

PERSHING'S PATHS OF GLORY



General Pershing Timeline (1860-1948)

1860: John J. Pershing is born on a farm in Laclede, Missouri.

1864: Four-year-old Jack Pershing witnesses a Civil War battle in his hometown of Laclede. He grows up playing with Black children and teaches in a so-called “Negro school.”

1886: Pershing graduates from West Point, having served as president of his class and achieving the highest cadet ranks possible all four years.

1887: Pershing is assigned to lead troops in the 6th Cavalry, stationed at Fort Bayard, New Mexico. Later he is given a six-month command of Sioux Indian Scouts in South Dakota. He learns to speak Sioux to communicate more effectively with these Indian scouts.

1891: Teaching Military Science at the University of Nebraska, Pershing takes a lack-luster drill team, names it “Company A,” trains the men following his own leadership style, and wins national drill competitions. After Pershing returns to teach at West Point, the drill team begins to call themselves “The Pershing Rifles.” Pershing meets future United States Vice-President and subordinate general officer, Charles Dawes. He studies law.

1895: Pershing leads Black Buffalo Soldiers in the 10th Cavalry fighting Indians on the frontier.

1897: Pershing, an assistant Instructor of Tactics at West Point, is a tough taskmaster, earning the enmity of some cadets, who caustically nickname him “N r Jack” because he has led Black soldiers into battle. Pershing famously noted his enduring admiration and respect for these “Black Warriors.”

1898: In the Spanish-American War in Cuba, Pershing joins Teddy Roosevelt in winning the Battle of San Juan Hill.

1902: The press touts Pershing’s Philippine campaigns, and he begins to be called a “war hero.”

1903: After returning to Washington for service with the War Department, Pershing meets Frances Warren, daughter of Wyoming senator Francis E. Warren.

1905: Frances and John Pershing marry at the Church of the Epiphany and hold their reception at the Willard Hotel in Washington; Mr. & Mrs. Pershing sail for Pershing’s new duty as Military Attaché in Tokyo. Pershing serves as observer to the Russo-Japanese War.

1906: The first of four Pershing children, Helen Elizabeth, is born; President Roosevelt gives Captain Pershing a jump to Brigadier General over 862 senior officers to command the Department of California and Fort McKinley.

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1909-13: Returning to the Philippines, Pershing leads the successful assault on a Moro (Muslim) stronghold at Mount Bagsak, Island of Jolo. Subsequently, he writes to the Adjutant General that he did not believe he was entitled to the Medal of Honor for which he was being considered. He served as Governor of Moro Province and later, Commander of Mindanao.

1914-15: Pershing takes command of the Presidio of San Francisco and the 8th Brigade. Subsequently the Brigade is assigned to the Mexican border with Pershing second-in-command to Major General Frederick Funston.

1915: While he is stationed at Ft. Bliss, Texas, Pershing's wife, Frances and their three daughters, Helen, Anne, and Mary are killed in a fire at the Presidio in San Francisco. Only his 5-year-old son Warren survives.

1916: Pershing and young Lieutenant George S. Patton, Jr. (eventually promoted to General), assemble the first mechanized army with automobiles and airplanes, chasing Pancho Villa and his band deep into Mexico.

1917: Pershing returns to Washington, D.C., where he is promoted by President Woodrow Wilson and chosen to lead the American Expeditionary Forces into the World War. Pershing stands strong defending the United States right to lead its own troops into the battle in France, and despite Allied (England and France) pressure, Pershing prevails.

1917: Micheline Resco, a 23-year-old French Romanian artist, is commissioned by the French Minister of War to paint a portrait of Pershing, which is still in the family's possession.

1918: Pershing is the hero of Europe, leading the Allies to victory in World War I at the Battle of the Meuse-Argonne.

1919-1945: Pershing remains highly popular, turning down a request that he run for President of the United States. Instead, he founds and runs the American Battle Monuments Commission leading the acquisition of land and the building of 26 foreign cemeteries for those who died overseas. These are the soldiers that Pershing was "unable to bring home."

1946: Pershing marries Micheline Resco, his 30-year companion, at Walter Reed Hospital where he was recovering from a stroke.

1948: Pershing dies at the age of 88 of coronary artery disease and congestive heart failure at Walter Reed General Hospital. He lay in state at the United States Capitol rotunda and following a state funeral, he was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

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