



## Newsletter Issue 45, October 2019

### War Memorials in Germany

Of the over 1600 memorial sites currently in our database, only 36 (2%) are in Germany. While towns all over Europe have always shown their appreciation for their liberation by erecting monuments to American troops that served there, such memorialization activity has not been the norm in Germany. After World War II, the US government recovered all American remains buried in Germany and interred them temporarily in US cemeteries elsewhere in Europe while the next of kin made their disposition decisions. We didn't leave any remains in what was then enemy territory, and our largest WWII cemetery in Europe to this day is the Lorraine American Cemetery in France, closest to the German border. (There are two Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries with a handful of US burials—one in Hamburg and one south of Munich—where US soldiers rest that died while serving with the Brits while fighting in Germany.) The few memorials that have been erected in Germany often deal with profound issues, and we consider two in this issue.

#### Rüsselheimer Lynching

An American B-24 Liberator was shot down after a bombing run on an air base near Hanover on August 24, 1944. The crew all survived and were captured. They were loaded onto a train bound for a prisoner interrogation center near Frankfurt. But an RAF raid on Rüsselsheim early on 26 August damaged the tracks through the town, so the train could not get through. The Americans were taken off the train and marched through the town in order to catch another training waiting on the other side of town. But along the way, they were mobbed by over 100 townspeople, angry about the bombing the previous night and looking for revenge. What began as taunts escalated into an attack with bricks, stones, lumber and hammers. The German guards disappeared and the townspeople murdered most of the crew. The bodies were loaded onto a farmer's cart and taken to the local cemetery. But another air raid interrupted the procession, and two of the crew that were still alive managed to escape. The resulting war crimes trial of 11 Rüsselsheim citizens in July 1945 was the first such trial in the American zone of occupation and served as a guide for the Nuremberg trials that started four months later. Five convicted Rüsselheimer citizens were executed. Today the incident is remembered by a dramatic four meter wide panel (inaugurated in 2004) marking the spot of the lynching.

#### Buchenberg Air Losses



Allied Strategic bombing took a terrible toll, both from Germany and from our air crews. On July 18, 1944, the 483rd Bomb Group (Heavy) was involved in one of the great

est air battles of the war. Flying out of Italy with 28 B-17s, they were part of a planned bombing attack consisting of 112 B-17s and were to bomb the German airfield at Memmingen. They were attacked by 150 German fighters over Kempten. The attack lasted 20 minutes, and their fighter escort arrived 8 minutes after the shooting had begun but were outnumbered four to one. The German fighters attacked the big bombers from the rear. The 483rd lost fourteen B-17s in minutes, each with a crew of ten airmen. The town of Buchenberg was the crash area for five of these bombers. The remaining bombers successfully bombed the airfield, killing 170 Germans on the ground, wounding 140, and destroying 50 parked aircraft. The 483rd was awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation for their efforts that day. It is unusual to have five heavy bombers come down onto a single town, and equally as unusual for a German town to commemorate such an event. Today there is a plaque on the town's war memorial in the cemetery listing and honoring the 29 US airmen killed on those planes.



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