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John J. Pershing, *My Life before the World War, 1860-1917: A Memoir*. Ed. John T. Greenwood. Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 2013. Pp. xii, 727. ISBN 978-0-8131-4197-8.

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Even before he was selected to command the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) in France in 1917, John J. Pershing was one of the most distinguished and experienced soldiers in the US Army. John T. Greenwood (former chief of the Office of Medical History, Office of the Surgeon General, US Army) has made available, for the first time, Pershing's previously unpublished memoir¹ of his pre-World War I years of service from his student days at West Point (1882-86) through his command during the Mexican Expedition (1916-17).

After completing his two-volume memoir *My Experiences in the World War*,² Pershing worked on but never finished an account of his prewar life. What he had completed of it he did not consider worthy of publication. In 1934, he even hired an experienced journalist, Frederick Moore, to refine the manuscript for the press; he released Moore within less than a year. The collapse of Pershing's health in 1938 then precluded further work on the manuscript. Accordingly, Greenwood has had to work with several drafts and portions of drafts of a work in progress. He has reintroduced passages in early drafts omitted from subsequent ones and fabricated titles for the chapters and indeed the full work. Some stories break off abruptly or lack discernible intent. Annotations in the manuscript indicate that Pershing meant to do additional research for writing never done. Thus, for example, details are missing for the time when he developed the military fraternity, Pershing Rifles, at the University of Nebraska. Nor do we learn of the challenges Pershing faced as a Tactical Officer at West Point (1897-98), such as the various difficulties that arose between him and the Corps of Cadets. Animosity within the Army officer corps over his long association with and advocacy of the 10th US Cavalry, one of four segregated African-American regiments, go unmentioned. The treatment of Pershing's leadership in Mexico in 1916 is unfortunately truncated. The loss of his wife and three daughters in a fire at the Presidio in San Francisco in 1915 remained too painful for him to address even two decades later (he expunged the single sentence reference to the tragedy from an early draft).

Two planned chapters on Pershing's World War I experience, meant to provide continuity with his earlier memoir, are omitted. Barely acknowledged is his final service to the nation as Chairman of the American Battle Monuments Commission, undertaken to honor the men he had commanded during the First World War. Although military historians will rue such gaps, Greenwood quite correctly does not attempt to fill them, in his commitment never to alter "Pershing's basic intent" (xi).

To the resulting 366-page memoir, Greenwood has added a comprehensive, immaculately researched 143-page biographical appendix on officers and individuals, both American and international, whom Pershing interacted with over his lifetime. It is an invaluable contribution to the study of the US Army officer corps from 1886 to 1917. Greenwood includes no less than ten additional appendices: a lecture Pershing gave on his service in Cuba during the Spanish-American War, eight reports he made during operations against the Moros in the Philippine War, and one official investigation he conducted regarding a reverse sustained during operations in Mexico. Although these various supplements swell the volume to over seven hundred pages, they constitute a significant contribution to history in their own right. Exhaustive endnotes with Greenwood's extremely informative annotations comprise another sixty-eight pages. The book also features a comprehensive index and very fine maps. The University Press of Kentucky and the AUSA are to be congratulated for cartography far surpassing that found in most military histories published today.

1. It is a volume in the Association of the US Army (AUSA) "Warrior Series."

2. NY: F.A. Stokes, 1931.

His autobiography reveals how Pershing developed as a person and a military leader. One of the most fascinating chapters describes a formative event in his youth in Laclede, Missouri—a raid by a band of Confederate guerrillas searching for his father, a known Union man (16–17). This, his “earliest recollection,” introduced Pershing to insurgency and counterinsurgency, a type of conflict he would master through long experience during his military career.

As he matured as an officer, Pershing became critical of military instruction at the US Military Academy:

There were no tactical studies then; even of an elementary character.... [M]ore practical knowledge of the principles of minor tactics ought, in my opinion, to be included in the West Point curriculum.... After my experience in the army I felt that practical instruction should begin early to include simple exercises in minor tactics in order better to prepare young graduates for active field service. It seemed to me that graduates of West Point should be given a course both theoretical and practical in the kind of service they would have as commanders of platoons and companies and even higher units in battle. I made some suggestions along this line to the Commandant, but he was not inclined to advance beyond a certain limited routine. Tactical officers under him had little encouragement to extend the scope of their instruction. (50, 97)

It comes as no surprise that Pershing’s recommendations were, long years later, adopted at West Point, where they are studiously observed to this day.

In September 1891, Pershing was detailed as a military instructor at the University of Nebraska, not the sort of post many officers found desirable. He writes, however, that “The position appealed to me as affording greater opportunity for intellectual improvement through association with both the college faculty and the townspeople than continuous service at some isolated frontier post” (81).

Whenever his duties mandated travel, Pershing took every opportunity to expand his knowledge of foreign capitals and places of historic interest, including London, Paris, Italy, and Egypt in 1898–99. He toured Japan extensively in 1905 and “frequently went to military stations to study training methods or attend local reviews and maneuvers” (240). He traveled across Russia on the Trans-Siberian Railroad with his wife and children (1908–9). Continuing his trans-European trip, he made a point to visit a Prussian artillery barracks at Potsdam (264) and carefully inspected the Waterloo battlefield (265–66). At Tours, he “spent an interesting day” examining early French experiments with military aviation as well as cavalry training at the same locale. He made a side trip specifically to investigate the 1871 battlefield of Metz, with “a guide and maps” (266–68).

A considerable strength of the book is Pershing’s thorough discussion of his service as a military observer with the Japanese Army during the Russo-Japanese War, during which he established close relations with many foreign officers that would serve him well a decade later. He returned to Japan to observe the 1907 Imperial Japanese Army maneuvers (254–55).

An avid student of tactics, Pershing took great pains to learn about such innovations as aviation, barbed wire, and machine guns. He made a very effective early use of barbed wire in defeating a heavy Moro attack in 1911 “without casualties” (289) and was disappointed that the US Army failed to develop and exploit machine guns or formulate doctrine for their use. Throughout his career, Pershing pioneered practical training methods to ensure the intellectual advancement of enlisted men, their physical fitness and good marksmanship. The training regimen he instituted as a Brigade Commander at Fort McKinley in the Philippines was the forerunner of the system he developed and enforced for the AEF (248–50). It is not generally known that Pershing was an early graduate of the Army War College: he attended its inaugural course in 1904–5 with a class of only nine officers. Unfortunately, he does not give details of his studies and experiences at the fledgling institution.

Pershing mastered the principles of what later became known as counterinsurgency during his time fighting the Moros. These included securing market places, constructing lines of transportation and commerce, and demonstrating that he was “interested in [the Filipinos’] welfare” (154). He slowly achieved good relations with the Moros; even though his superiors became “impatient at the inaction,” Pershing felt that “we should exhaust every means of winning them over peaceably” (161). His description of the Moros at

Camp Vicars, and later in 1911, was still relevant to the conditions American forces encountered in northeastern Afghanistan in 2006. His successful combination of military and political approaches preceded by decades the US Army's attempts to develop and employ an effective counterinsurgency doctrine in Iraq and Afghanistan. Pershing's discussions of his leadership in the two Moro campaigns should be mandatory reading at military leadership schools.

While this cobbled-together autobiography is imperfect and will win no awards for literary merit, that reflects not upon its editor's fine efforts, but on its incomplete and, by Pershing's own admission, unsatisfactory state. In the circumstances, Greenwood has done superb repair work on a very raw and lacunose manuscript to make it readily available to students and scholars, as well as interested general readers. We must be grateful for the light it sheds on young John J. Pershing's journey to greatness.