



News Release
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Contacts:

Mike Vietti, National WWI Museum and Memorial, (816) 888-8122, mvietti@theworldwar.org

“Diggers and Doughboys” Special Exhibition Opens Tuesday, Sept. 11 at National WWI Museum and Memorial

Exhibition Features Artworks Portraying Relationship Between U.S. & Australia from WWI to Present

KANSAS CITY, MO. – Australian and American troops fought side-by-side for the first time in July 1918 during World War I. Since then, the Diggers (Australians) and Doughboys (Americans) supported each other in every major military conflict, including World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Opening Tuesday, Sept. 11 at the National WWI Museum and Memorial, [*Diggers and Doughboys: The Art of Allies 100 Years On*](#) features incredible artwork from the Australian War Memorial Collection illustrating the unique comradeship between the two countries.

“The relationship between the militaries of Australia and the U.S. stands as one of the most consistent and supportive alliances in the histories of both nations,” said National WWI Museum and Memorial Senior Curator Doran Cart. “This diverse collection portrays a century of military collaboration between these two nations through deeply engaging and impressive artworks from World War I through the modern era.”

On July 4, 1918, Australian and U.S. soldiers fought side-by-side for the first time at Hamel, France in a battle in which the American Expeditionary Forces fought under Australian command. The following day, Lt. General Sir John Monash, Commander of the Australian Corps, noted that this served as “an historic event of such significance that it will live forever in the annals of our respective Nations.”

The Diggers and Doughboys became fast comrades not only because their campaign hats and swagger were similar, but also from their shared democratic outlook on military rules, regulations and officers.

From the 93 minutes that the Battle of Hamel took to today, Australian and American forces have shared an alliance forged from steel. That alliance proved steadfast in World War II when they again fought side by side which turned the tide of the war in the Pacific. Almost one million American men and women service personnel trained and passed through Australia during the war.

A pamphlet given to Americans going to fight alongside their Australian counterparts in 1942 related that “the Aussies don't fight out of a textbook. They're resourceful, inventive soldiers, with plenty of initiative.”

The Diggers and Doughboys supported each other through every world conflict after 1945 from Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. The military alliance endures today in Syria and Iraq combating the threat of terrorism and as peacekeepers world-wide. The strong bond between the two countries' military was formalized with the ANZUS Treaty in 1951, a cornerstone of American and Australian national security.



Throughout the longstanding relationship between the “Diggers” and “Doughboys,” one of the most common questions posed relates to their nicknames: where do the terms come from?

Laurence Stallings, Doughboy turned historian, wrote in 1963 that there can be little dispute as to the derivation of the name. “In Texas, U.S. infantry along the Rio Grande were powdered white with the dust of the adobe soil and hence were called adobes by the mounted troops. It was a short step to dobies then by metathesis the word was doughboy.” The term Doughboy seems to have been applied to all infantrymen, even the unit segregated African American troops.

The word “Digger” has been around since the early days of the gold rush in Australia and anecdotally there is evidence that some Colonial Australians were given the nickname Digger because of their mining endeavors. Private Tudor Roberts wrote in September 1917 from France that: “the name Digger came from the (British) Tommies who think we Australians are all miners or cowboys.” Charles Bean, the Australian Official War Historian writing of the mid 1917 period, said: “It was at this stage that Australian soldiers came to be known, together with the New Zealanders, as the Diggers...the term had been occasionally heard before.”

Diggers and Doughboys: The Art of Allies 100 Years On is open in Memory Hall from Tuesday, Sept. 11 through Sunday, Nov. 11 and is included with general admission to the Museum and Memorial.

About the National WWI Museum and Memorial

The National World WWI Museum and Memorial is America’s leading institution dedicated to remembering, interpreting and understanding the Great War and its enduring impact on the global community. The Museum and Memorial holds the most comprehensive collection of World War I objects and documents in the world and is the second-oldest public museum dedicated to preserving the objects, history and experiences of the war. The Museum and Memorial takes visitors of all ages on an epic journey through a transformative period and shares deeply personal stories of courage, honor, patriotism and sacrifice. Designated by Congress as America’s official World War I Museum and Memorial and located in downtown Kansas City, Mo., the National WWI Museum and Memorial inspires thought, dialogue and learning to make the experiences of the Great War era meaningful and relevant for present and future generations. To learn more, visit theworldwar.org.

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