

The Greatest Adventure: American Volunteer Ambulance Drivers in the
First World War

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The outbreak of World War One in August of 1914 saw Europe and her colonies engaged in a conflict that would last for the next four years. While war was welcomed by most of the European populace,¹ these nations were wholly unprepared for the destruction that modern weaponry would produce. France, especially, found its medical services lacking-- the army's ambulance corps was made up of horse drawn wagons used in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, despite the acknowledged superiority of the automobile. Faced with the difficulty of finding both vehicles and men to drive them, French authorities turned to the United States and the countless young men who had been fascinated by the development of the automobile². Soon, men from America's elite schools began to journey across the Atlantic to aid in the war against France's enemies. While their motivations varied, their results did not, and fervor for the ambulance corps in France quickly spread throughout the United States. Two young Oregonians, John C. Platt and George Marion Kyle, both attending Leland Stanford University, found themselves caught up in the enthusiasm, and joined the American Ambulance Field Service. As was the case with all who volunteered, the first Stanford Section, of which Platt and Kyle were a part, was a conglomeration of different ages, personalities, and ideologies. Their reasons for volunteering differed: some went seeking adventure, others were humanitarians, and some were ideologues. But when they arrived in France, these men, some no more than boys, were able to form an effective volunteer force that would save many lives. By the time the United States took over control of the Field Service in the latter half of 1917, it had developed into an independent organization, one that the United States Army was happy to incorporate into its own forces.

¹ Peter Hart, *The Somme* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2009) 5-6.

² Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996) xiv. Hansen points out that at the time of the German army's invasion of Belgium on August 4, 1914, the French army consisted of only two motorized ambulance sections, with 20 vehicles in each.

The American Ambulance Field Service³ was the brainchild of Abram Piatt "Doc" Andrew. This 41-year-old Princeton graduate, with the help of an old acquaintance, Robert Bacon, the President of the American Hospital Board, traveled to Neuilly⁴, France as an ambulance driver for the American Military Hospital in the winter of 1914. In a letter to his parents, Andrew clearly states his reasons for going.



[T]he possibility of having even an infinitesimal part in one of the greatest events in all of history-- the possibility of being of some service in the midst of so much distress-- the interest of witnessing some of the scenes in this greatest and gravest of spectacles-- and above all the chance of doing the little all that one can for France.⁵

The American Hospital itself had been opened in 1910⁶ by a small group of Americans, but with the outbreak of war had expanded it to accommodate increased numbers of patients. This expansion became known as the American Military Hospital⁷, located in the Lycée Pasteur, a school building close to the original hospital.⁸ By the time Andrew arrived in France in December of 1914, the hospital had already begun to send ambulances out to regional hospitals, but these volunteers and their machines were limited to driving wounded to and from hospitals to the trains or hospital ships. This "jitney" work, as it came to be known, frustrated a number of

³Commonly referred to in many sources as the American Field Service, the AFS, or simply the Field Service.

⁴A suburb of Paris.

⁵A. Piatt Andrew, *Letters Written Home from France in the First Half of 1915*, (n.p.: privately printed, 1916), pp.18-19, quoted in Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996) 40. The letter is dated 1/7/1915.

⁶"The Parent Institution: the American Hospital of Paris," *The AFS Story*. Accessed 12 March, 2012.

⁷Also known as the American Ambulance Hospital, See Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 40.

⁸A. Piatt Andrew, introduction to *With the American ambulance field service in France*, by Leslie Buswell, 2nd ed., ed. Harry Davis Sleeper (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1916), ix-x.

young men with its repetitive nature, creating discipline problems among the drivers and friction between Americans and other nationals.⁹ As Andrew himself wrote, "this work [jitney work], however useful it may have been, was not of a character to appeal to enthusiastic and ardent young Americans, who were physically able and morally eager to share more of war's hardships and dangers."¹⁰

To combat this, Robert Bacon created a new post for Andrew that would utilize his many administrative skills¹¹ in the early months of 1915: Inspector General of the American Ambulance Field Service. Andrew's first action was to complete an inspection tour of the volunteers scattered throughout the area, confirming his suspicions of boredom. Upon his return to Paris, the new Inspector General began to argue for allowing the "enthusiastic and ardent" volunteers to serve closer to the front line. As with his initial request to serve with the American Ambulance Hospital,¹² Andrew's political and social connections were well placed to gain him access to the French military command. Official French policy was to keep American volunteers away from the front due to the United State's neutrality, and for fear of the odd German sympathizer. Despite misgivings, Captain Aimé Doumenc, the French army's chief advisor on transportation, agreed to give Andrew a field trial in Alsace involving a small number of ambulances and volunteers, conditional upon the agreement of the commandant of the French Army Automobile Service of the East, Captain de Montravel. Montravel quickly agreed, and the

⁹ Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996) 41-42.

¹⁰ A. Piatt Andrew, "Some of the Early Problems," introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920) 18.

¹¹ Andrew had served as an assistant professor of economics at Harvard, as director of the US Mint, and as assistant secretary of the Treasury, See Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 39.

¹² Bacon was well aware of Andrew's political career, and Andrew had taken Bacon's son as his personal secretary when he was at the Treasury. See Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 39.

embodiment of Andrew's vision of a newly revitalized AFS, Section Z, left Paris on April 3, 1915 with 12 Ford Model T ambulances and 16 men to drive and maintain them.¹³

After arriving in Vittel, France, roughly 85 miles East of Paris, the eager men of Section Z impressed Captain de Montravel, so much so that they were quickly moved farther east to the city of Saint Maurice-sur-Moselle.¹⁴ As the French army moved forward into Alsace, so too did Section Z, all the while carrying wounded men in their Model T Fords over the steep roads of the Vosges and other mountain passes previously inaccessible to all but army mules and wagons (see figure 2). One driver, Everett Jackson, recalled of his time spent in Alsace: "The road, steep and narrow and rough at any time... To these difficulties was added the necessity of passing the slowly descending trains of ammunition wagons and mules. On one stretch of road no lights were permitted, as they would have disclosed its location to the Germans."¹⁵ Despite such dangers, the Americans impressed the dubious French. Captain de Montravel soon requested another section, giving rise to Section Y, the second of Andrew's newly revitalized Field Service. Though his ideas had thus been validated, there still remained the issue of French policy, which formally restricted the movement of volunteers.

Andrew went to the French General Headquarters (GQC) to address the issue, meeting again with Captain Doumenc. Together they wrote an agreement that eased the worries of the French commanders, while allowing Andrew and his volunteers to drive their ambulances at the front. In the agreement, the Field Service assured that no candidate for service would be accepted without 3 letters of recommendation, a blatant attempt to ease the fears of the French regarding

¹³ Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996) 44.

¹⁴ Vittel is closer to 85.3 miles from Paris, while Saint Maurice-sur-Moselle is an additional 44 miles to the southeast.

¹⁵ Everett Jackson, "Last Days in Alsace," in *Friends of France: The Field Service of the American Ambulance described by its members*, ed. A. Piatt Andrew (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916) 54-55.

spies and German sympathizers finding their way into the ranks.¹⁶ It also stated that each volunteer would commit to six months service, which could then be extended in three month increments if he wished, and each man would promise not to reveal any military information that he might become aware of during his time in France.¹⁷ In addition, each section of the Field Service would be commanded by an officer of the French army, the men would be required to wear the uniforms of the American Field Service, and each automobile would be registered to the French Army.¹⁸ The units were therefore subject to French military discipline, though as Andrew later pointed out in his forward for the *History of the American Field Service*, this was probably unenforceable as any man looking to escape punishment could have sought refuge with the United States government. But, as he recalls, only one such instance occurred, which was "amicably" settled: the man in question was simply dishonorably discharged from the Field Service.¹⁹

The French Army and the American Ambulance Field Service were to share the burden of providing equipment, rations and accommodations for the men. While the men were required to pay their own travelling expenses, uniforms, and other necessities, the Field Service provided them with food and lodging during training periods and while on leave. The ambulances, spare parts, tools, and any other equipment belonging to the section was also provided in this manner. The French army supplied the Field Service with gasoline, tires, oil, and the army rations and

¹⁶ A. Piatt Andrew, "Some of the Early Problems," introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920) 19-20. The agreement also stated that these letters would be made available to the French authorities at all times at the Field Service Headquarters in Paris.

¹⁷Ibid.,20.

¹⁸Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996) 46. Translation: "Everyone and all for France"

¹⁹ A. Piatt Andrew, "Some of the Early Problems," introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920) 20.

quarters for the men in the field.²⁰ Many of the ambulance men would later write about the lodgings they were housed in while in the field, some with fondness and others with disgust. Rats were common, and many of the accounts treat them as a matter of course.

Two one-and-a-half storied peasants' cottages, with debris-littered floor and leaking roof...The optimist who remarked that at least there were no flies was cowed into silence by the rejoinder that the same could be said of the North Pole...A bevy of rats at least seemed to consider the place so [habitable], and we never lacked for company of the rodent species.²¹

William Yorke Stevenson, in contrast, had better memories of one of his *postes*. "We have pleasant 'cantonments' in the in the quaint little town to the east of Rheims. Sponagle and I being the officers have a small bedroom; the boys are all together in a big airy room..."²²

While the men may have had complaints at times regarding their quarters, they were generally pleased with the ambulances they drove. Unlike other organizations, Andrew was



Figure 2

strictly committed to using Henry Ford's Model T whenever possible. He did not allow the volunteers to bring their own personal vehicles to France. In fact Andrew turned down a number of offers from various American automobile manufacturers on the belief that

uniformity was of the utmost importance if his Field Service was to succeed.²³ To this end,

Andrew settled on the Ford, with its remarkably durable build and interchangeable components.

²⁰ A. Piatt Andrew, "Some of the Early Problems," introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 27.

²¹ Robert W. Imbrie, "Notes from a Diary," American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 52.

²² Stevenson, William Yorke, *From Poilu to Yank* (1918; Hathi Trust Digital Library), 75, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b283115>.

²³ A. Piatt Andrew, "Some of the Early Problems," introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 32-33.

Each ambulance was based on a Ford *chassis* imported from the United States and fitted with a French-made body upon arrival.²⁴ The early versions featured canvas walls and tops which provided little protection from the elements or from shrapnel. Later editions featured boards, which in addition to providing more protection, were easier to clean (see figure 2).²⁵ When properly cared for, the Model T's would run indefinitely, but they required constant low-level upkeep to stay in top condition.²⁶

Drivers often became attached to their vehicles, and each section developed an insignia to paint on their doors. Leslie Buswell wrote of his ambulance, "I almost love my old car-- it was in the battle of the Marne-- and I often find myself talking to it as I pick my way in pitch darkness-- past carriage guns or reinforcements."²⁷ Such sentimentality was not uncommon. Robert Imbrie also wrote about the connection between a driver and his ambulance.

For periods of weeks, mayhap, it is his only home. He drives it through rain, hail, mud and dust, at high noon on sunshiny days, and through nights so dark that the radiator cap before him is invisible... Not only his own life, but the lives of the helpless wounded entrusted to his care depend on its smooth and efficient functioning. Small wonder then that his car is his pride.²⁸

²⁴ Ford was an interesting individual. His idea of philanthropy included making Andrew and other philanthropic organizations pay full market retail for every item purchased. See A. Piatt Andrew, "Some of the Early Problems," introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 32-33 and Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 101.

²⁵ A. Piatt Andrew, "Some of the Early Problems," introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 34-35.

²⁶ Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 109-111.

²⁷ Leslie Buswell, *With the American ambulance field service in France*, 2nd ed, Edited by Harry Davis Sleeper (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1916), 98.

²⁸ Robert Whitney Imbrie, *Behind the wheel of a war ambulance* (1918, Hathi Trust Digital Library) pg. 14-15, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89100091446>.

Each section was ultimately made up of 20-24 Ford ambulances, a Ford staff car, a light repair car (also a Ford), and two two-ton trucks, one of which carried supplies and equipment for the section while the other could carry roughly 15 to 20 wounded men in case of an evacuation or other emergency.²⁹

So it was that in April of 1915, the American Ambulance Field Service officially came into being as a distinct and separate entity. Unlike some of their fellow organizations, they were not allied with the American Red Cross, or with any other neutral organization (in fact, the AFS was decidedly not neutral, with their motto of *Touset tout pour la France*³⁰). With the reversal of French policy came even more responsibility however, and Andrew was faced with the challenge of fulfilling the French authorities' requests for more ambulances and men. Sections Z and Y were strengthened and renamed. Section Z became Section Sanitaire Américaine 3, or S.S.U. 3 (the 'U' was to distinguish it from the English unit Section Sanitaire Anglais), while Section Y became Section Sanitaire Américaine 2. Both were increased in size to include twenty ambulances. S.S.U. 3 remained in the Vosges, and S.S.U. 2 was sent to Lorraine. A new section, S.S.U. 1, was stationed at Dunkirk.³¹ The American Ambulance Field Service had finally begun to realize its potential.

While unarguably beneficial for both the French Army and the Field Service, the new arrangements did not suit those in charge of the American Military Hospital. Although Andrew had regarded their authority as little more than nominal since being appointed Secretary General, they still controlled his funding. Already uneasy about Andrew's dealings with the French Army,

²⁹ A. Piatt Andrew, "Some of the Early Problems," introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 33.

³⁰ Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996) 48.

³¹ Stephen Galatti, "The Organization of the Service," introduction to *Friends of France: The Field Service of the American Ambulance described by its members*, ed. A. Piatt Andrew (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), 2.

and the manner with which they had been conducted,³² the addition of another section (S.S.U. 4) in November of 1915 and plans for a fifth in April of 1916 compelled the Hospital's Transportation Committee to cease its funding of the Field Service in an attempt to regain control of its errant offshoot. By the spring and summer of 1916, the dispute over funding had begun to take its toll. Never one to bow easily to pressure of any kind, Andrew had cabled William Hereford in New York, requesting that he buy the necessary spare parts using funds from Andrew's personal bank account. This failed to solve the debate, however, as the Committee still found ways to interfere. After 27 Ford chassis meant for the Field Service arrived in Bordeaux, the Transportation Committee refused the men and funds necessary to transport them to headquarters in Paris.³³

Following this incident, on July 16, 1916, Andrew contacted Robert Bacon who was then in the United States, requesting that the American Ambulance Field Service be given an administration and treasurer separate from the Hospital's. Bacon, who recognized the advantages of retaining the now acclaimed Field Service as an operating unit of the Hospital, was reluctant to give it any form of anonymity.³⁴ To this end, he turned the issue over to Mrs. Anne Vanderbilt, who sat on the Transportation Committee.³⁵ Mrs. Vanderbilt was quick to recognize that changes were required, and fully supported the shifting of the Field Service's affiliation to the original American Hospital, thus making it independent of and roughly equal to the American Military Hospital. This gave the American Field Service its own governing

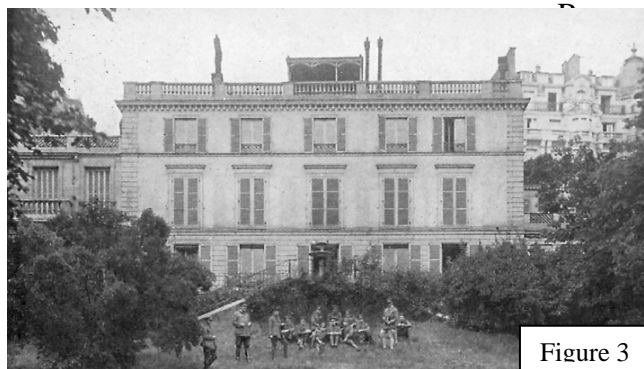
³²Andrew failed to include anyone from the Hospital in the discussions, instead circumventing what they saw as his proper chain of command, Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 47.

³³*Ibid.*, 49.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 50.

³⁵"21 Rue Raynouard: The Field Service's Home Away From Home," *The AFS Story*. Accessed 12 March, 2012.

committee³⁶ which would report directly to Robert Bacon, and the ability to raise its own funds. The Transportation Committee was not finished, however. In



a fit of pique, the Field Service was banished from the grounds of the American Military Hospital at the Lycée Pasteur by the Transportation Committee.³⁷

Far from being upset, Andrew thought that the physical as well as political separation was for the best. In his introduction to the *History of the American Field Service*, he discusses his motives for desiring the move.

Their [sections of the Field Service] work had no relation with the work of the American Hospital at Neuilly, which was more than two hundred miles distant from the nearest section... The Field Service, with a quite distinct work to perform in a quite different region, with its own special funds, its own committees in America, and its own staff in France, needed space and freer opportunity to develop.³⁸

To this end, the Field Service found itself a new home. 21 Rue Raynouard (see figure 3), located in a neighborhood of Paris known as Passy, was owned by Baron Hottingeur and Comtesse de la Villestreux. By mid-July, 1916, Andrew had used his many connections to obtain

³⁶Andrew and his assistant Stephen Galatti were two of the three members, Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 50.

³⁷Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 51.

³⁸A. Piatt Andrew, "Some of the Early Problems," introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 26-27.

a rental agreement, and the Field Service moved in.³⁹ The 5 acre estate⁴⁰ provided plenty of room for the parking of ambulances, the drilling of men, and recreational activities. The house itself allowed several hundred men to be quartered there, in addition to supply rooms and offices for the administrative personnel, with another building on the grounds turned into an infirmary.⁴¹ While the new home of the Field Service provided materially for the needs of its members, it also acted as something of a safe haven, a place to escape from the horrors that were seen in their everyday activities, and was much loved by the members of the Field Service.⁴² One driver, Leslie Buswell, recalled his memories of the new headquarters fondly, relating a story that provides the reader with a sense of the respite that 21 Rue Raynouard provided them.

A stone statue of a dancing boy in front of the house was too much for us all. We ransacked the attic and found some articles of clothing belonging to our absent hostess, and have so dressed it that, with a tin can in its hand, it now looks like an inadequately clad lady speeding to her bath-house with a pail of fresh water.⁴³

The new headquarters at 21 Rue Raynouard did exactly what Andrew had hoped they would: allow the Field Service to expand far beyond its existing capacity. When the move was made in the summer of 1916, there were five sections in the field assisting the French Army with the transportation of its wounded. Roughly a year later, the Field Service had expanded to include forty-seven sections.⁴⁴ Among these was a group of men from Leland Stanford Jr.

³⁹ Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 51.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ A. Piatt Andrew, "Some of the Early Problems," introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 27.

⁴² Stephen Galatti, "Twenty-One Rue Raynouard," American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.2 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920),

⁴³ Leslie Buswell, "New Quarters" in *Friends of France: The Field Service of the American Ambulance described by its members*, ed. A. Piatt Andrew (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), 223.

⁴⁴ A. Piatt Andrew, "Some of the Early Problems," introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 27.

University.⁴⁵ Together they formed the first group to join the American Field Service as a complete section.⁴⁶

In the last months of 1916, 150 men from Stanford joined together with the notion of traveling to France to drive ambulances. Of these 150 men, 20 were eventually chosen to represent the university in what was called the First Unit of Friends of France, and later became Section Sanitaire Américaine 14, or Section 14.⁴⁷ Among these men were two Oregonians who both hailed from Portland, Oregon at the time of their enlistment in the Field Service: George

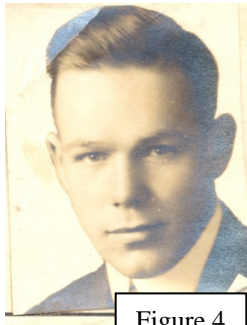


Figure 4

Marion Kyle, aged 21 (see figure 4), and John Crosby Platt, aged 19 (see figure 5). Kyle was the son of a successful railway engineer who was himself studying engineering at Stanford. Platt was the stepson of a sales manager at an automobile company in Portland.⁴⁸ Although their motives

for volunteering are not known, a friend of Kyle's, Alan Nichols, signed off a letter to his family with "we're off for the great adventures"⁴⁹ and consistently wrote with a lighthearted and adventurous tone. Whether this can be applied to the rest of the men in the section is difficult to determine, but Nichols, at least, appears to have been in France seeking adventure.

Platt and Kyle left New York for France on February 14, 1917, along with the 18 other men of their section. Like most of their comrades, they traveled on ships bound for France, often carrying much needed war materials. William Yorke Stevenson remarked on this during his crossing. "The ship is short-handed and very deep in the water, -- even carrying freight piled

⁴⁵ For brevity's sake referred to here as Stanford

⁴⁶ Henry Sleeper, "The Effort in America" introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 47.

⁴⁷ Joseph H. Eastman, "Section Fourteen," American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.2 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 85.

⁴⁸ "Students Go to War," *Oregonian*, January 25, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers (11C58D34D4873BD8).

⁴⁹ Alan Nichols, *Letters Home from the Lafayette Flying Corps*, 2nd ed., ed. Nancy Ann Nichols (San Francisco: J D Huff and Co, 1993), 58.

high on the after deck."⁵⁰ The danger of attack by German submarines was a very real threat for many of these ships, and gave the volunteers their first hint of the potential dangers they faced.

In a letter home, Alan Nichols wrote: "No U-boats at all last night, though we were ready... Kyle got up early this morning and said he saw the gunners shove a long shell into the gun aft. The life rafts have been unlashd and laid up against the rail where they will float off."⁵¹

These measures were not necessary, however, and the men of Section 14 arrived in Bordeaux on February 23 without incident. From Bordeaux, the men traveled by rail to Paris and were quartered at 21 Rue Raynouard, where their limited training took place.⁵²



Figure 5

After receiving their new Ford Model T ambulances and passing the requisite driving tests, Section 14 was sent immediately to their first *postes* in the Verdun sector on March 16, 1917. Here the Stanford men received their first taste of the life of an Field Service ambulance driver, although their section of Verdun was relatively quiet at that time.⁵³ Nichols summarized their life in the Verdun sector well.

We took our own blankets and slept on stretchers in an old canal boat. I drew first call. I took them to our hospital about 13 kilometers away, on a fierce, bumpy road...We will get about three days of rest alternating with one day or night of twelve hours of work. Of course, this is not allowing for hurry calls in attacks. Our front is quiet now and we have little to do."⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Stevenson, William Yorke, *At the front in a fliver* (1917; Hathi Trust Digital Library), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b282908>.

⁵¹ Alan Nichols, *Letters Home from the Lafayette Flying Corps*, 2nd ed., ed. Nancy Ann Nichols (San Francisco: J D Huff and Co, 1993), 37.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 38-41, 46.

⁵³ Joseph H. Eastman, "Section Fourteen," *American Field Service, History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.2 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 86.

⁵⁴ Alan Nichols, *Letters Home from the Lafayette Flying Corps*, 2nd ed., ed. Nancy Ann Nichols (San Francisco: J D Huff and Co, 1993), 60.

Section 14's first *postes* proved to be a fairly gentle introduction, save for one instance in which a healthy respect for German artillery was instilled in both Kyle and Platt, and which the latter related to his hometown newspaper.

Marion Kyle, another Portland boy, and I, were standing in the road with two French officers watching the bombardment when suddenly a sharp whistle warned us of an approaching shell. Our two French friends dropped flat on the road...we followed suit just as quickly as possible, just as a piece of 'eclat' broke a small beam off of a barn a few yards away.⁵⁵

From Verdun they were sent south to the Toul sector, in the region of Commercy, but as Joseph Eastman eloquently wrote, "If Verdun was having a rest, Commercy had declared a peace!"⁵⁶ That the Section saw no work during their time there is unlikely, as they were given a period *enrepos* (resting period) afterwards. This was short, however, and on June 5 the Section was sent northwest to the Moronvilliers sector, near the town of Mourmelon-le-Petit. Section 14 remained here until the United States Army drew it into the fold as Section 632.⁵⁷

It was about the time of Section 14's transfer to Mourmelon-le-Petit that Kyle began to think of joining the French aviation service. In a letter to his family, dated June 5, Alan Nichols writes that Kyle had decided to join the French service and had already written for his application. Nichols was thinking about joining him.⁵⁸ Both men would eventually be accepted into the French aviation service by the end of July, 1917, with one minor exception. Where Nichols appears to have gone about his enlistment through the proper channels, Kyle simply left,

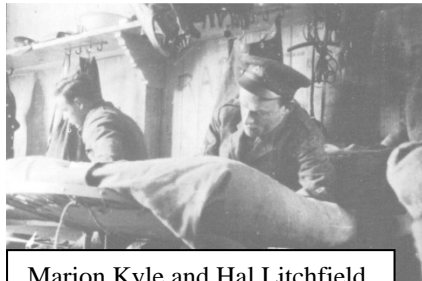
⁵⁵"Oregon Man Home from War Service," *Oregonian*, December 16, 1917. America's Historical Newspapers (11C5F547F6C93520).

⁵⁶ Joseph H. Eastman, "Section Fourteen," American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.2 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 87.

⁵⁷ "Summary," American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.2 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 84.

⁵⁸ Alan Nichols, *Letters Home from the Lafayette Flying Corps*, 2nd ed., ed. Nancy Ann Nichols (San Francisco: J D Huff and Co, 1993), 77.

with no release from the Field Service.⁵⁹ In a later letter, dated July 28, Nichols wrote to his parents that Allan Muhr⁶⁰ had publicly informed the section that Kyle had been court-martialed and was being sent to America as a deserter.⁶¹ Kyle was unaware of this, according to Nichols, but there must have been some truth in the story. On his *Carte d'Identite*, an entry stated that he had been "dishonorably dismissed from AFS for having departed without having asked to be



Marion Kyle and Hal Litchfield during his time with the AFS

released." This was crossed out at a later point, implying that he made his peace with the Field Service.⁶²

Though he too admired the French "birdmen,"⁶³ Platt served out his six month commitment with no mishaps (his *Carte d'Identite* does state that on July 13 he was ill, though not

with what), and finished his engagement in September of 1917. His records show that after returning home, he too enlisted, joining the United States Tank Corps.⁶⁴ While no section's experiences can be called uniform, or applied to those experienced by another group of volunteers, Section 14, and the men who comprised it, are representative of the surge of young men who volunteered for the American Field Service. The massive growth of the Field Service from five sections in the summer of 1916 to 47 in 1917,⁶⁵ would not have been possible had there not been programs of recruitment and fundraising, often one and the same, throughout the United States.

⁵⁹ American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.2 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), Appendix G. Muhr was a Controller and a Cadet Adjutant.

⁶⁰ Alan Nichols, *Letters Home from the Lafayette Flying Corps*, 2nd ed., ed. Nancy Ann Nichols (San Francisco: J D Huff and Co, 1993), 93.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁶² George M. Kyle *Carte d'Identite*, Archives of the American Field Service, New York.

⁶³ "Oregon Man Home from War Service," *Oregonian*, December 16, 1917. America's Historical Newspapers (11C5F547F6C93520).

⁶⁴ John C. Platt, *Carte d'Identite*, Archives of the American Field Service, New York.

⁶⁵ A. Piatt Andrew, "Some of the Early Problems," introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 27.

Unlike some other philanthropic groups serving in France at the time, the Field Service, thanks in large part to Andrew's efforts and those of the men he appointed to oversee such activities, was actively seeking and receiving funds from numerous sources within the United States. Andrew had initiated the process of raising money as early as the summer of 1915 after being put in touch with the American Fund for French Wounded (AFFW) by Mrs. Vanderbilt. In



Figure 7

a mutually beneficial arrangement, the Field Service delivered the AFFW's gifts of clothing, food, blankets, and other items meant to comfort the wounded at the front. In return, Andrew received from Anne Morgan, the AFFW treasure, a list of local committees within the United States. The AFFW gave the Field Service another leg up by devoting their entire September, 1915, news bulletin to them, a publication which enjoyed a far from insignificant readership.⁶⁶ This relationship was a long and fruitful one for both organizations. In addition to the bulletin, AFFW treasurer Anne Morgan would write an article over a year later in which she praised the "American Ambulance boys," and stated that "Men, money and more men are needed for the American Field Ambulance, and it is a shame to send any except our best young men of vitality and strength."⁶⁷

After discovering that William Hereford, who had previously handled the Field Service's business in the United States, was apathetic in the performance of his duties⁶⁸, Andrew appointed Henry Sleeper (see Figure 3) to assume the role of Field Service representative and chief fundraiser in the United States. Sleeper in turn enlisted two young men as his assistants, John

⁶⁶Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 52.

⁶⁷"Duty to France is Urged on America," *Oregonian*, November 9, 1916, America's Historical Newspapers(11CE22B898823738).

⁶⁸ He was a poor recruiter, often allowing the best and brightest to go into other ambulance corps, and some of Andrew's writing suggests that he made mistakes with funding, as well. See Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 52, 54.

Hays Hammond, the son of a wealthy mining engineer, and Leslie Buswell, who himself had served as an ambulance driver in the Field Service.⁶⁹ Their task was not an easy one. As Sleeper wrote later, "We had a good cause, an unusually sympathetic means of operation, but at that time no affiliation in this country on which we had a right to depend for any large or responsible effort. A way of winning friendship, a competent organization, and a considerable fund had therefore all to be achieved -- and quickly."⁷⁰ Sleeper, Hammond, and Buswell set about immediately to accomplish this. Their job was made a little easier by the number of drivers who had written home to their families and relatives. Many such letters were published in hometown newspapers, providing Sleeper and his men a foundation on which to build.⁷¹

Their first task was to set up American Ambulance Field Service committees across the nation. After this was done, they then provided these local organizations with speakers and other programs for recruiting and fundraising purposes. The most popular form was what Arlen Hansen terms an illustrated lecture, that is, a short talk accompanied by a silent film of the drivers in action.⁷² The talk was customarily given by a former driver, as was the case in Portland, Oregon in May of 1917. On this occasion, one Lieutenant George M. Roeder⁷³ spoke at a series of three lectures and was accompanied by a film which "depicted the American ambulance service and its duties from the gleaning of the wounded men at the first trenches to

⁶⁹Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 52 -53.

⁷⁰ Henry Sleeper, "The Effort in America" introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 40-41.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 39-40.

⁷²Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 53. Many of these films were shot by the French government. See Henry Sleeper, "The Effort in America" introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 45.

⁷³George M. Roeder, from New Jersey and educated at Harvard, served 1 year and 2 months in the Field Service, from 1915-1917. He served with S.S.U. 2. He did not join the American Expeditionary Force after the United States entered the war. See American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.3 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), Appendix G.

their arrival at the base hospital... with shells bursting close to the lens of the camera." This event was said to have brought in roughly \$6000 dollars for the Field Service.⁷⁴



Figure 8

All this was not enough for Andrew, however. At his suggestion, Sleeper and his staff produced several books aimed at illustrating the work that the Field Service was doing in France. The first of these, published in 1915 and again in 1916, was a collection of letters written by Leslie Buswell (see Figure 4) under the title *Ambulance no. 10: personal letters from the front*.⁷⁵ The second, and perhaps better known, was *Friends of France: The Field Service of the American Ambulance described by its members*. A compilation of essays and short works written by the members of the Field Service, *Friends of France*, like its predecessor, sought to give Americans at home a taste of life with the American Ambulance Field Service.

Despite the tumultuous and uncertain beginnings of the Field Service, it never lacked for wealthy and influential supporters. Mr. and Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt,⁷⁶ supporters of the American Hospital and American Military Hospital in Paris, were financial and ideological patrons from the outset. Both Robert Bacon and his wife, despite the former's reticence in allowing the Field Service to become its own entity, became influential figures in its continued operation and growth. Bacon was named the Treasurer of the Fund, and, according to Sleeper, provided offices and staff in New York for the Field Service's use. Mrs. Bacon, who was at that time the Chairman of the American Committee of the Hospital, used her contacts throughout the

⁷⁴ "\$6000 Is Raised Here," *Oregonian*, March 23, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers(11C5DD39E10932F8).

⁷⁵ This book was also published as *With the American Field Service in France*, which was anonymous. The edition listed in the text was published under Buswell's name. See

⁷⁶ It was this Mrs. Vanderbilt who assisted in the emancipation of the Field Service. See Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996) and Henry Sleeper, "The Effort in America" introduction to *American Field Service, History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 41.

United States to the benefit of the Field Service. Edward J. de Coppet and James J. Storrow, New York and Boston businessmen respectively, also gave generously to the Field Service. Coppet himself encouraged the publication of works like *Friends of France* and *Ambulance no. 10* as an effort to increase donations and to encourage American university students to join the Field Service.⁷⁷

Between 1915 and 1917, a number of memoirs and compilations from ambulance drivers in the American Ambulance Field Service were published. While some, like the previously mentioned *Friends of France*, *Ambulance no. 10*, and their later companion *Diary of Section 8*, were printed by the Field Service, others were independent works that nonetheless acted in much the same manner. A distinguishing feature of those volumes put out by the Field Service was the direct call for funds and volunteers in the form of inserts often pasted on the last page. This provided those who wished to contribute with the necessary information.⁷⁸ William Yorke Stevenson's two texts, *At the Front in a Fliver* and *From Poilu to Yank* are excellent examples of independent memoirs, as is Henry Sheahan's⁷⁹ *A Volunteer Poilu*. No matter their origins, these works served a vital role in presenting the American Ambulance Field Service to the public and in encouraging young men from the nation's universities to volunteer their time and money. By the end of summer, 1916, thanks to the efforts of Andrew, Sleeper, Buswell, Hammond, and the

⁷⁷ Henry Sleeper, "The Effort in America" introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 41-43.

⁷⁸ *Friends of France: The Field Service of the American Ambulance described by its members*, ed. A. Piatt Andrew (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916) and American Field Service, *Diary of Section VIII*, printed only for private distribution, 1917.

⁷⁹ Interesting to note that the version of the work that was referenced by this author had a hand-written notation on the title page stating that Sheahan was actually a pseudonym for Henry Beston. Further research revealed that this was not the case. The author's full name was actually Henry BestonSheahan, thus the source of the confusion. See Henry Sheahan, *A volunteer Poilu* (1916; Hathi Trust Digital Library) <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b263295> and American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.3 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), Appendix G.

numerous others involved, the Field Service had reached financial and administrative independence.⁸⁰

With a firm financial basis, Sleeper was free to focus more attention on recruitment, though this often coincided with fundraising efforts. The committees in communities and cities throughout the United States that were formed to raise money also served as recruitment centers. As many volunteers came from American universities, recruitment committees were also formed on major campuses.⁸¹ A number of professors actively encouraged their students to join. Henry Sheahan was one such volunteer, acknowledging Dr. Charles Townsend Copeland in the dedication of his memoir.⁸² Others, many of them administrators, facilitated it by permitting students to leave school, often in the middle of a term, without any penalties and with the promise of readmission after they had served their six month requirements.⁸³ This form of recruitment, like the fundraising, was well served by the numerous publications coming from the men in France.

A review of the various works published regarding the Field Service, reveals that most writers fell into one of two categories. There were those, like Robert W. Imbrie, who wrote what they saw and heard to the best of their abilities, not bothering to hide the distasteful aspects of war and the tasks which they were fulfilling.

We found our man ready, shot through the body, raving with delirium, his hands bound together to prevent him tearing his wound. Though a part of our way was exposed to the enemy's machine-gun-fire, the road was too pitted with shell-holes

⁸⁰ Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 54.

⁸¹ Henry Sleeper, "The Effort in America" introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 44.

⁸² Henry Sheahan, *A volunteer Poilu* (1916; Hathi Trust Digital Library) <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b263295>.

⁸³ Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 53.

to permit of fast driving with so badly wounded a man and so we crept back to Vic [Vic-Sur-Aisne]... It was close to midnight when, numbed with cold, we rolled through the silent streets of the town. On my return trip I twice found myself nodding over the wheel.⁸⁴

Others romanticized their time in France, occasionally mentioning the horrors of war but usually glossing over the inconvenient details, as illustrated in part by a portion of Joshua G.B.

Campbell's essay in *Friends of France*. "One had a delicious feeling of danger, and to stand there and hear the crash of the artillery, the buzzing of the aeroplanes, the swish of the bombs as they fell and the crash as they exploded, made an unforgettable experience."⁸⁵ Although it does not make up all of the work circulated by the Field Service, the romanticism with which some of the men recalled their experiences provided Sleeper and his staff with a perfect tool to encourage

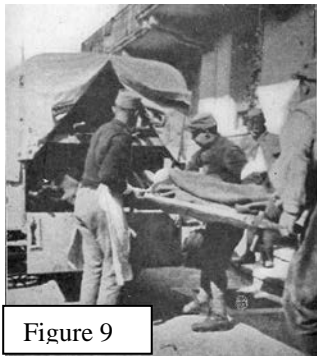


Figure 9

young men to join the Field Service. Society had glorified war, made it a patriotic and manly pursuit where heroism and chivalry were the order of the day and no one ever died, or when they did, it was a heroic sacrifice for the betterment of the nation. This was particularly true of the popular fiction of that era, written for boys and young men

and marketed as exciting adventure stories.⁸⁶ Whether Sleeper was aware of it or not, the publication of works detailing the everyday life of Field Service members, and his fundraising and recruiting campaigns, tapped into this aspect of American culture. The press also played a role in the promotion of the Field Service to young men hungry for the kind of adventure and

⁸⁴ Robert W. Imbrie, "Notes from a Diary," American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 111.

⁸⁵ Joshua G.B. Campbell, "The Section in Flanders," in *Friends of France: The Field Service of the American Ambulance described by its members*, ed. A. Piatt Andrew (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), 120.

⁸⁶ Michael Paris, "Boy's Books and the Great War," *History Today* 50, no. 11 (2000): 44, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost, 3739050. This source deals with British culture, but from this and from the author's own observations of period literature and publications meant for boys and young men, the basic concept holds true in American society as well.

glory they had read about, a fact that Sleeper later acknowledged: "The press notice and publicity resulting from these pictures [those shown at fundraising events] lent a keen impetus to recruiting."⁸⁷ The use of words like "thrilling" and "unequaled drama"⁸⁸ caught the attention of young men seeking adventure and directed them to the Field Service as a means of fulfilling such fantasies.

The efficacy of this, as well as of Sleeper's recruitment program, can be seen in the form of the many young men from schools around the country who volunteered to join the American Ambulance Field Service. Recruitment campaigns were so successful, in fact, that the Field Service could afford to choose their drivers. Sleeper estimated that they took only 40% of those who applied, thus "the character of the personnel was of the first order."⁸⁹ Some joined for adventure and glory, others joined because, like Andrew, they believed that the United States bore a historical debt to France.⁹⁰ Others joined for altruistic reasons. Their motives were often as varied as the men themselves. In the early days, before Sleeper and Andrew made a concerted effort to recruit from colleges and universities, there was a wider variety of men within the service. Robert Whitney Imbrie, of Section 1, observed this phenomenon in his memoir, stating that "At the outbreak of the war the restless ones of the earth flocked to France, drawn there by prospect of adventure and a desire to sit in the game. The Ambulance attracted its share of these characters and a stranger, more incongruous mélange I dare say was never assembled."⁹¹ Imbrie went on to state that despite the preponderance of college men in the American Field Service, his

⁸⁷ Henry Sleeper, "The Effort in America" introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 47.

⁸⁸ "\$6000 Is Raised Here," *Oregonian*, March 23, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers(11C5DD39E10932F8).

⁸⁹ Henry Sleeper, "The Effort in America" introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 45.

⁹⁰ Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 128-129.

⁹¹ Robert Whitney Imbrie, *Behind the wheel of a war ambulance* (1918, Hathi Trust Digital Library) pg. 10, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89100091446>.

own section included, there was "no snobbery," and the work was done in a democratic manner.⁹² While this was probably not the case in every section, the majority of men seemed willing to shoulder their portion of the work that being a driver entailed.

Whatever their reasons, all volunteers had to meet a number of qualifications before being declared fit for service, the most basic of which were listed on the inserts placed in the back of American Field Service publications. These included American citizenship, good health, a clean record, the ability to drive and repair automobiles (this last bit was changed in a later version to read "a superficial knowledge of repair work an advantage"),⁹³ and the ability to pay travelling expenses.⁹⁴ In addition to these prerequisites, each man was required to submit three letters of recommendation from "men of standing" within their communities.⁹⁵ This appears to have changed as the Field Service became more stringent in their selection process. Alan Nichols, a member of Section 14, was required to submit six letters of recommendation and a "guaranty of non-German parentage." As members of the Field Service were also a part of the French Army, they had to pass physical examinations as well. Alan Green, an Oregonian who attempted to join the Field Service, was turned away because he could not pass the physical.⁹⁶ Such requirements, combined with the targeted recruitment of volunteers from America's top schools, gave the Field Service an aura of elitism that neither Andrew nor Sleeper did anything to discourage, though this was rarely reflected in the writings of the drivers.

⁹²Robert Whitney Imbrie, *Behind the wheel of a war ambulance* (1918, Hathi Trust Digital Library) pg. 11, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89100091446>.

⁹³American Field Service, *Diary of Section VIII*, printed only for private distribution, 1917.

⁹⁴*Friends of France: The Field Service of the American Ambulance described by its members*, ed. A. Piatt Andrew (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916). Interesting to note that in the later versions, this last requirement was completely removed, likely because of the enormous amounts of funding coming in. Sleeper discusses this in his introductory essay. See Henry Sleeper, "The Effort in America" introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920).

⁹⁵A. Piatt Andrew, "Some of the Early Problems," introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 19.

⁹⁶"Society News," *Oregonian*, October 13, 1917, America's Historical Newspapers (11C78316D35F84B8).

In a way, a certain sense of elitism was felt when one took into account the costs incurred by those who joined the Field Service. All were required to pay their own way. As Sleeper stated, "In establishing the new ambulance sections, it was essential, if the volunteer spirit were to be kept alive, not only that no salaries be given, but that in every possible instance an applicant should pay his own expenses."⁹⁷ One volunteer, Alonzo W. Pond, remembered the difficulty this presented to some who wished to volunteer. "Many were eager 'to do our part,' but not so many could raise \$600 or \$700, the minimum required for a six-month hitch in the AFS." Pond, like others, was able to raise the funds required thanks to the generosity of a businessman in his college town.⁹⁸ The volunteers were expected to pay for their own travelling expenses to and from France, their uniforms, and any other personal equipment necessary. The Field Service provided them with all the other tools necessitated by their work, including an ambulance, spare parts, and lodging during training periods or when on leave. As they were a part of the French Army, the men received regular army rations and the standard pay of roughly 5cents per day.⁹⁹ Even as knowledge of the Field Service spread, and sponsorship became more common, the recipients of such generosity appear to have been primarily students. The first Stanford section was one such instance, and many more followed. When the United States finally entered the war in 1917, more than 2,500 volunteers had served in the American Ambulance Field Service.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Henry Sleeper, "The Effort in America" introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 43.

⁹⁸ Alan Nichols, *Letters Home from the Lafayette Flying Corps*, 2nd ed., ed. Nancy Ann Nichols (San Francisco: J D Huff and Co, 1993), 54.

⁹⁹ A. Piatt Andrew, "Some of the Early Problems," introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 26. These rations were supplemented by a 2 cent per day allowance given to each man by the Field Service. This is controversial. Some members swore that they never received any pay, while others, like Alan Nichols, claimed that they were not paid but were reimbursed for travel expenses. Others vividly remember receiving pay.

¹⁰⁰ Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 183.

The United States officially entered the First World War in April of 1917. Militarization of the volunteers in France appeared at first to be a simple task. Those in Washington sought to simply transfer the volunteer corps into the Army's Ambulance Services and be done with it. The French, reluctant to give up their ambulances, had other ideas. Finally, a compromise was reached. The US Army would take control of the volunteers, then immediately reassign them to the French army. Although this was formalized on May 26, 1917, no move was made to implement it until August, 1917.¹⁰¹ Andrew was supportive of this change, encouraging his drivers to agree to the militarization, which occurred by the first of October, 1917.¹⁰² According to Sleeper, approximately 600 of the 1,000 Field Service volunteers transferred to the AEF,¹⁰³ though this came at a high price. The men who built the American Field Service, men like A. Piatt Andrew, Henry Sleeper, and Stephen Galatti, were pushed aside in favor of regular-army men, their advice ignored and their warnings unheeded. Despite the change in administration, and in uniform, the memories of those who volunteered for the American Ambulance Field Service remained strong. One driver noted that, on the uniform of ex-AFS drivers, if one looked closely enough, "ten to one somewhere on [it] will shine forth the number of his old Field Service Section."¹⁰⁴ Other drivers ensured that their old numbers could be discerned, if only faintly, beneath the new army paint gracing their ambulances.¹⁰⁵ For those who served in the American Ambulance Field Service, the experience was one they would never forget.

¹⁰¹ Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 161-164.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 178. In *History of the American Field Service*, the dates of absorption into the US Army are somewhat different, and are given as late as December of 1917.

¹⁰³ Henry Sleeper, "The Effort in America" introduction to American Field Service, *History of the American Field Service in France, "Friends of France", 1914-1917*, vol.1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 54-55.

¹⁰⁴ excerpt from AFS Bulletin (No.52), July 6, 1918, quoted in Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 179.

¹⁰⁵ Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers: The Story of American Ambulance Drivers in the Great War, August 1914- September 1918* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 179.

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