# Introduction

The doughboy bore the greatest burden, suffered the greatest hardship and privation, earned the greatest glory. He won the war.

**Source:** Woollcott, *The Command is Forward*, xii.

It is relatively easy to record facts, and thousands will record the facts of America's participation in the Great War for Civilization. More difficult is it to record the attitude of the soldier participating in the war or to describe the atmosphere of the dugout. Few records will be made of these features of the war, and yet these features are of greater human interest than the details of a battle.

**Source:** Skillman, 163–164.

## The Background

*Both of my grandfathers served with the American Expeditionary Force (A.E.F.) in Europe in 1918. First Lieutenant Alfred Marion Barlow lost a leg due to shell fragments received while crossing the Sheldt Canal in Belgium on November 2 and 3, 1918. He was serving with Company L, 148th Infantry, 37th (Buckeye) Division and had been "federalized" into the U.S. Army from the Ohio National Guard. Regimental Sergeant Major Laudie Ernest Dimmette's injuries are clouded by time and his own reticence, but he was probably gassed and certainly suffered trench foot. He served in the headquarters company of the 113th Field Artillery Brigade of the 30th Division. I don't know if either ever knew that they both served in the fighting around Montfaucon during the last week of September 1918, the North Carolina artillery providing support for the Buckeye infantry.*

**General Edwin Glenn pinning a decoration. To the left of Alfred Barlow is "a lieutenant from Baltimore." (Editor's collection)**

*It has now been a century since they and so many other young American men began the odyssey that would lead them to war far from home and back, though in diminished numbers; their story has been told many times and in many ways. At first, they were the ones who told it, in diaries, letters home, newspaper accounts and magazine articles, and in divisional histories. Later, the task fell to novelists, moviemakers, and historians.*

*The sounds of those first voices necessarily dwindled with time, but fortunately they did not disappear. They were preserved in print.*

*The First World War existed on paper even as it was being fought. Yes, electronic communications (radio, telephone) played a role, but it was the typewriter and the pen that both recorded the war and, in many respects, made possible the massive organizations it demanded. The American soldier, right down to the lowest ranks, was often both a reader and a writer. Commands and instructions were passed to him in writing—much of his entertainment came that way, too, through books and letters, newspapers and magazines. And he responded with his own pen.*

*That pen, though, was restricted. Censorship was a necessary and respected part of life in the A.E.F. The soldiers knew that their letters and diaries could fall into the "wrong" hands, so they kept their writings to topics that referred to the details of the war only elliptically.*

*The frustration of reading these doughboy letters alone and out of context, in fact, led to this book. There was little about the war that I could glean from my grandfather Barlow's letters to his mother and grandmother. I wanted to know more about his experiences.*

*Soon, I started exploring military documents, memoirs, and the bound reproduction of* The Stars and Stripes *that I had inherited from my other grandfather. The letters home by the soldiers, I discovered, are only the smallest part of the doughboy experience in relation to words. That this army marched more on its typewriters than on its stomach (or that its typewriters allowed it to march on its stomach) had become abundantly clear.*

*There is no way that we, today, can replicate the experiences of the doughboys, and no reason we would ever want to. They had an extremely tough time of it, many of them dying, others returning home permanently scarred. They should not be forgotten.*

*Fortunately, they aren't.*

*Though their war may have accomplished little in terms of the grand goal of "peace in our time," it certainly changed American culture. Nora Bayes sang, in 1919, "How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm after they've seen Paree?" The answer provided the script for the Roaring Twenties; the new place in the world occupied by the United States was confirmed by ex-doughboy lives.*

*Still, a century later, the questions for us remain: Who were they? How did the war change them?*

*This book is an attempt to provide first answers to these questions through the very words the American soldiers of World War I read and wrote during (or soon after) the experience that molded their collective personality.*

## The Doughboy

*One of the diverting controversies among the soldiers of the American Expeditionary Force (A.E.F.) in World War I arose over just what they should be called. A century on, we look back on them as "doughboys," but that name has been more recently chosen to distinguish them from the Yanks of that other World War, the one fought by their sons—for these soldiers, too, were often known as "Yanks." Though both terms were used by the soldiers themselves as well as by supporters at home, "doughboy" actually lost out to "Yank" in France in 1918.*

*Heywood Broun, a reporter for the* New York Tribune *who, after the war, would be known as one of the wits of the Algonquin Round Table (along with former sergeant Alexander Woollcott), reported from France during the war. His book,* The A.E.F., *which came out in 1918, contains the following passage about the controversy over what to call the American soldier:*

**The local Gallipolis, Ohio Company F of the Ohio National Guard. Alfred Barlow is at the far left. (Editor's collection.)**

The name for the American soldiers gave the French press and public no end of trouble. They began enthusiastically enough by calling them the "Teddies," but General Pershing, when interviewed one day, said that he did not think this name quite fitting as it had "no national significance." The French then followed the suggestion of one of the American correspondents and began to call the soldiers "Sammies," or as the French pronounce it, "Sammees." Although this name received much attention in French and American newspapers it has never caught the fancy of the soldiers in the American Expeditionary Army. Officers and men cordially despise it and no soldier ever refers to himself or a comrade as a "Sammy." American officers have not been unmindful of the usefulness of a name for our soldiers. Major General Sibert, who commanded the first division when it arrived in France, posted a notice at headquarters which read: "The English soldier is called Tommy. The French soldier is called poilu. The Commanding General would like suggestions for a name for the American soldier." At the end of the week the following names had been written in answer to the General's request: "Yank, Yankee, Johnnie, Johnny Yank, Broncho, Nephew, Gringo, Liberty Boy, Doughboy."

Now Doughboy is a name which the soldiers use, but strictly speaking, it refers only to an infantryman. The origin of the name is shrouded in mystery. One officer, probably an infantryman, has written, that the infantrymen are called doughboys because they are the flower of the army. Another story has it that during some maneuvers in Texas an

artilleryman, comfortably perched on a gun, saw a soldier hiking by in the thick sticky Texas mud. The mud was up to the shoetops of the infantryman and the upper part which had dried looked almost white. "Say," shouted the artilleryman, "what've you been doing? Walking in dough?" And so the men who march have been doughboys ever since.

**Source:** Broun, *A.E.F.*, 38–40.

*Writing a decade after the war,* Stars and Stripes *reporter John Winterich recalled newsroom discussions on what to call the members of the A.E.F. The soldiers' newspaper even went so far as to print an image of an American soldier above the caption "A Picture Without a Title," rejecting "Sammy" and "Amex" as appropriate designations. Winterich goes on to quote a letter from a soldier that ran in the March 1, 1918, edition of the paper, reproduced here in full:*

To the Editor of *The Stars and Stripes*:

Re "A Picture Without a Title" in today's *Stars and Stripes*. Call 'em "Glories," or, in singular, "Glory;" collectively, "Glory Boys," keeping in mind the chorus of John Brown's Body," "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah."

Adelbert G. Hubert.
February 15, 1918.

**Source:** "Glory Boys," *The Stars and Stripes,* March 1, 1918, 4.

*That, obviously, went nowhere.*

*Winterich next quotes an editorial from an issue at the end of that month, again reproduced here from the original:*

A Sammie may be defined as an American soldier as he appears in an English newspaper or a French cinema flash. It is a name he did not invent, does not like, never uses and will not recognize. When he sees it in the papers from home, it makes him sick. The American doughboy has had his baptism of fire, but he has not yet been christened.

The name "Sammie" was ineffectually wished on our troops the day of their arrival in France. The French soldiers had been "poilus" and the British "Tommies" since long before 1914, but, like the Australians, the Americans arrived nameless in France. It was not long, to be sure, before the gallant band that sailed from under the Southern Cross had

become known the world around as the "Anzacs," but this was used too fulsomely after Gallipoli that the boys themselves acquired a distaste for it, and of late have taken to describing themselves as "Aussies." "Aussies," then, is now the fashion, and some day the A.E.F. will, literally, make a name for itself. Some day it will find a substitute for the unsatisfactory, the really painful, "Sammie."

When, in the fullness of time, the American Army has been welded by shock and suffering into a single fighting force, with one mind, one heart and one spirit, the American soldier will find his name. It will be the inspiration of some ambulance driver, perhaps, or the outburst of some eloquent cook. It will strike the fancy of a passing guard and be forwarded through military channels like a sentry's call. Wounded boys will carry it back to base hospitals and ammunition train drivers will spread it to the base ports. Some reporter will hear it at some distant bar and put it into the story he has to write that night. It will be printed in America. Paragraphers and cartoonists and vaudeville comedians will use it. It will be caught up at home and in the training camps. The name will be fastened on. The American soldier will have been christened. He does not know now what that name will be. He simply knows it won't be "Sammie."

**Source:** "Down with 'Sammie,'" *The Stars and Stripes,* March 29, 1918, 4.

*Winterich tells us that no one person "rose to the occasion" or even complained about referring to the soldiers as 'boys,' something, he says, the paper decided to stop doing on its own.*

*Oddly enough, on the same page of* The Stars and Stripes *with the "Sammie" article is this:*

The new song beginning, "The Yanks are coming," would be more popular over here if it were not about ourselves. It would be egotistical of us to sing it too much. But there is no over-stating the strength of those four expressive words.

'The Yanks are coming.' They are—and the only people who appear to doubt it are the Germans.

**Source:** "'The Yanks Are Coming,'" *The Stars and Stripes,* March 29, 1918, 4.

*Winterich goes on to relate that it was the overseer of the* Stars and Stripes *operation, Captain Guy Viskniskki, who agitated most strongly for*

*"doughboy." At his urging, a campaign to promote "doughboy" began with the April 19th issue in 1918.*

*Here is the commencing article:*

A letter in the editor's mail signed "Subscriber"—we are too young to get letters from "Old Subscriber"—asks tartly if we are aware that there are other kinds of soldiers in this army besides doughboys. Answer: We are not. As we read the definition in the dictionary known as "General Usage," a doughboy is an American soldier—any American soldier.

More and more in the training camps and in the trenches, over there and over here, the name "doughboy" is attaching itself to every living man who wears the olive drab. Time was when it was applied only to enlisted infrantrymen. Time was when there was a suggestion of good-natured derision in it. But of late, with the original doughboys in the very vanguard of the A.E.F., the name appears insensibly to have taken on a new accent of respect. Infantrymen and artillerymen, medical department boys and signal corps sharks, officers and men alike, all of them are called doughboys and some of them are rather proud of it. Our cartoonist—leatherneck though he is—is a doughboy. So is General Pershing. So are we all of us.

If "Subscriber" does not like the name, he need not cancel his subscription, because, after all, it was no doing of ours. If a better name—"Yanks," perhaps—gets into circulation, we shall use it. If, on the other hand, "doughboy" should, in time, become the universal name for the American soldier, we cannot claim to have invented it.

We have only one claim to fame. It is this. Never, so help us, have we nauseated and unnerved a doughboy by calling him a Sammie.

**Source:** "We're All Doughboys,"
*The Stars and Stripes*, April 19, 1918, 4.

*Later, Winterich adds that "Yanks" was unquestionably gaining ground, not by the conscious incubation of propaganda but by usage. The very issue in which the "We're All Doughboys" editorial appeared had reproduced on the front page a smashing drawing by Captain Wallace Morgan labeled "The Yanks Are Coming!" For those back home, "Yank" also won out (by a nose) over "doughboy." Both are found in articles and even books by the returning soldiers as names they used for themselves.*

*Only later, as pointed out earlier, would the necessity for differentiating an entirely different generation of American soldiers revitalize "doughboy," giving it precedence over "Yank" for the soldiers of World*

*War I. The new Yanks, the G.I.s of World War II, now became the Yanks of popular and worldwide imagination.*

## The Stars and Stripes Forever

*The soldiers' newspaper,* The Stars and Stripes *captured the particular spirit of the A.E.F. It chronicled the resilience, frustration, patience, willingness, and, yes, even arrogance of the doughboys. From Pershing on down, the soldiers of the A.E.F. knew they were going to win—something that made their French and British allies, who had been slogging out a stalemate with the Germans for years, look at them askance. But it was part of their attitude, and it had a great deal to do with how they viewed the experience—and even their success.*

*Writing almost three-quarters of a century after the war, Alfred Cornebise described* The Stars and Stripes *of World War I:*

There is little doubt that *The Stars and Stripes* enjoyed something rare and fine: the time, place, personnel, and occasion came together and the results were a sparkling performance. The paper reflected journalism at a high level. It manifested class, style, verve, and vivacity. The World War I edition of the paper remains an American journalism classic, and perhaps a minor literary one as well.

**Source:** Cornebise, 170

*The importance of* The Stars and Stripes *is testified to by the careers after the war of its staff. Harold Ross, an itinerant newspaperman before the war, would go on to found one of the greatest of all American magazines,* The New Yorker. *Alexander Woollcott, a drama critic at* The New York Times *before he enlisted (and once he returned), would become a popular wit and entertainer during the period between the wars, immortalized as Sheridan Whiteside in the play and movie* The Man Who Came to Dinner. *Franklin P. Adams, already an experienced columnist when he enlisted, would become nationally known as "F.P.A." for his "The Conning Tower" column. Cyrus Baldridge shot to fame through American reproductions of his illustrations for* The Stars and Stripes *in magazines at home. He remained a dominant American illustrator through the 1940s and even beyond. John Winterich would go on to write about books and a range of other topics over a career lasting beyond the next war. Grantland Rice, already an established sports reporter, would report for* The Stars and Stripes *before returning home to complete one of the greatest sports-journalism careers*

*ever. Few publications have ever been graced with a greater array of talent.*

*However, it is the members of the A.E.F. themselves, not the paper's staff, who made* The Stars and Stripes *the astonishing journalistic achievement that it remains. The letters and poems from the front and doughboy enthusiasm for the paper kept the staff going, prodding itself to provide the best possible newspaper for their fellows at the front:*

The editorial department of *The Stars and Stripes* has from time to time been somewhat taken aback by encountering a rumor that it consists of a detachment of General Staff colonels or a committee of Y.M.C.A. secretaries. Some of the leading actresses back home have even been irritated enough to suggest that it appeared to be edited by Elsie Janis. To all of which charges, we can, and always do, reply, "Liar."

The editorial staff of *The Stars and Stripes* consists of enlisted men of the A.E.F. There have never been any commissions or even promotions awarded within its sanctum.

To show what outfits of the A.E.F. and what newspapers back home contributed, the roster follows. The original staff, in the order of which it was acquired, was made up of these four:

Private Hudson Hawley, formerly of the *Hartford Times*, the *New York Sun* and the *Yale Record*, who was picked from the 101st Machine Gun Battalion. He wrote much of the first few issues. He was Bran Mash, Miss Information and everything else at the start, and later became one of the chief chroniclers of the S.O.S. [Service of Supply]

### *Sample of His Work*

Private John T. Winterich, formerly of the *Springfield Republican*, who escaped from the 96th Aero Squadron. He developed into the chief copy-reader, make-up man and head-writer of the A.E.F.

Private Harold W. Ross, formerly of the *San Francisco Call* and some 78 other American newspapers (one at a time). He came to the editorial staff from the 18th Engineers and immediately planned and established the orphan fund to which American soldiers have contributed more than 2,000,000 francs and which has taken under the wing of the A.E.F. 3,414 French waifs.

Sergeant Alexander Woollcott, formerly dramatic critic of the *New York Times*, was safely ensconced in the registrar's office of Base Hospital No. 8 when captured and borne off to Paris. When the war suddenly became warlike last spring, he was sent to the front, where he remained

for the most part until the armistice was signed, serving as chief war correspondent of *The Stars and Stripes* and living in constant danger of death at the hand of some division that thought he was giving too much attention to the wretched, craven divisions on either side.

These four constituted the original staff of *The Stars and Stripes* and remain in charge of its editorial destinies today. One of them is managing editor—probably the lowest paid managing editor in the history of journalism. These four have written 99 per cent of the editorials we have printed. In addition, they have helped make the world safe for democracy as serving as models for Wally's cartoons.

### *More Non-Coms and a Private*

To the original quartet were added, while the fighting lasted, Sergeant Seth T. Bailey of the *Portland Oregonian* and the Sunset Division, Sergeant Philip Von Blon of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and Base Hospital No. 4, Corporal Jack S. Connelly of the *Boston Herald* and the 101st Field Artillery, Corporal Robert Snajur of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and the 398th Ammunition Train and Private John Black of the *Brooklyn Eagle* and Base Hospital No. 15.

Sergeant Bailey, a peculiarly hard-boiled doughboy, descended on the sanctum in column of squads, sporting a Mexican badge. He deployed before a type-writer and threw over a barrage of letters from "Henry's Pal to Henry" which have enlivened the A.E.F. ever since. Bailey, Von Blon, Ross and Winterich all took a hand in the work at the front, for it took many men to cover that fairly lively beat.

Then certain officers, destined for other work in France, helped us out one at a time in passing. There was Lieutenant Charles Phelps Cushing of the *Kansas City Star*, who attended and shared the labor pains with which the A.E.F. gave birth to this newspaper. Captain Franklin P. Adams—F.P.A. of the *New York Tribune*—did a column for a time, and Lieutenant Grantland Rice, the sport writer, himself recited the funeral oration for the sporting page when it was buried for the duration of the war. Now on his way home, he promises to send us some hot sport dope by cable, but probably will forget about it. They are that way—officers. The divisional histories are the work of Captain Joseph Mills Hanson, who is our historian at G.H.Q. Then the work in the S.O.S. has been abetted by Captain Harold W. Clark of the *Boston Herald*.

**Source:** "Well, It's Probably the Only Birthday We'll Ever Have," *The Stars and Stripes*, February 7, 1919, 5.

*A biography of Alexander Woollcott describes the people of* The Stars and Stripes. *The "Dere Mable" mentioned in this excerpt is a series of humorous (and fictional) letters home penned for a divisional publication by Edward Streeter and published as a book in 1918 with a 1919 sequel,* That's Me All Over, Mable*:*

The officers were but ephemeral. The staff soon sloughed them off and got down to its basis of enlisted men only. Over them but not of them were Captain Guy T. Visknisski, in the editorial department, and Captain Richard Waldo, an able and experienced graduate of Park Row on the business side. The working staff was made up of Harold W. Ross—the best editor in America, in Woollcott's opinion—Hudson R. Hawley, Woollcott, the artists, C. LeRoy Baldridge and A. A. Wallgren, with such a young sergeant, Seth Bailey, who paralleled Dere Mable with some lively trench vernacular contributions to which he was allowed to sign his initials, a privilege not accorded Woollcott. No daily in America had ever boasted a city room of such high average quality.

**Source:** Adams, *A. Woollcott,* 85–86.

## The Rationale

*The rationale for this book can be illustrated, in part, by the progression of usage, definition, and division seen in the previous discussion of the word "doughboy." Words change as the world changes. Looking back after a century at the events of World War I, our vision is altered by the prisms of that century. Just as personal memories of events change as we talk about them, so do cultural memories beyond the lifetime of any living individual.*

*The words of the time remain, however; it is worth the effort, from time to time, to return to them. The picture they build can be surprising.*

*By interweaving a variety of types of documents, even changing types of sources in different chapters, I attempt to build a cohesive narrative around the topics central to each chapter. Military documents, memoirs, letters home, and articles from* The Stars and Stripes *are the heart of this book. Alone, none of them paints a picture full enough for readers of the 21st century. Together, they can give a sense of the texture of the short but dramatic and complex experience of the A.E.F.*

*There are millions of documents, surely, written at the approximate time of the Great War that deal directly with it. What is provided here*

*is obviously an extremely small sampling, only a taste of what can be found.*

*At some points in the documents excerpted here, idiosyncratic spellings have been regularized and obvious typographical errors corrected. Different types of documents from different sources appear in different chapters in an attempt to present something of the breadth of the A.E.F. experience but without disrupting the narrative of that experience. The difference also reflects what was written at the time. Because of censorship and the difficulty of writing from the front, for example, there is less directly from doughboys' pens about the fighting itself than from* The Stars and Stripes *and official Army documents.*