeology*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Jun. 2003) 9.

The commission's desire to serve the entire American population is demonstrated by the fact that they stuck primarily to non-denominational religious images. Religious freedom has always been fundamental to America's self image. Since the first settlers arrived seeking sanctuary from religious persecution, America has had a long history of support each individual's right to worship as they see fit. Using non-denominational images helped the commission to communicate this idea of open mindedness and tolerance. The chapel at the cemetery was specifically designed to be a non-denominational Christian building. Though there is a cross hanging in the center of the room, there are very few other religious symbols inside the chapel. This space was designed to be sacred, but the commission avoided sending messages about specific doctrinal beliefs by not using symbols that were closely associated with any branch of the church (Fig. 14 & 15).[83]

Christian imagery was also important to helping the commission deliver a message to the rest of the world about America's national character. America has prided itself on being a Christian nation, and the commission wanted to display that sense of national spirituality in this memorial. In using so many religious symbols, they are trying to show that America as an upholder of the values of the religion. This was especially important to the American self-identity in the years leading up to the war. As the United States expanded and grew more powerful, it saw itself as ordained by God to hold its unique place in the world. Religious images helped the United States visually connect their victory in the war to divine will.

The importance of religious imagery to the cemetery is demonstrated by their use in the most ubiquitous item on the landscape: the tombstones (Fig 10). The vast majority

[83] Nash, 27

of the markers are crosses, though Jewish servicemen were given a Star of David, which from a distance blends perfectly with rows of crosses. Though most other war cemeteries included religious iconography of some form, not all used the images as their grave markers. The Germans used black stone squares as their tombstones. The French and British did make some use of the white crosses, but they also experimented with other options. For example, the British often used white rectangular stones that were slightly rounded at the top in many of their cemeteries.

The language on the tombs of unknown soldiers at Meuse-Argonne is also religious. The stones read, "Known Unto God." Directly referencing God on each marker is yet another attempt to use religion to combat interwar fears. Unknown soldiers are, by their very nature, nameless and faceless. They have been robbed by the war of all sense of identity and individuality. By using the phrase "known unto God" instead of something more blunt like "name unknown" allows the viewer to believe that this man has retained his identity, even if we do not know who he is. It is comforting to think that a good and omniscient God knows exactly who the man buried under each grave marker is.

The text inscribed on the chapel echo this belief in a Judeo-Christian God and afterlife. On the arches over the door, apse and widows is the repeated message,

> God hath taken them unto himself
> Their names with life forever more
> Peaceful is their sleep in God
> Perpetual light upon them shines[84]

This passage assures the viewer that the dead are being eternally rewarded by God in the afterlife for their service to their country. In doing so it implies that fighting for one's

country is a morally upright thing to do, and that God would approve of the men doing so. The language is also meant to provide a sense of peace and closure for visitors who have come to mourn the death of their loved ones. Words and phrases such as "life forever," "peaceful," "sleep," and "perpetual light" all indicate the happy state of those men who have died. It denies the violent and painful way that many of these men died on the battlefield. In fact, the euphemistic language used almost makes it sound as though they were old men who had died in their sleep. Their deaths are put in the most positive possible light by focusing on the fact that they are now in a restful, blissful place with God. The passage doesn't make any references to Jesus or any other religious figures, which reinforces the idea that this chapel was meant to serve people of all faiths. Yet the language is clearly connected to Christianity, and the ABMC could expect Americans who had grown up in the church to recognize it.

The language of this passage also counters the post-war fear of random chance by focusing instead on a notion of divine order. Throughout, God is treated as an active figure who guides the fates of men. Attention is drawn away from the reality that these men died in the random chaos of war by the passage, "God hath taken them unto himself." Making God the responsible agent implies that these deaths were "natural" and part of a greater cosmic plan. The wording also allows the U.S. to deny its own culpability in the deaths of these men. The implication is that there was no human hand in these deaths, that they were just preordained by God. It sounds more like something fitting to say about a child who has died of an incurable illness, than a man who was drafted my his nation, sent to serve in an offensive, and then was killed by the actions of another man during that time.

All of these subtle messages in the passage indicate that it was meant to speak to contemporary Americans, rather than an outside audience. It attempts to deal with the myriad of psychological struggles that Americans were having as a result of the war. Its traditional language reminds people that they are still linked to the past, and conveys a sense of continuity. The emphasis on a happy afterlife helps create a sense of closure for the loved ones of the fallen men, and the explicit references to God remind people of their faith, and the notion that there is a good, rational being guiding life. It is also a way for the U.S. to address the animosity that many people felt for the nation getting involved in the war in the first place. Through this language, the United States shifts the blame from these men's deaths onto the shoulders of fate.

The inscription that describes the purpose of this Chapel further reinforces these messages of comfort. The passage reads, "This chapel is erected by the United States of America as a sacred rendezvous of a grateful people with its immortal dead" (Fig. 16). This passage indicates a number of things. First, it assert that the men buried in this cemetery are in heaven by referring to them as "immortal." It then explicitly designates this space as a place where the living and dead can come together in the act of remembrance, calling it a "sacred rendezvous." The word "sacred" also makes it clear that this is a holy space, and immediately links the building with the notion of religion. Finally, it is notable that the inscription does not credit the American Battle Monument Commission with erecting this Chapel. Instead, it is "the United States of America" and her "grateful people" who are the builders. This reinforces the idea that this is a space of communal remembrance, and symbolizes the idea that the entire nation is paying homage to the men who died. The phrasing of this inscription serves both groups and functions

that the AMBC was trying to fulfill. It provides comfort to those affected by the war by showing the value that America placed on her dead. It also gives future viewers a clearer sense of why this building was erected, and how America felt about her lost men.

Militaristic Symbols and References

Though in many ways the memorials attempted to gloss over the nature of the war, one of the purposes of these monuments was to commemorate an offensive, and there are a number of ways in which these memorials directly reference the conflict. While the memorials themselves serve to commemorate the dead, the militaristic symbols remind the viewer of the way in which they died. While the elevated language of the inscriptions and the formal architecture create a mythical lore around the fallen men, the military symbols remind the view of the realities of war. The battlefields on which the memorials were built may have been smoothed over and carpeted with grass, but the arrows etched into the monuments point to features of the surrounding terrain were these men fell. The militaristic symbols tie the monuments back to the war as a historical fact. These militaristic symbols are the most direct reference to the violent nature of the offensive. Yet for the most part they too take the form of abstract symbols. The commission shied away from ever depicting the gruesome nature of the conflict in stone.

The militaristic symbols offer an interesting example of how the commission had to balance its desire to speak to its two different audiences. For contemporary Americans, the war was still very much a raw wound, and in the interest of serving them, the commission would want to avoid dealing with the realities of war as much as possible. Widows would not want to be confronted with images of tanks, machine guns, trench lines, and mud. On the other hand, if the actions of these men was to be properly

preserved and commemorated, it was essential that the commission address what actually happened during the offensive in which they died. In order for future generations to properly appreciate what had happened, the memorials also had to play an educational role, and convey a sense of what had happened. The commission attempted to create a balance between serving these two groups by staying vague, and relying on traditional iconography and language. These two methods allowed them to create distance between the events and the viewers, and simultaneously to elevate the actions of the men to the realm of mythical heroism.[85]

The use of maps in the memorials

One example of how the commission used this approach is in use of maps and place names on the memorials. This was a largely symbolic and safe way to talk about the battles that had taken place. Rather than having to carve into stone images of men dying as they charged against German machine gun fire, the maps provide an impersonal and sterile way of looking at the conflict. Thousands of individual men who served are reduced into rectangular boxes, and straight-lined arrows of advance tell a neat and orderly story of successful advance. In many ways, the very nature of maps denies the inherent chaos and emotion of war: simple linear shapes can be used to explain battles that were far too complicated to actually depict. It provides simplified version of the past, which is much easier to study and understand than the actual conflict would have been.

The map at Montfaucon plays a prominent role in the way the commission retold the story of the war. It is located on a raised piece of stone on the open air observation deck on top of the monument. From here visitors can see the surrounding countryside,

[85] Mayo, 28

and the arrows of the map point out the features of the surrounding landscape where the battle took place. The map at the Romagne cemetery has a modified, though similar, layout. It is located in two panels on the outside walls of the Chapel, near the doors. Like at Montfaucon, an outdoor location was chosen for the maps because it enabled people to actually seen the parts of the surrounding terrain that the arrows on the map referred to. This map breaks the offensive down into neat sectors, each labeled with a number (Fig. 31).

Determining what the maps would look like was itself a form of framing the past. Not every objective, or the advance of every group of men could be marked, otherwise the map would become an illegible mess. Likewise, the arrows only indicate where the group began, and where they eventually made it. In doing so, the maps make it appear that each advance went forward successfully on the first attempt. There are no loops, or indicators of where men where forced to turn back and retreat, or to try another way. No indication is made of the number of men lost along the way. Their movements have been reduced to a starting and an ending place.

In a July 5th, 1933 memorandum the commission outlined its policies for simplifying the overly complex battle. The memo reveals a number of factors that played into the way they depicted the war. One consideration was the desire to give credit to all the men who fought, "of the three names selected for each division, at least one place was selected in the area of each brigade." In other words, the partially chose which places they would mention out of a desire to have at least one place to credit to each brigade. Issues of fairness also caused the commission to leave out entire sectors of the battle from the maps, "Places whose capture has been a subject of dispute between two divisions

were not mentioned under either division if there were other places where equally hard fighting of the divisions concerned occurred." In other words, as long as there was another location the give the division credit for capturing, the commission just omitted anything that was controversial. For places too important to be left out of the map, the commission decided, "the names record places of fighting rather than giving credit to a certain division for the capture of a certain locality." [86]

Another influence had to do with communal memory of the war. These maps were created a decade and a half after the war had ended, and both the men involved and the American public had already developed certain ideas about what had happened during the war. Rather than trying to argue with such notions, the commission chose to create maps that would fit with the public's perception of events, "In case there is a town or hill in a divisional area which is especially well known on account of its historical importance, size, or other characteristic, this place was generally selected in spite of the fact that harder fighting occurred in a lesser-known place." This shows that the commission wanted to present the American public with a map of events with which they would be familiar. It is an interesting example of a case where the commission decided that the memorial's function as a manifestation of national memory superseded its role in preserving the facts of the actual war. It also indicates that the members of the commission were not so far removed from the public that they had lost touch with the popular sentiments towards the war; clearly they were interested in creating a war memorial that the American people could relate to.

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[86] AMBC European Office Memo. July 5, 1933. American Battle Monuments Commission. National Archives, College Park

Each of these names also held an added significance for the men who fought there, and were returning to visit fallen friends. As the chivalric language associated with the war began to ring increasingly hallow for these men, it was the place names instead that were filled with levels of meaning and memory.[87] The use of place names features prominently both at Montfaucon and at the chapel. On the stone base of the Montfaucon statue are inscribed four large regional names between the monumental wreaths: Argonne Forrest, Romagne Heights, Barricourt Heights, and Meuse Heights. Originally "Argonne" and "Meuse" were to appear alone, since both would have been very familiar to Americans of that era. However, the commission's desire serve its second audience group and their wish to create a lasting message about the war caused them to make the change, "It is suggested that for the benefit of future generations of Americans visiting the monument in France, the full names ARGONNE FORREST and MEUSE RIVER be employed, the present generation not needing the additional identification the later ones may require." This is a good example of the commission's desire for the monuments to not just serve the veterans and their families, but to be a message about the war for future generations as well. [88]

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[87] In A Farewell to Arms Hemmingway writes about the importance of place names, long after the traditional words of warfare lost all meaning, "I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them, on proclamations that were slapped up by billposters, over other proclamations, now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. **There were many words you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity. Certain numbers were the same way and certain dates and these with the names of the places were all you could say and have them mean anything. Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.**" 184

[88] Cahill, Howard F. K. Cahill to Commission. April 2, 1929. American Battle Monuments Commission. National Archives, College Park.

Place names are also featured prominently at the Romagne Chapel. The commission discussed a number of different ideas for text to place in the arches above the manes of the missing soldiers, which were listed on the front outside wall of the Chapel. Ultimately they decided to list the names of different regions where the fighting in the offensive had been heaviest. Eighteen different places were chosen. Using place names allowed the commission to directly reference the war, but still in a way that glossed over the violent nature of the conflict. Writing the place names above the names of the dead does connect those places to the idea of death and loss, but it still does so in a much more vague way than if the walls had been inscribed with texts describing what the battles were actually like.

Military Insignias

Another way that the Commission was able to reference the war and the men who fought in it without being explicate about the nature of the conflict was through the use of military insignias, and naming the divisions. Inside the chapel the division insignias can be found in the stained glass widows (Fig 15). Incorporating each division's symbol into the stained glass gives them an ornamental quality, and serves as a way to link the architecture to the war. This choice was made more to serve the commission's first audience group, rather than future generations. Insignias would have been more important to the veterans than to outside viewer, since they had actually fought under those symbols and recognized their meaning. This might explain why the military members of the commission pushed for their use much more than the civilian architects. Price encouraged greater use of these symbols, "Bronze screen at Romagne forms an

opportunity to perpetuate certain distinctive features of the World War, such as insignia of units, branches of service."[89]

The veterans would have felt a stronger connection to these insignias, because these were the smaller divisional groups that they would have fought under. Their insignia represented the men who the fought and lived with during those bloody years. In many ways, the insignias replaced the function that the state symbols and names served at the Gettysburg memorials. Soldiers of the First World War identified themselves with these fighting groups in the same way their predecessors associated themselves with their home state. The fact that these are the groups with which the soldiers associated also shows that the regionalism of the civil war years was not nearly as present by this era.[90]

Depictions of the Soldier

Though for the most part the commission tried to avoid dealing with the modernity and violence of the First World War, there is some evidence that they wanted to incorporate more militaristic elements into the memorials. In this almost comical excerpt of a December 29th, 1928 letter to the architects York and Sawyer, Price writes,

> "The Commission, however, would like to have at least some of the decorative details of the chapel refer to the World War… For instance, in the photograph showing model No 23 the figure is wearing a hat somewhat similar to the steel helmet used during the war and in its hand there is something resembling a hand grenade. We are not sure whether or not this was intended, but if so it is believed to be a step in the right direction."[91]

In this letter, Price goes beyond just requesting standard military symbols for the monuments. He is explicitly asking the architects to incorporate images of the First

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[89] Ibid 62
[90] Nash, 66
[91] X. H. Price. Price to York & Sawyer. December 29, 1928. American Battle Monuments Commission. National Archives, College Park.

World War. Both this style of this helmet, as well as this kind of grenade were first used in the Great War. They are also representative of the technological and mechanical aspects of the war. The letters between the commission and the architects suggest that it was the commission (which was mainly composed of military officers) that pushed for more military symbols within the memorials (Fig. 30).

Even though this relief is far more militaristic than most of the artwork used in the memorials, it still does not depict a solider engaging in any aggressive or violent act. The man in the relief is seated, with one hand out in a defensive gesture. He is clearly not attacking anyone; if anything he is trying to stop an approaching enemy. There are also a number of elements in this relief that are abstract, idealized, and Greco-Roman. The man is shown half naked, covered with some sort of drapery over his bottom half. His muscular, idealized arms and chest are exposed in a typically classic pose. In fact, he looks more like an ancient Roman with a helmet anachronistically slapped on his head than a soldier for the twentieth century. The other relief panels of soldiers follow the same pattern- the man is always seated, or half laying down, and covered in some sort of drapery. All of these aspects serve to separate the image from the realities of the First World War. This relief demonstrates how, even when they did depict elements that were specific to the Great War, the architects still leaned heavily on symbols of the past.

The most common feature among all the World War 1 monuments put up in Europe by all the nations involved is the way that they portray the soldier. For the most part, all nations followed the same formula for any stone solider form. They avoided depicting any specific individual. Rather, they depicted a face completely devoid of any unique or identifying features. Stylistically, they have been reduced to only the most

simple and necessary forms needed to depict a human (Fig 29). These faces tend to be a bit square and block-like, but with a rounded idealism that makes them look more like a stern caricature than the face of any particular solider. Their faces are completely smooth- no wrinkles, furrowed brows, or facial hair. They are completely stoic, showing either joy in conquest and victory, nor sorrow in loss and defeat. There is no suggestion of movement: they seem eternally frozen and still. They gaze out straight ahead, neither looking down at the battlefields, nor up to any divinity. They look strong, but mechanical, numb, and un-human. They are often depicted wearing a steel helmet from the war, so that not even any unique hair can be seen. These type of solider-heads were incorporated into the Meuse-Argonne cemetery design, were they are used as the capitals for the columns on the Romagne chapel. As discussed in Chapter 1, this stands in stark contrast to the way the types of solider-sculptures used in American Civil War monuments. Civil War monuments focus on individual leaders, and very few depictions of common soldiers can be found. With the First World War, this trend has been completely reversed.

This style of depiction speaks to the massification and democratization of this era and the war. The war took place during the age of industrialization. More than ever before, products and people were losing their unique identities. Rather than individualized, handcrafted goods, people were buying uniform products which rolled off of factory conveyer belts by the thousands.[92] While in the Civil War many soldiers wore homemade uniforms, by the First World War everything about the soldier's dress had been standardized. From the helmets on their feet to the boots on their feet and the guns in their hands, there was absolute conformity from man to man. In previous wars officers

[92] David Blackbourn. *History of Germany, 1780-1918: the long nineteenth century.* (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2003). 241.

often war special uniforms to designate their rank, but in the First World War this made them a special target of machine gun fire. In order to prevent the terrible attrition rates of these men, they were put in the same uniforms as everyone else- their rank distinguished in so minute a way that only those men right next to them could see it.[93]

Other aspects of the war also emphasized the massification of men. The bloodshed of the war was unprecedented. The fact that there were so many unidentifiable bodies and missing men reinforced the idea that the soldiers no longer had any individual identity. The massification of the army mirrored the effects of urbanization. As more and more people during the first half of the twentieth century moved from villages to cities, they lost the characteristics that had defined them. Rather than holding a single, stable place within a small community, these men were now just one of thousands of faceless factory workers or laborers. Likewise, a man could become lost in the sea of troops- swallowed up and stripped of his individual characteristics. Instead, this war required a collective heroism- for entire groups of men to advance together at once, rather than and individuals. The technology of the day made it nearly impossible for any one man to have much influence on the outcome of a battle. Instead, it was a war of numbers and attrition: whoever could throw the most bodies, bombs, and bullets at the enemy would prevail. This conception of warfare made all soldiers interchangeable.[94] The features of these stone soldiers reflect this interchangeability. It suggests this same type of uniformity. The lack of emotion suggests that it is not even a specific moment, or maybe not even a human being captured, but rather an overarching idea- a soldier archetype.

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[93] Andrew Mollo and Pierre Turner. *Army Uniforms of the First World War.* (London: Osprey Press, 1977). 34.
[94] Blackbourn, 38

Interestingly, no soldiers are depicted anywhere on the Montfaucon memorial. Nothing in the correspondence between the commission and the architects suggests that this was a conscious decision, but the absence of soldiers on a war memorial is still significant. It shows another example of the commissions desire to deal with the war in a more abstract way, which would not draw attention to the brutality of the conflict. The other two potential models for the memorial both featured relief panels that showed soldiers. In particular, the chief decorative features for the second of the potential designs were two large soldiers, both decked out in complete World War 1 garb, with bowed heads.

It is impossible to know whether the absence of these panels played any role in the commission's decision, since their ballots only indicate their model choice, and not the reason for their choice. It is unlikely though that this was the chief consideration. The model they chose was significantly different from the other two in a number of ways (most notably in size) and letters to the architects suggests that this played a bigger role in their decision than anything else. At the same time, no one in the commission ever requested that the architects add images of soldiers to the Montfaucon monument.

Conclusion

Through its incorporation of both religious and military iconography the commission was attempting to serve the needs of its two audiences. Religious symbols were especially helpful in trying to address the psychological needs of contemporary Americans that had been affected by the war. Their prominence in the Meuse-Argonne cemetery shows how important and powerful the commission felt these images were. The grave markers themselves are all religious images (either crosses or Stars of David). In

addition, the only building at the cemetery, with the exception of the welcome center, is a chapel. A chapel, by its very nature, is a sacred space, meant to remind those in and around it of the presence of God. Religious iconography was also integral to the way America wanted to portray itself to the rest of the world. These symbols make it clear that the U.S. was devout and pious nation. The use of non-denominational images also allowed that U.S. to show that it was an open, religiously tolerant society.

Interestingly, there is a lack of religious iconography on the Montfaucon memorial. This may have to do with the two different functions that the cemetery and statue were supposed to serve. As mentioned in the first chapter, war memorials can serve to both celebrate a victory, and also to mourn the loss of the fallen. As a cemetery, Meuse-Argonne's natural purpose is to focus on the mourning and sacrifice aspects of memory. The innumerable graves dotting the lawn make it visually impossible for the sorrows and pains of the war to be denied. As a result, the commission focused on using comforting images in this space. Religious images are an effective means of communicating that message of comfort and support for a number of reasons. First, the type of religious images used at the cemetery are all very traditional in form. This helped to remind viewers that they, and their society, were still rooted in the pre-war past, when everything had seemed much simpler. It also asserts the existence of a God, who is guiding and directing the world as he sees fit. Such a concept would have been very comforting to Americans who were becoming increasingly afraid that they at the mercy of blind, irrational chance. Christian imagery is especially useful when dealing with death on this scale, because it is so closely linked with concepts of rebirth and a peaceful, happy afterlife.

The purpose of the Montfaucon statue is less to mourn the loss of men, and more to celebrate the success of the Meuse-Argonne offensive. This may explain the lack of religious iconography. Instead of trying to comfort the viewer, this memorial focuses on America's victory. The Greco-Roman iconography of the statue is far more appropriate for delivering this message. The Romans were well known for their use of triumphal architecture, and they would often erect buildings, towers, or arches to celebrate a successful military campaign. Through the use of similar forms, the Montfaucon statue is visually connected back to that same idea of imperial triumph.

Military iconography was also used in the memorials to communicate certain messages about the U.S.'s involvement in the war. This commission had to balance its desire not to upset contemporary Americans with violent images, with the need to communicate information about the offensive to future generations of viewers. In order to do so, the commission relied on vague, chivalric images and language that did not convey a real sense of the violence and chaos of the war. By using traditional images such as the Roman fasces, and draping soldiers in toga-like garb, the commission makes it clear that these are war memorials, without every addressing the specific nature of the first world war. Military insignias are equally vague. They convey a sense of the groups who fought together, but without saying anything about what happened to those groups in the war.

Maps lent themselves especially well to conveying information about the war in a simplified, and sterilized manner. By using boxes to represent groups of men, and arrows to represent their actions during the battle, the commission was able to tell a straight forward narrative of the battle that glossed over violence, destruction, or mistakes.

Likewise, place names helped the commission to pass on important information about the offensive without addressing unpleasant details.

Conclusion

Where words fail, images can speak volumes. It is their very silence and ambiguity that lends them power. While words can communicate ideas to the head, images have the power to stir the emotions. And somehow, those images can transcend time. In my work on this paper, I've read dozens of books that try to capture the horrors of the war, the enormity of the destruction and loss, and the devastating grief that followed the armistice. I have been shocked by statics, and revolted by descriptions, but nothing in any book has ever compared to the swell of emotion that I felt walking down the rows of crosses at the Meuse-Argonne cemetery. Nothing I have learned about the era before or since has made me feel as close to the people of that period as I did when I visited the memorials they set up. This paper has been an attempt to explain the "why" and "how" of all the messages that struck me so clearly and forcefully on my visit. I was staring at the graves of men who had died long before I was born- men who I had never known or cared about. Yet I was simultaneously overcome by grief, and overwhelmed with the sense of patriotic pride. I do not know whether or not these memorials will continue to have so profound effect 500 years from now. I do know that for myself, and for the countless others who have felt something similar on their visit, the commission fulfilled its mission.

The design of the Meuse-Argonne memorials reflects the careful balance that the American Battle Monuments Commission struck between a number of competing purposes that the memorials had to fulfill. The memorials had to simultaneously celebrate America's tremendous victory, and mourn her enormous losses. It had to be both a confident announcement of America's imperial might, and a humble eulogy for the

thousands of fallen men. It had to communicate the joy of triumph, while still acknowledging the vast sense of grief and incompleteness that accompanied it. In short, they had to tell the story of America's involvement in the war in a way that would appeal to not only those affected by the war, but to anyone from any place, culture, or time. They began the project knowing that whatever they created would far outlast them; that the stones they erected would silently tell their tale to future generations.

Through the Meuse-Argonne memorials the American Battle Monuments Commission sought to send messages about the American character, and America's involvement in the First World War. These decisions that the commission made in planning these monuments reflect their conscious desire to serve two different groups. The first consisted of Americans who had been directly affected by the war. This included veterans, families who had loved ones who had died or served, and other contemporary Americans, who had directly or indirectly been affected by the war. The commission attempted to use the monuments to comfort and reassure this first group.

One way in which the commission sought to do so was by repeatedly sending messages of stability. Stability was important for interwar Americans, who felt uprooted and adrift as a result of the war. One simple way in which the commission was able to send this message was through the materials they used. Everything at both Montfaucon and the Meuse-Argonne cemetery is made of either stone or bronze. Both materials send a message of strength and permanence; they suggest that despite the hardships the U.S. was facing, the American spirit was durable enough to last.

The commission also communicated a sense of stability through traditional forms, themes, and symbols. Such images were used to visually reassert the connection between

the past and present. The Montfaucon monument draws heavily on Greco-Roman imagery for its design. The most obvious example is the fact that the monument itself is a Doric column. A column's actual function in architecture is to provide stability to a structure. Doric columns were famously used by both the Greeks and the Romans, so the shape also serves to remind the viewer of the unbroken connection between western civilization before and after the war.

The Meuse-Argonne cemetery also draws heavily on traditional symbols and forms, but here the focus is on religious rather than Greco-Roman images. Christianity provided the commission with a number of pre-existing symbols which were packed with layers of meaning that most contemporary Americans could be expected to understand. The cross was particularly powerful, since it sends a message of sacrifice, loss, and rebirth. By using it as the grave marker, the commission ensured the impact of these messages by making the cross the most ubiquitous shape in the cemetery. Creating a Romanesque chapel at the highest point on the cemetery reinforced the theme of tradition and religion. Romanesque architecture has a long history of use for churches throughout Europe. Using such a form for the chapel created a visual link both to the traditions of western civilization, and to the hopeful messages of Christianity.

These memorials were also meant to help Americans grieve. One of the hardest things about healing an emotional wound is the fact that the pain has no physicality. A traumatic memory, or the loss of a loved one can be just as debilitating as a severed limb, but unlike with the limb, there's nothing the person can point to, no place on their body where they can see the injury. The fact that such injuries are intangible can make it harder for the person to come to grips with the pain. Memorials serve as a place where the

community can come together and mourn; they create a space in which the hurt can be acknowledged. By putting up stone monuments to the traumatic events, the commission gave these wounds the physicality that they otherwise lacked.[95]

Religious images also helped Americans to come to terms with their grief. Such images asserted the existence of a blissful afterlife, which the fallen men were all presumably enjoying. They also rebuff the random and unjust chaos that seemed to characterize the loss of life in the war. While things on Earth may seem random, the religious passages and images affirm that there is actually a cosmic order, overseen by a wise and benevolent God. Such references to God and Fate also stopped the U.S. from having to assume responsibility for the deaths of so many young men. Instead, these references suggest that their unfortunate deaths were actually just part of God's great plan.

The second group who the monuments were meant to communicate with consisted of everyone else: the rest of the world during the interwar years, as well as all future Americans and foreigners who might ever come across the monuments. The memorial's messages to this second audience were aimed at giving these people a certain image of the U.S., and its involvement in the war. The design of the memorials reflects certain themes about the American character which the commission wanted to emphasize. These messages are part of what makes the memorials so revealing about America during the interwar years. They show what values, and characteristics that American society at that time found especially "American." By looking at the idealized way that America presented itself in these monuments, we can glean a sense of what America through its strongest and best traits were.

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[95] King, 32

One way in which the monuments frame these values is through their depiction of the American soldier. The language of the inscriptions indicate that he is an honest, courageous man, dedicated to his duty and his country, who overcame his enemy through superior character, rather than technological or numerical superiority. The only relief sculpture depictions of the soldier show him in a passive role, defending himself, rather than attacking his enemy. The religious inferences throughout the cemetery also suggest the moral uprightness of the American soldier, and infer that he was fighting a just and moral war against evil.

The ABMC also use these memorials to send a clear message about America's new position as a world power. This is perhaps the loudest, least ambiguous messages of the monuments. Yet the commission was also careful to deliver this message in a way that does not detract from the memorials' main purpose, which was to commemorate the men who had fought in the war. The commission used the scale and layout of these memorials to show America's wealth and economic might, while simultaneously keeping the focus on the fallen men. For example, the U.S. chose to build one large cemetery, rather than multiple smaller ones. As a result, the Meuse-Argonne cemetery conveys a sense of vastness far greater than many of the other war cemeteries of the era. Likewise, the commission used both the height of the Montfaucon hill, and the monument itself to send a message about American strength and power.

Many of the design decisions that the commission made helped them to simultaneously deliver messages to both of their audiences. In addition to creating a link to the past, Greco-Roman imagery also allowed the U.S. to visually suggest parallels between itself and the Rome. The use of such symbols implied that America was the

twentieth century's equivalent of the Roman Empire. Likewise, the vastness of the cemetery served both to emphasize the strength of the United States, and the enormity of its losses. The prominence of religious images shows both America's pride in being a "Christian nation" as well as an attempt to comfort grieving families.

As I have learned from my own experiences, war memorials have the power to continue to communicate with people, long after their creators have died. The visitor's book inside the chapel offers a glimpse into the impact that this site has had on people from all over the world. It would be fascinating to study the way that these reactions have changed since the monuments were first built. Though the monuments themselves have not changed, the messages that visitors take away from them will naturally be impacted by the cultural background of those viewers. The ambiguity of symbols leaves room for people to interpret their meanings differently. New political movements or current events can also impact the way that people see these images. For example, the fasces on the Montfaucon monument certainly have a very different set of connotations today than they did when the ABMC was first planning the monument. We now know that the Great War was not the "war to end all wars," and since the completion of these memorials, America's role in the world has continued to evolve and change. While this paper has looked at the relationship between interwar America and these memorials, it would also be interesting to see how people's interactions with the monuments have changed with time.

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Appendix Images

National Archives: Figures 1, 2, 6, 11, 12, 14, 15, 30

American Battle Monuments Commission: Figures 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 13, 17

Trenches on the Web: Figures 3, 20, 26, 27, 28, 32

Great War Society: Figures 18, 19, 21, 22, 29

Personal Photos: Figures 10, 16, 23, 24, 25, 31, 33

Appendix

Figures 1 & 2: The two Montfaucon models not selected for construction

Figure 3: Montfaucon after the offensive (1919)

Figure 4: Montfaucon today

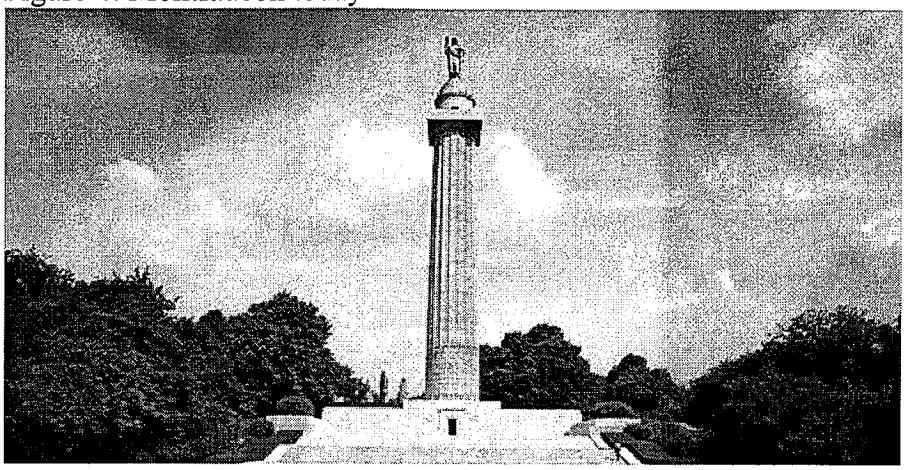


Figure 5: The ruins on Montfaucon

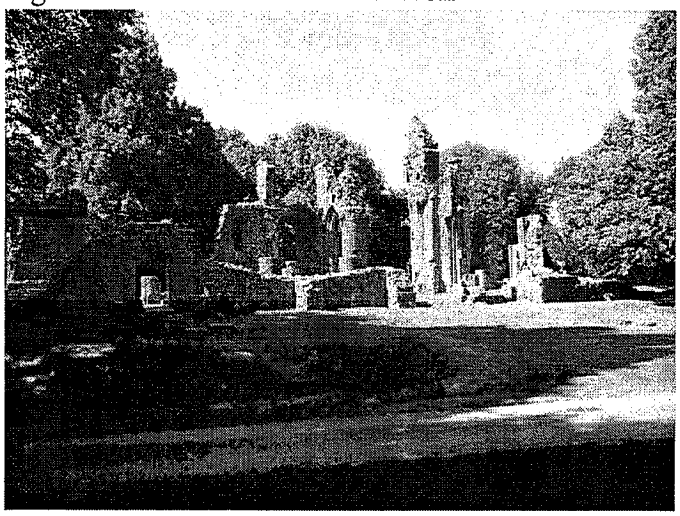


Figure 6: Photos of Montfaucon hill with ownership plots drawn in (1920)

Figure 7: Aerial layout of the Meuse-Argonne Cemetery

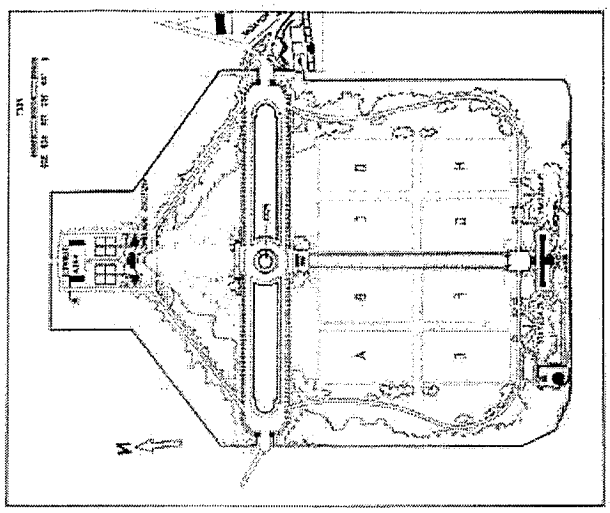


Figure 8: Meuse-Argonne Cemetery

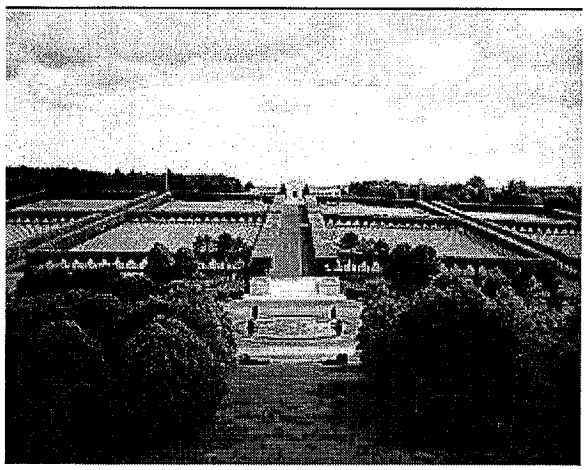


Figure 9: Center Isle of Meuse-Argonne Cemetery

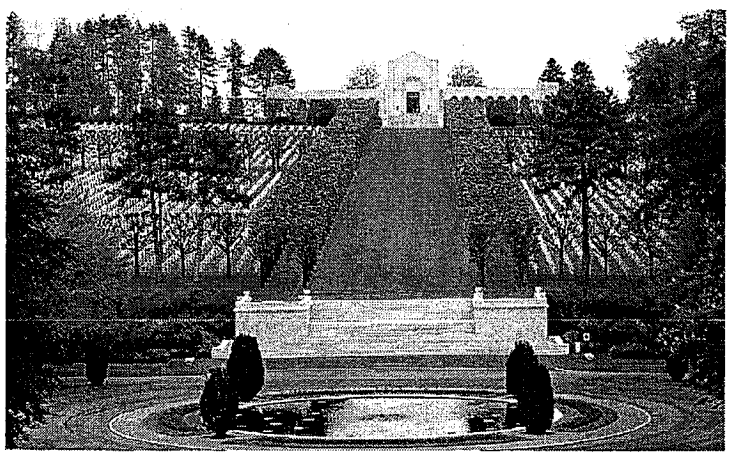
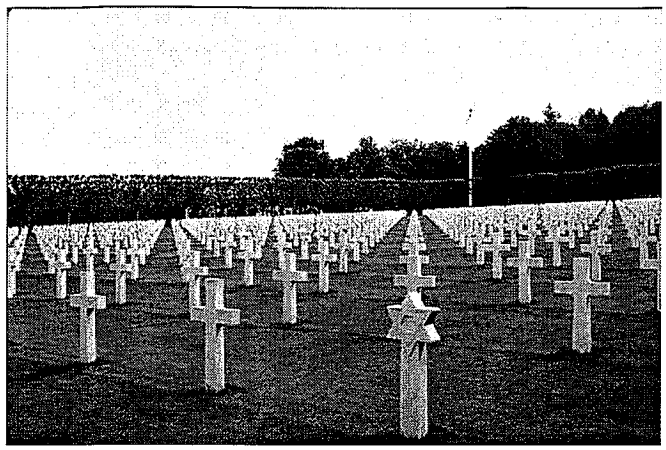


Figure 10: Graves



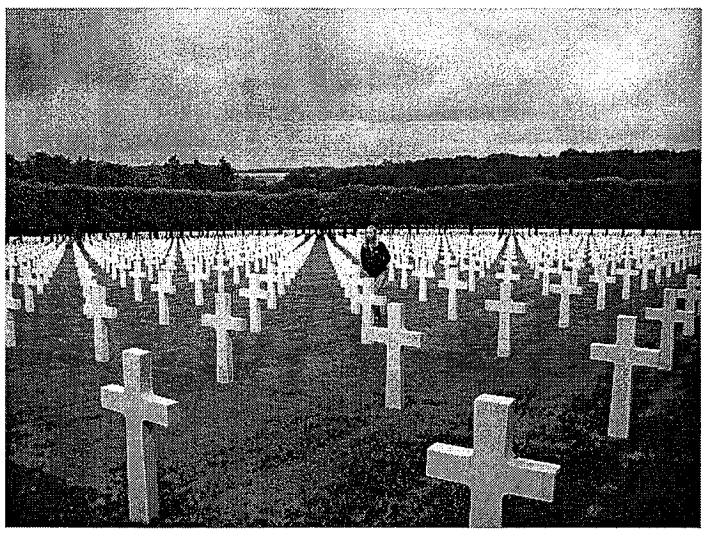


Figure 11: Cemetery prior to landscaping and re-burials

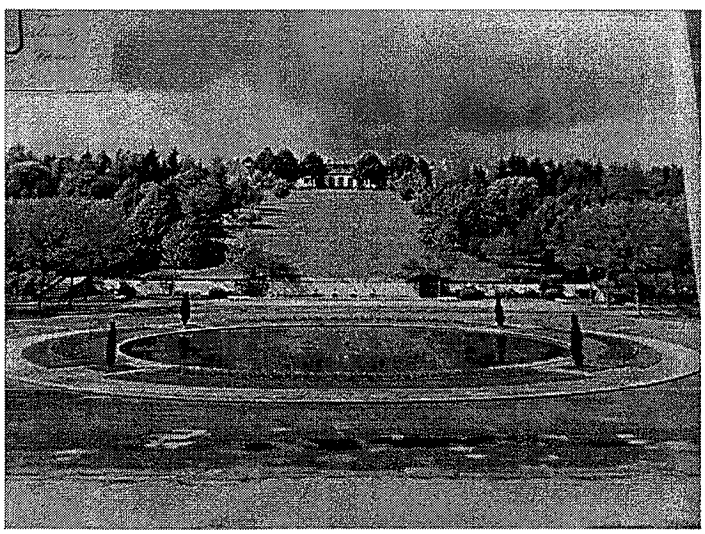


Figure 12: Chapel at Meuse-Argonne Cemetery

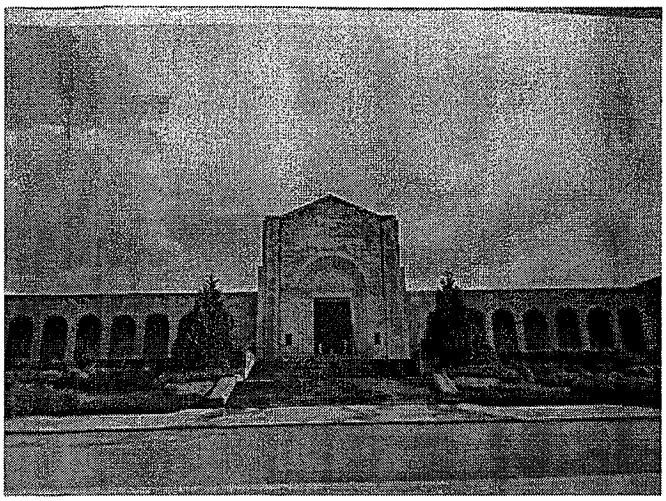


Figure 13: Chapel Entrance

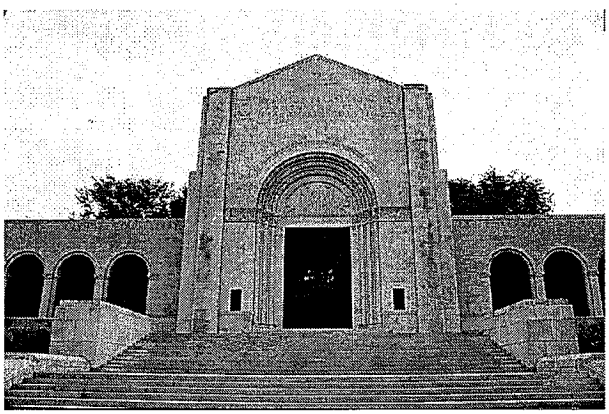


Figure 14: Sketch of Inside of the Chapel

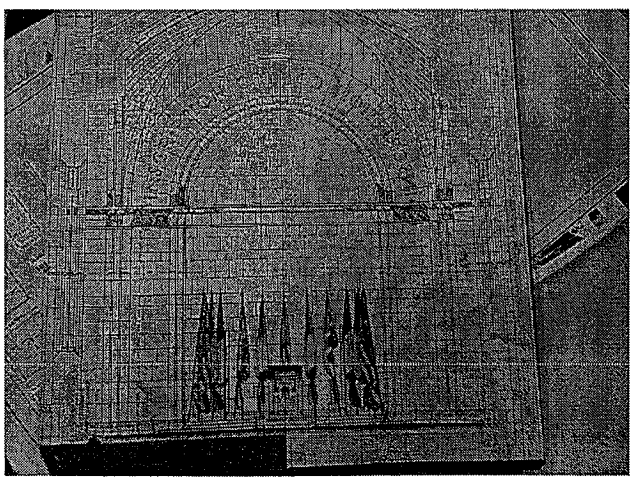
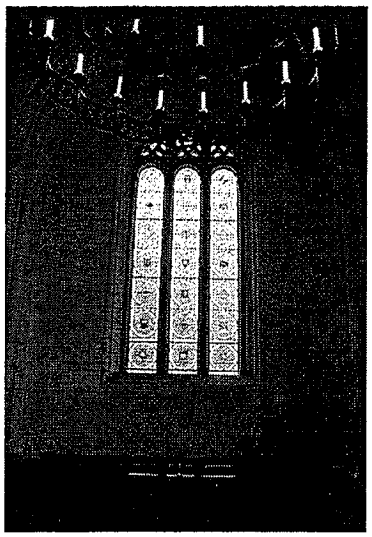


Figure 15: Stained glass windows in the Chapel



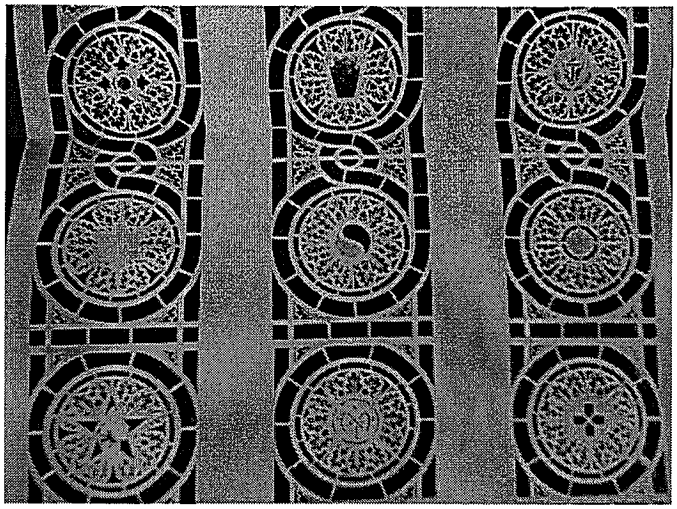


Figure 16: Inscription on Chapel Wall

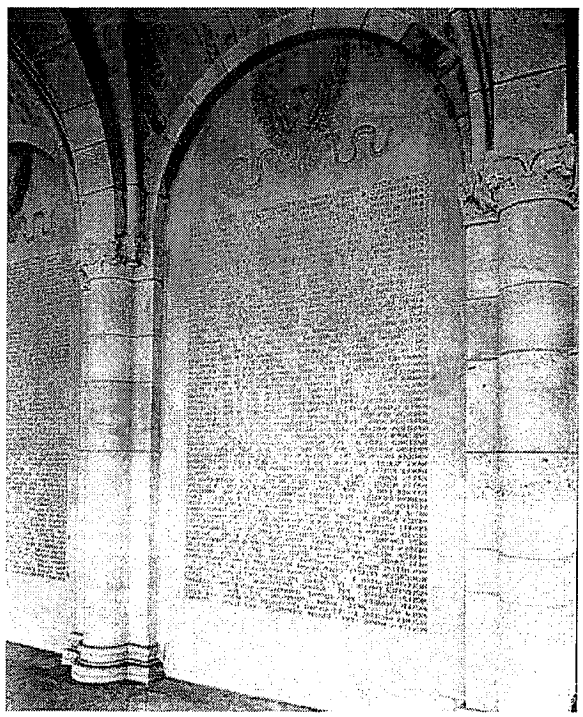


Figure 17: Panel listing the names of the Missing on the Chapel wall

Figure 18: Douaumont French Cemetery

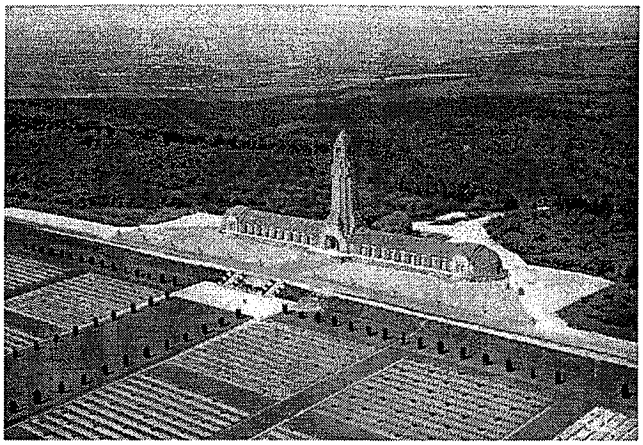


Figure 19: Names of Missing inside Douaumont Memorial

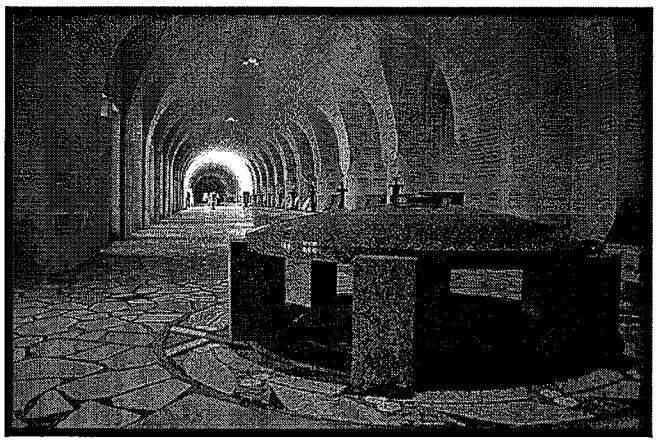


Figure 20: Menin Gate

Figure 21: Langemarck German Cemetery

Figure 22: Mass Grave at Langemarck

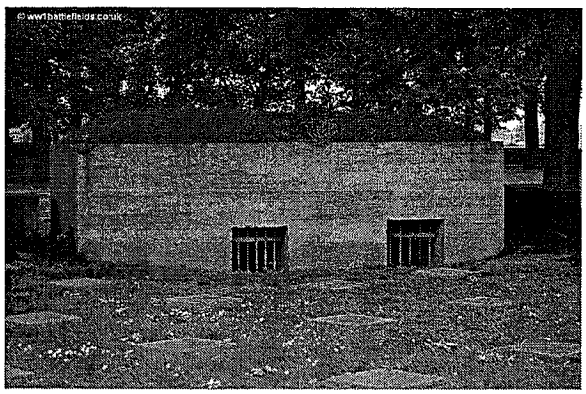


Figure 23: Gettysburg National Cemetery

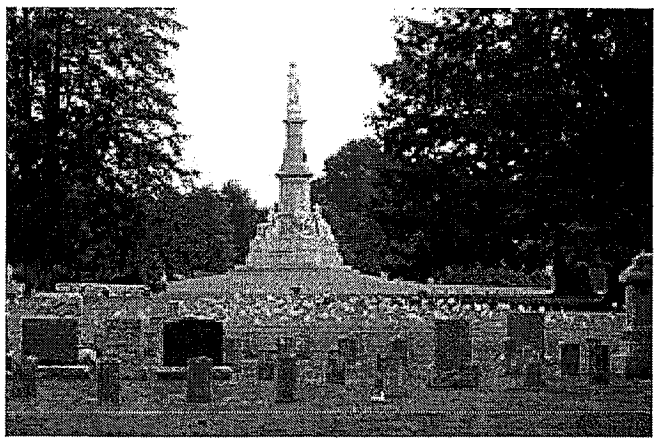


Figure 24: Statue at Gettysburg

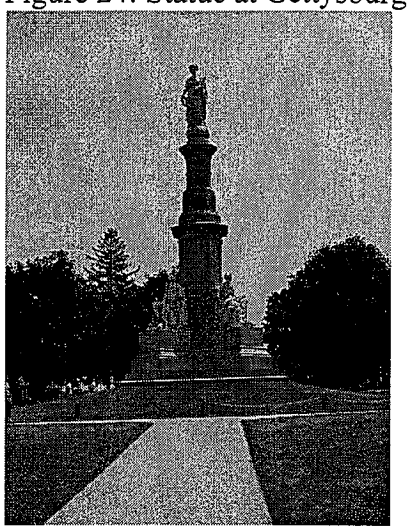


Figure 25: Arlington National Cemetery

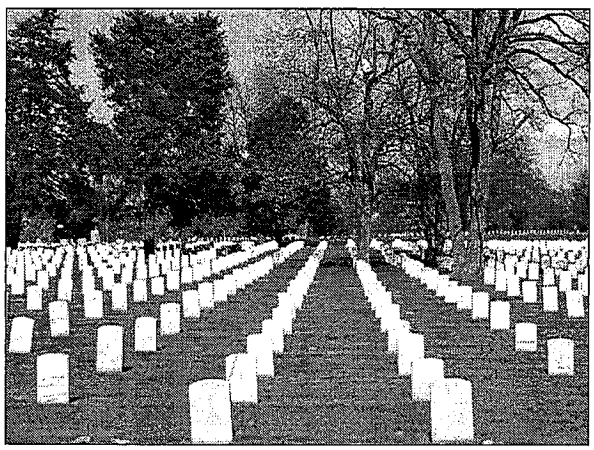


Figure 26: Tyne Cot Cemetery

Figure 27: Cross of Sacrifice at Tyne Cot

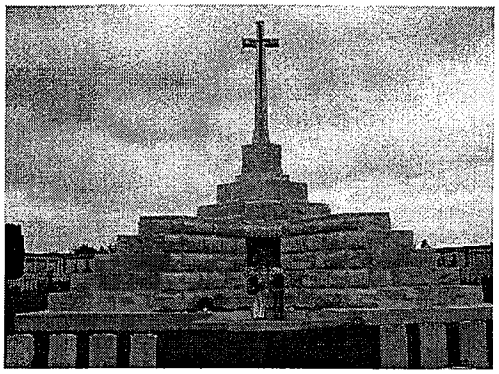


Figure 28: Theipval Memorial

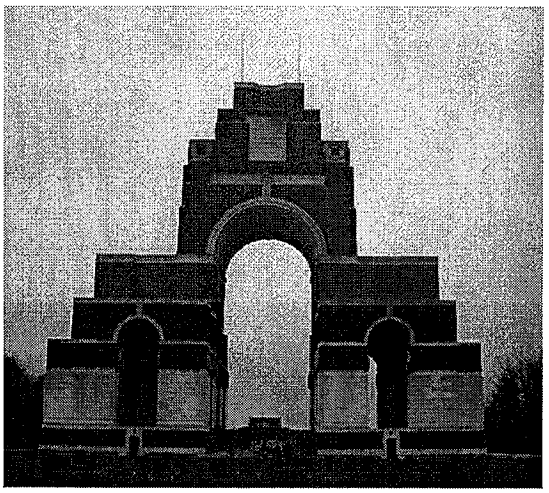


Figure 29: Vancouver Corner Canadian Memorial

Figure 30: Relief from Chapel at Meuse-Argonne

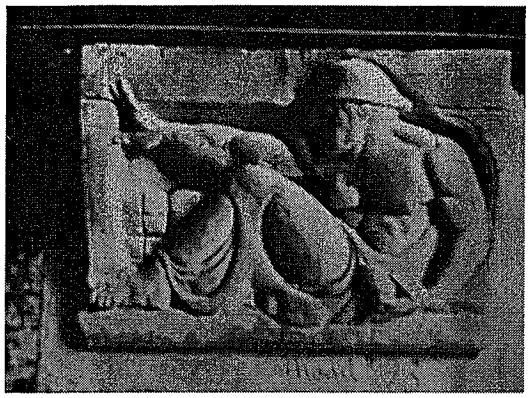


Figure 31: Map on the Meuse-Argonne Chapel wall

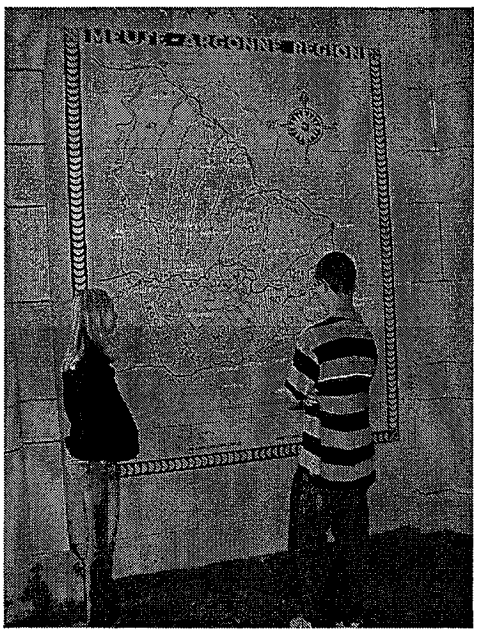


Figure 32: Montfaucon can be seen throughout the region

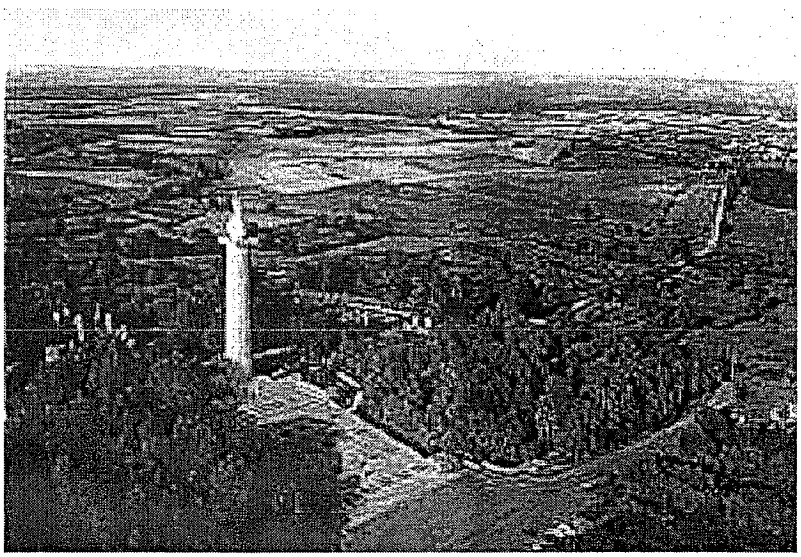


Figure 33: Close-up of the fasces on Montfaucon