Spring 1999

Lux et Lex: Volume 6, Number 1

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Recommended Citation
Garrett, Bob; Slater, Sandy; and Spaeth, Janet, "Lux et Lex: Volume 6, Number 1" (1999). Lux et Lex. 8.  
https://commons.und.edu/lux-et-lex/8

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BACK TO THE TRENCHES WITH SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Oh, she's a slashing, crashing terror, day or night. She's a raging, roaring demon full of fight. Over the top in no man's land, bellowing doom on ev'-ry hand. She's a roaring battering ram is the Tank.

The above refrain appears in "Marching Song of the Tanks," a tune penned by two veterans of the World War I U.S. Army Tank Corps. While war ditties such as this might seem somewhat peculiar by today's standards (the song's graphically violent imagery and belligerent message contrast oddly with the peppy music), they were popular morale boosters at the time.

"Marching Song of the Tanks" is just one example of the unexpected treasures waiting to be mined by researchers of George S. Patton Papers, available in the Chester Fritz Library's Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections. Patton Papers were gathered by Major Sereno Brett, Patton's second-in-command during World War I. The collection documents Patton's first combat experiences, as well as the beginnings of tank warfare, his personal specialty.

George S. Patton Papers were purchased and then gifted to the Chester Fritz Library by Ralph Engelstad, a 1954 UND business graduate and former Fighting Sioux hockey goalie. Engelstad has a history of outstanding contributions to his alma mater. His gift of Patton Papers preceded his recent 100 million dollar donation, half of which will fund the construction of a new hockey arena. UND's current hockey arena is named after Engelstad, in appreciation of his generosity.

With his gift of Patton Papers, Engelstad further displays both his loyalty to UND and his passion for history. Willis Van Devanter and Allan J. Stypeck, two distinguished military historical document appraisers, referred to Patton Papers as "the most historically valuable collection relating to World War I that we have either seen or, in our researches, have been made aware of." They add that "to the best of our knowledge and as advised by those in a position to know, most of this material has never been reproduced." George S. Patton Papers contains some truly unique material, from the aforementioned sheet music to photographs, authentic World War I battlefield maps, personal accounts and war diaries.

Patton's World War I career is often neglected or glossed over by historians. Yet, it was his formidable years and studying it provides insight to his later activities in World War II. Some background is thus in order. The United States declared war on Germany in April 1917. General John J. Pershing was appointed commander in chief of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) and asked Patton to accompany him to France. Patton began taking an interest in tanks, which were then new and untried weapons. In November 1917, he became one of the first officers in the newly established United States Tank Corps and was soon ordered to direct a new tank school near Langres, France. Here, he organized and trained the 304th Tank Brigade. He led this brigade into battle at St. Mihiel in September 1918 and the Meuse-Argonne offensive later that month. World War I ended on November 11, 1918, which, interesting enough, was Patton's 33rd birthday.

Items dating from the first world war include personal accounts by Patton and others, correspondence, field operations reports, field orders and Army Liaison Office telegrams sent during the Battle of St. Mihiel and the Argonne Offensive. War diaries of the 304th Tank Brigade and maps used by Tank Corps officers are two items especially worth highlighting.

The war diaries are one of the collection's strongest and most exciting assets. Many entries are signed by Patton or written entirely in his hand. While Patton's personal diaries are housed in the Library of Congress, these war diaries were...
previously unavailable. They provide intense detail of battlefield movements. An entry for September 12, 1918, the first day of the Battle of Saint Mihiel, provides an interesting example:

This was Day 1. H Hour at 5:00 a.m. Brigade supported 4th Army Corps (1st Army) 344th Battalion operating with 1st Division; 8 army corps (126th Division). Two companies of each Battalion were in Battalion reserve. The Day's objectives were in every case attained, despite the heavy casualties.

Patton's personal diary contains only a brief account of that day's actions. Thus, the official war diary adds a gap in the war's documentary history.

Thirty-six contemporary World War I maps of various sizes depict the theatres of operations. Officers drew lines and wrote annotations on the maps to denote movements and other pertinent battlefield information. Viewing the maps easily evokes images of Patton and his fellow officers poring over the same materials in a campaign situation.

Personal accounts and correspondence provide fascinating views of combat. Patton's own written account includes a description of a meeting between Patton and Douglas MacArthur, long before either was a household name:

We found General MacArthur and his aid with four or five infantry soldiers. Our party took about ten Germans who seemed very anxious to surrender. We showed MacArthur if we could move our tanks forward across the bridge at Lisieux, which, contrary to expectations, was found intact. He gave his consent in [sic] the bridge was not mined. We walked over the bridge, in the manner, expecting to be blown to heaven any moment but our great relief found that the bridge had not been tampered with.

The collection is especially rich in providing information on the development of armored warfare. In World War I, the tank was a new and terrible weapon. An armored and mobile fortress, it represented the cutting edge of military technology. Tanks broke the battle deadlock in the Western Front, offering real hope for the Allies. After the war, the Allies established the International Committee of the Red Cross to safeguard the use of tanks in future wars.

Contemporary reactions to the tank are often fascinating to examine. For example, the collection includes a report entitled "The Moral Effects of Tanks Upon the Enemy," written by F.T. Murphy, a Lieutenant in the A.E.F. Tank Corps. Murphy examines the first uses of the tank in war, noting that "their moral effect on the enemy appears to have been considerable." As an example, he cites an instance where "a tank was broken down in the mud, yet the дерек's moral effect was such as to compel the enemy to come out and surrender on our own.

Imagine the challenges faced by Patton in beginning a Tank School from the ground up! A manual entitled "Instructions for the Training of the U.S. Tank Corps in France," signed by Patton with his initials, reveals the mixture of old and new in the tank school curriculum: "The subjects mainly dealt with in this publication are those which are essential for a Tank Unit. Beyond these, there is, however, the whole range of military training common to all arms. These subjects must be studied, because without knowledge of the other arms and the system of the service, cooperation is not possible." Among the subjects beneficial to tank soldiers, we find machine gunnery, mechanics, driving instruction, and reconnaissance.

Several other military reports reflect contemporary views of the then-modern weapon. "Tanks at Time and Man Savers," an official report of the British Army, cites the advantages of the still largely-unsolved question of how to deploy and use tanks in future wars. It cites the advantages of the still largely-unsolved question of how to deploy and use tanks in future wars.

A map of various tanks and their movements in the Western Front is annotated with the movements of tanks to denote the evolution of tank warfare. A map of various tanks and their movements in the Western Front is annotated with the movements of tanks to denote the evolution of tank warfare. A map of various tanks and their movements in the Western Front is annotated with the movements of tanks to denote the evolution of tank warfare. A map of various tanks and their movements in the Western Front is annotated with the movements of tanks to denote the evolution of tank warfare.

After the war, the U.S. Army continued to experiment with tanks and debate their appropriate role within the military. 329 photographs, spanning World War I to the eve of World War II, document the evolution of tank warfare. Various tank models, including British, French, German, Swedish, and Italian, as well as American, models are depicted. The tanks are shown both at rest and being operated in war games and other experimental tests.

Textual records complement the photographs and bring many contemporary issues to light. What is the future of the tank in the post-World War I era? Should the Army have more tanks? Should it have less? Can the United States defend itself against an armored attack? Such questions weighed heavily on the minds of Army officials, as well as on soldiers and politicians. War College lectures, newspapers, and correspondence are an interesting piece of correspondence to Major Sereno Brent, who asked whether a division of tanks should be divided into two smaller groups, each commanded by a major general. The letter writer argues that such a division would be "too large for proper control... This is, in effect, an army corps. Something about half this size seems more reasonable. The greater the mobility the more able to maneuver and the less danger to surrounding French property."

It is interesting to note that the writer of this letter was General George C. Marshall Jr. The letter is signed by "Assistant Commandant G. C. Marshall Jr.

Two tanks, which effectively dubbed the "Armored Force," were finally formed in 1940 by, ironically enough, Chief of Staff George C. Marshall Jr. Patton was placed in command of the Second Armored Division, located in Fort Benning, Georgia. Newspapers of the two armored divisions in Fort Benning and Fort Knox complete the journey begun by George S. Patton Papers, leaving us at the verge of the United States entry to World War II.
It could be said that scholars never truly die. They live in the memories of those who knew them, but also leave a more permanent legacy through the written word. People come alive not only through the words they write but also through the words they collect, as a book lover's personality is reflected in his or her personal library. English Professor Joseph Smeal provides a case in point.

Prof. Smeal began his career at UND in 1957, when he started teaching English as an instructor. He retired in 1981. Smeal was a foremost expert on American literature and wrote the English Department's centennial history, which was completed in 1983. He passed away on April 25, 1987 and his loss is still keenly felt.

An avid reader and researcher, Prof. Smeal spent much time at the Chester Fritz Library. Special Collections was a favorite spot. Sandy Slater, Head of Special Collections, knew him as one of the Department's regulars. Each day, Smeal would sign Special Collections' visitor registration book as the first patron. He would then join the Department's staff, including Dan Rylance and Colleen Oihus, for a cup of morning coffee. His fellow English professor Sheryl O'Donnell remembers seeing Smeal in Special Collections when she was working on a project there. She valued his comments and suggestions and fondly recalls his "voracious reading habits and... visionary wit."

Robert Lewis, current English Department Chair, notes that Smeal would occasionally get so caught up in his writing or reading that he would forget—temporarily—his teaching duties. Students didn't complain, recognizing the outstanding resource they had in Smeal. In Lewis' words, "Even if he sometime missed class he was still outstanding—stimulating, challenging, full of energy, sometimes acerbic, sometimes funny."

Smeal was much beloved as a teacher. Professor Elizabeth Hampsten recalls his approach to teaching Freshman Composition. "When his students found the idea of writing daunting, he would remind them that writing is a natural language, no more alien or foreign than their spoken words."

Smeal's lively personality quickly emerges through conversations with his colleagues in the English Department. Michael Beard notes Smeal's keen eye and uncanny ability to verbalize thoughts. David Marshall, Smeal's officemate, describes Smeal as "very quiet and constantly humorous" and as a person who enjoyed the exchange of ideas. Marshall also notes that Smeal was very widely read, and his academic endeavors were diverse, from a study of the interworkings of poetry and linguistics to a history of the upper Midwest.

These interests were reflected in Joseph Smeal's personal library, a collection filled with books on American and English literature, especially poetry, but also rich in its diversity. The Chester Fritz Library is indebted to Enid Smeal, Joseph's widow, for donating these items. Thanks to Enid Smeal's generosity, her late husband may now share his interests with UND's academic community and with researchers throughout the region. We can't help but think that Joseph Smeal himself would be quite pleased.

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DISCOVER THE CORPS OF DISCOVERY!

Lewis and Clark's "Corps of Discovery" reached North Dakota in 1804. Bicentennial observances of this event are thus a short five years away. The Chester Fritz Library is already preparing for the occasion. Current and out of print books relating to the Lewis and Clark expedition are being purchased for the Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections. Special Collections will serve as a valuable resource for anyone seeking information on Lewis and Clark. Look for further announcements of Lewis and Clark events and activities at the Chester Fritz Library as the bicentennial approaches.