

Breakout, Pursuit, and Liberation

KEY: † Military Cemetery



Photo: The National Archives
American soldiers in Avranches



Brittany American Cemetery and Memorial

Three days after the U.S. 8th Infantry Division liberated the site on August 2, 1944, it became a temporary military cemetery. It evolved into a permanent military cemetery after World War II. France granted the use of the site in perpetuity without charge or taxation as a burial place for those killed in the liberation of Europe.

American Battle Monuments Commission

This agency of the United States government operates and maintains 26 American cemeteries and 29 memorials, monuments and markers in 16 countries. The Commission works to fulfill the vision of its first chairman, General of the Armies John J. Pershing. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Forces during World War I, promised that "time will not dim the glory of their deeds."



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Brittany American Cemetery and Memorial

American Battle Monuments Commission



Brest Naval Monument

The Naval Monument at Brest overlooks the major base for American naval vessels during World War I, and celebrates the U.S. Navy's achievements then.

Tours Monument

The World War I Tours monument honors the 650,000 soldiers who toiled in the Services of Supply of the American Expeditionary Forces.



For more information on this site and other ABMC commemorative sites, please visit www.abmc.gov

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**BREAKOUT AND PURSUIT,
 JULY 25 – AUGUST 25, 1944**

After weeks of intensive offensive operations against German forces following the D-Day landings in Normandy, U.S. forces captured St. Lô on July 18. General Omar Bradley, commander of First U.S. Army, planned Operation COBRA to break out of Normandy and into Brittany.

JULY 25: Operation COBRA began. Concentrated "carpet bombing" by U.S. and British airmen west of St. Lô opened a gap in German defenses.

JULY 28: Coutances fell to U.S. troops on July 28, and Avranches on July 30.

AUGUST 1-7: Third U.S. Army was activated. Its VIII Corps drove westward into the Brittany peninsula. The rest of Third Army struck southward toward the Loire River, reinforcing First Army's advance toward the Seine River.

AUGUST 7: German counterattack near Mortain threatened the advance. Valiant fighting by U.S. soldiers and prompt reinforcements stopped the counterattack.

AUGUST 8-16: First and Third Armies continued advancing eastward. They also strove to link with British and Canadian forces near Falaise and Argentan. By August 16 the numerous enclosed German forces began a very disorderly withdrawal through the "Falaise Gap."

AUGUST 19: The remnants of German forces withdrew. The gap closed when U.S., British, and Canadian forces linked up.

AUGUST 21: Free French resistance forces begin insurrection within Paris.

AUGUST 25: U.S. 4th Infantry Division and French 2d Armored Division led the entry into Paris.

COBRA succeeded. Allied forces broke out of German lines in Normandy, liberated most of Brittany, reached the Seine, and liberated Paris before moving east toward Germany.

The Maps

Map titled "Breakout from the Beachhead and Advance to the Seine" graces the Memorial Building's north wall. The south wall map features operations from the Normandy landings to war's end.



Visitor Building

Here you can meet our staff and get your questions answered, and sign the guest register.



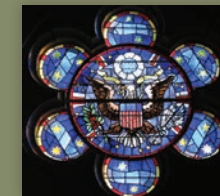
The Memorial Building

The Memorial Building consists of a foyer and tower, map room, and chapel. Its ecclesiastical architecture is typical of the region. Highly decorative sculptures are found over the entry door.



Great Seal in the Chapel

Above the altar in the chapel a large stained glass window displays six foils, each with three stars. The Great Seal of the United States dominates the center.



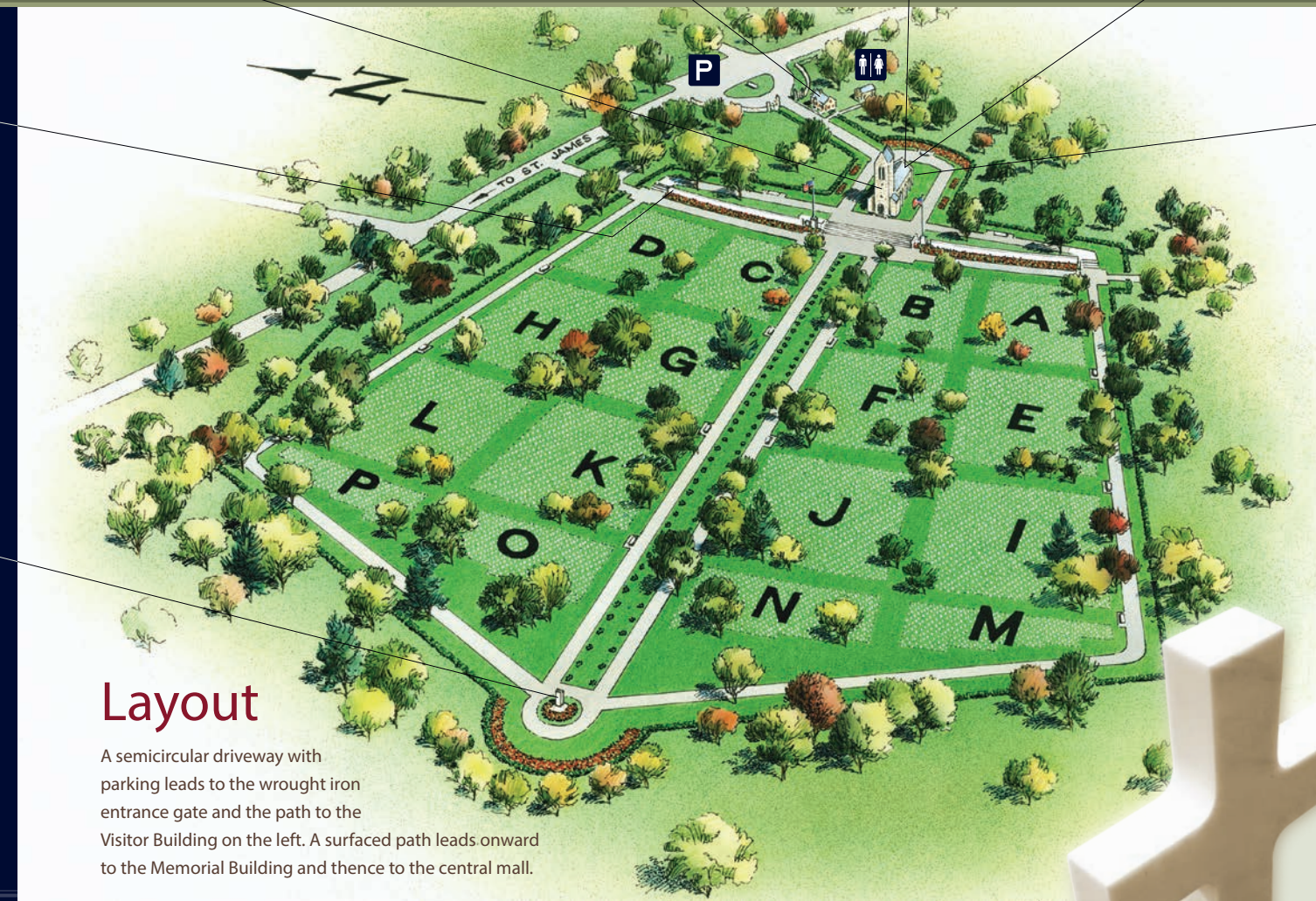
Tablets of the Missing

The tablets emanate from the curved walls of the terrace. The names inscribed on the walls present information about 498 of our missing. A bronze rosette marks those later recovered.



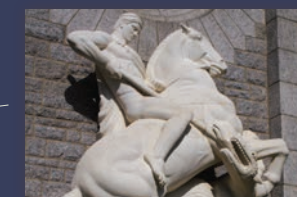
The Cenotaph

The rectangular stone cenotaph overlooks the western end of the mall. A torch and laurel wreath and the words "PRO PATRIA 1941-1945" are carved upon it.



Layout

A semicircular driveway with parking leads to the wrought iron entrance gate and the path to the Visitor Building on the left. A surfaced path leads onward to the Memorial Building and thence to the central mall.



The Statue

A sculpture group titled "Youth Triumphant Over Evil," executed in Chauvigny limestone from the Poitiers region, graces the east end of the Memorial Building.



Photo: The National Archives
 American soldiers stop German attack near Mortain

Headstone Location

PLOT:

ROW:

GRAVE:

Useful Information

- DIMENSIONS: 28 ACRES
- STARS OF DAVID: 81
- SETS OF BROTHERS: 21
- HEADSTONES: 4,408
- TABLETS OF THE MISSING: 498
- DEDICATED: JULY 20, 1956
- LATIN CROSSES: 4,327
- UNKNOWN: 97