

Merkstein, am 9. Maerz 1949

B E S C H E I N I G U N G

Es wird bescheinigt, dass die Kampfhandlungen in der Gemeinde Merkstein am 27. September 1944 begonnen haben und die Gemeinde Merkstein am 6. Oktober 1944 von amerikanischen Truppen besetzt worden ist.

Auf dem Waldfriedhof in Merkstein waren drei im Luftkampf gefallene Fliegersoldaten beerdigt, die spaeter aber von ameriknischen Soldaten ausgegraben und wahrscheinlich auf dem Heldenfriedhof in Margraten (Holland) beigesetzt worden sind. Im Erdkampf gefallene Soldaten der ameriknischen Armee sind auf den Friedhoefen der hiesigen Gemeinde nicht beigesetzt worden. Auch an anderen Stellen der hiesigen Gemeinde sind mir Graeber von gefallenen ameriknaischen Soldaten nicht bekannt.

Der Gemeindedirektor

(Siegel)

gez. Geich

Merkstein, 9 March 1949

S T A T E M E N T

It is certified that fighting in the community of Merkstein started on 27 September 1944 and the occupation of the community of Merkstein took place on 6 October 1944 by American troops. In the Merkstein cemetery "Waldfriedhof", there were three (3) airmen buried who were killed in aerial combat but were disinterred later by American soldiers and probably interred in the Military Cemetery at Margraten (Holland). Deceased soldiers of the American army killed in earth-combat have not been buried in the cemeteries of this community and there are also no grave sites known to me in other localities of this community.

(Stamp)

The "Gemeindedirektor"

s/ Geich

I hereby certify that this is a true translation of the above to the best of my ability.

Gunter Daske
Gunter Daske
German interpreter

A TRUE COPY:

gd

PAUL H. MUELLER PHM
Major Cavalry
Operations Officer

(Exhibit "B")

Jakob Fischer
Finkenrath 20

Finkenrath, den 9. Maerz 1949

ERKLÄRUNG

Ich erkläre dem Kommando des amerikanischen Graeberdienstes, dass ich nicht evakuiert war und daher Augenzeuge der Kämpfe in dieser Gegend war. Die ersten amerikanischen Truppen erschienen hier am 27. oder 28. September 1944 und richteten in meinem Hause einen Truppenverbandsplatz ein. Saemtliche Verwundeten kamen hierher, wurden verbunden und gingen dann zurueck.

Da es mir aber verboten war, in der Umgegend mich frei zu bewegen, kann ich ueber einzelne Geschehnisse keine Informationen geben. So ist mir auch von dem Stosstruppunternehmen, welches lt. Beschreibung des Gelaendes etwa 600 m von hier stattgefunden hat, nichts bekannt. Auch koennte ich nicht sagen, dass amerikanische Truppen, die hier stationiert waren und etwa drei Wochen nach dem Durchgang der Front eine Suchaktion nach gefallenem amerikanischen Soldaten startete, an der beschriebenen Stelle Gefallene gefunden haben. Sicher ist aber, dass alle amerikanischen gefallenem Soldaten, die gefunden werden konnten, von eigenen Truppen fortgeschafft wurden.

Persoenlich habe ich nur zwei amerikanische Gefallene gesehen, die beide durch Artillereitrefter gefallen sind. Einer von diesen war ein Sanitaeter und fiel an der Boeschung der Bahnlinie waehrend der andere auf dem Hof meines Nachbarn den Tod fand.

gez. Fischer, Jakob

Jacob Fischer
Finkenrath 20

Finkenrath, 9 March 1949

S T A T E M E N T

I certify to the team of the American Graves Registration Command that I was not evacuated and therefore eyewitnessed the fighting in this territory. The first American troops appeared here on 27 or 28 September 1944 and established a first-aid-station in my house. All wounded were brought here, their wounds dressed and transferred further to the rear.

Since it was forbidden for me to move around in the vicinity I am not able to give information regarding particular happenings. Thus nothing is known to me concerning the patrol which encountered enemy fire in a territory about 600 meters from here, according to a description received. I also could not state that American troops stationed here which, about three (3) weeks after the front had moved on, started a search for deceased American soldiers, had found deceased on the location prescribed. But it is certain that all deceased American soldiers who could be discovered have been removed by own troops.

I personally did see only two (2) deceased American soldiers who both were killed by an artillery shell. One (1)

(Exhibit "C")

Statement of Mr. Jacob Fischer (cont'd).

of these was a medic and was killed on the slope of the railroad, while the other was killed in the yard of my neighbor's farm.

s/ Fischer, Jakob

I hereby certify that this is a true translation of the above to the best of my ability.

Gunter Daske
Gunter Daske
German interpreter

A TRUE COPY:

gd

PAUL H. MUELLER PHM
Major Cavalry
Operations Officer

(Exhibit "C")

Mariahne Steffens
Merkstein-Wildnis 2

Merkstein, den 8. Maerz 1949

E R K L A E R U N G

Ich erkläre dem Kommando des amerikanischen Graeberdienstes, dass ich auf dem Gut Hofstedt (Meulenberger Hof), in welchem ein deutscher Truppenverbandsplatz eingerichtet war, in Diensten stand. Nach der Einlieferung eines amerikanischen Soldaten gefragt, kann ich sagen, dass ungefaehr am 29. oder 30. September 1944 ein verwundeter amerikanischer Soldat in diesen Truppenverbandsplatz eingeliefert wurde. Er war beinverletzt, und wie deutsche Soldaten sagten, kam dieser von den Bunkern in der Gegend von Rimburg. Von den Soldaten wurde auch weiter erzahlt, dass dieses der einzige Ueberlebende von einer Gruppe Soldaten war. Es war auch von einem Stosstrupp die Rede. Es wurde leider nicht erwaaht, wo die Leichen der uebrigen verblieben oder begraben wurden. Weitere Informationen kann ich nicht geben.

gez. Marianne Steffens

Marianne Steffens
Merkstein-Wildnis 2

Merkstein, 8 March 1949

S T A T E M E N T

I certify to the team of the American Graves Registration Command that I was in employment at the farm "Hofstedt" ("Meulenberger Hof") in the buildings of which a German first-aid station had been established. Questioned as to the delivery of American soldiers there I can state that a wounded American soldier was delivered to this first-aid-station on about 29 or 30 September 1944. He had leg wounds and, as related by German soldiers, this soldier came from the pillboxes located near Rimburg. It was also related by the soldiers that he was the only survivor of a group of soldiers; the relation referred also to a patrol-undertaking. But no mentioning was done as to the whereabouts or place of interment of the others.

That is all information I can furnish.

s/ Marianne Steffens

I hereby certify that this is a true translation of the above to the best of my ability.

Gunter Daske
Gunter Daske
German interpreter

A TRUE COPY:

gd

(Exhibit "D")

PAUL H. MUELLER
Major Cavalry
Operations Officer

PHM

Konrad V^etten
Merkstein-Finkenrath

Rinkenrath, den 9. Maerz 1949

ERKLÄERUNG

Ich erkläre dem Kommando des Americanischen Graeberdienstes, dass ich bis 1. Juli 1948 Verwalter des Gutes Rimburg war. In dieser Eigenschaft kenne ich das Gelaende sehr gut; weiss aber nicht, dass in der Eisenbahndurchfahrt suedlich von Gut Rimburg und auf dem davorliegenden Feld amerikanische Soldaten gefunden wurden. Der Acker ist 1945 kultiviert worden und es wurde, ausser dem Fuss zu einem deutschen Soldaten gehoerend, weiter keine Ueberreste gefunden. Es ist aber anzunehmen, dass die Leichen der gefallenen amerikanischen Soldaten saemtlich von den eigenen Truppen geborgen worden sind.

gez. Konrad Vetten

Konrad V^etten
Merkstein-Finkenrath

Finkenrath, 9 March 1949

S T A T E M E N T

I certify to the team of the American Graves Registration Command that I was supervisor until 1 July 1948 on the farm estate Rimburg. Having been in this position the territory concerned is well known to me; but I do not know about the discovery of deceased American soldiers in the railroad cut south of the farm-estate of Rimburg, or on the field west of the cut. The field concerned was cultivated in 1945 but no remains, with the exception of a foot belonging to a German soldier, were discovered. However, it can be assumed that the remains of deceased American soldiers were all removed by own troops.

s/ K_onrad Vetten

I hereby certify that this is a true translation of the above to the best of my ability.

Gunter Daske
Gunter Daske
German interpreter

A TRUE COPY?

gd

PAUL H. MUELLER PHM
Major Cavalry
Operations Officer

(Exhibit "E")

Merkstein, den 10. Maerz 1949

E R K L A E R U N G

Seit Juni 1945 bin ich Friedhofswaerter der Gemeinde Merkstein und bin somit in der Lage, ueber saemtliche aufgefundenen und im Friedhof Merkstein beerdigten Soldaten deutscher sowie auslaendischer Nationalitaet Auskunft zu geben. Meines Wissens nach und lt. Unterlagen in meinem Besitz ist auf dem von mir betreuten Friedhof kein amerikanischer Soldat mehr beerdigt. Nur drei (3) amerikanische Flieger hatten ihre letzte Ruhestaette auf diesem Friedhof und sind am 10.4.1946 von amerikanischen Truppen umgebettet worden. Saemtliche auf dem Friedhof in Merkstein beerdigten unbekanntem Soldaten sind definitiv deutsche Soldaten, welche saemtlich in der Umgegend von Merkstein und auch im Rimburger Busch aufgefunden worden sind.

Von der Begebenheit in der Naehue der Rimburger Muehle wo ein amerikanischer Stosstrupp versuchte an deutsche Bunker heranzukommen, ist mir nichts bekannt. Auch kann ich mit Bestimmtheit sagen, dass in der betreffenden Gegend kein amerikanischer Soldat in den Jahren nach dem Krieg gefunden wurde. Weiter kann ich sagen, dass nach Beendigung der Kampfhandlungen hier in Merkstein hier stationierte amerikanische Truppen eine Suchaktion nach Gefallenen, gleich welcher Nationalitaet, starteten und saemtliche aufgefundenen Soldaten nach einem unbekanntem Bestimmungsort transportierten.

Am 9. und 10. Maerz 1949 habe ich nun ein Kommando des amerikanischen Graeberdienstes begleitet und noch einmal die ganze Umgebung der in Frage kommenden Bunker abgesucht, jedes Schuetzenloch aufgegraben, und auch jede Bodenerhebung, die auf ein Grab hindeuten koennte, nachgegraben. Auch die beschriebene Eisenbahnboeschung wurde noch einmal nachgesucht und vorhandene Schuetzenloecher aufgegraben. Aber alle unsere Bemuehungen waren umsonst. So bliebe dann die Moeglichkeit, dass die Besatzung des Bunkers bei der Gefangennahme, die kurz nach dem betreffenden Vorfall erfolgte, den amerikanischen Truppen von dem Vorhandensein von gefallenem amerikanischen Soldaten benachrichtigten und diese dann fuer die Ueberfuehrung Sorge truegen.

gez. Michael Wesender
Totengraeber der
Gemeinde Merkstein

Merkstein, 10 March 1949

S T A T E M E N T

I am cemetery caretaker of the community of Merkstein since June 1945 and am therefore in the position to furnish information about all discovered and in the cemetery of Merkstein buried soldiers of German as well as foreign nationality. To the best of my knowledge and according to

(Exhibit "F")

Statement of Mr. Michael Wesender (cont'd).

records in my possession, there is no American soldier buried anymore in the cemetery taken care of by me. Only the burial site of three (3) American airmen was located in this cemetery but these were disinterred and removed by American troops on 19 April 1946. All unknown soldiers buried in the cemetery at Merkstein are positively German soldiers, and all of which were found in the vicinity of Merkstein included the Rimburg forest.

Of the happenings near the Rimburg mill, where an American combat-patrol tried to approach German-held pillboxes, nothing is known to me. I also can state with certainty that in the territory concerned no American deceased was found in the years following cessation of war. I further can state that after fighting ceased in the town of Merkstein, American troops stationed in Merkstein started a search for deceased not caring of what nationality and removed all deceased discovered to an unknown destination.

On 9 and 10 March 1949 a team of the American Graves Registration Command and I searched the vicinity of the pillboxes in question once more. We dug up each foxhole found and all such places that indicated a possible grave. Also the railroad cut mentioned was searched once more and foxholes present were dug up. But all efforts were of negative result. Therefore the only possibility is that the crew of the pillboxes when taken prisoner, what took place shortly after the occurrences prescribed, informed the American troops of the presence of deceased American soldiers which then took care for the removal.

s/ Michael Wesender
Cemetery Caretaker of the
Community of Merkstein.

I hereby certify that this is a true translation
of the above to the best of my ability.

Guntay Daske
Guntay Daske
German interpreter

A TRUE COPY:

gd

PAUL H. MUELLER PHM
Major Cavalry
Operations Officer

(Exhibit "F")

An investigation of the Rimburg (3K-85) area was conducted. Mr. N. Kaller, farmer, and acting burgomaster of Rimburg in September - October 1944 declared that during liberation of Rimburg no American soldiers were killed on the territory of that village. However, American patrols frequently went from Rimberg, Holland to Rimburg, Germany, where the Siegfried line started. There were no German fortifications on Dutch territory. These pill-boxes and bunkers (Siegfried line) were situated east of Rimburg, on German territory.

Mr. B. Hazewinkel, commandant of the Federal Police at Rimburg, Holland, declared that no Americans are buried in Rimburg. No German pill-boxes or bunkers were ever situated on Dutch territory. These fortifications (Siegfried line) were on German territory east of Rimburg.

Conclusion: According to basic communication T/Sgt Wade, J. Vermeire Jr. Pfc Anthony T. Drabecki, and Pfc. John W. Kreigh became missing while on a mission to destroy pill-boxes east of Rimburg.

Statements of Mr. Kaller and Mr. Hazewinkel show:

1. No American soldiers were killed in Rimburg.
2. No German fortifications on the Dutch side of the border.
3. The fortifications, bunkers, pill-boxes (Siegfried line) are situated east of Rimburg, on German territory.

It is evident that the three E.M. referred to above did not become missing in Holland, but in Germany. It is therefore recommended that, in order to resolve this case, it be forwarded to the proper AGRS authorities in Germany.

Hendrick L. Veigh
HENDRICK L. VEIGH
Investigator

See to

TRANSLATION

District Hertogenbosch
of the Federal Police
Post Commandant

Rimburg, 7 December 48

Declaration

Undersigned, P. Hazewinkel, post commandant of the Federal Police declares herewith that no German fortifications (pill boxes and such) were erected on Dutch territory. No American soldiers are buried here. These pill-boxes (Siegfried line) are situated on German territory, east of Rimburg.

/s/ P. Hazewinkel

CERTIFIED A TRUE COPY:

Raymond G. Johnson

RAYMOND G. JOHNSON
1st Lt Inf

CERTIFIED A TRUE TRANSLATION

Hendrick L. Veigh
HENDRICK L. VEIGH, D-150596
Investigator.

Incl 3

Non-Recoverable Board Proceedings (Cont'd)

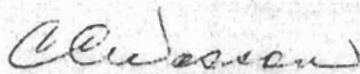
5. RECOMMENDATION: That the remains of the deceased listed in Exhibit "A" be determined non-recoverable.

s/ Allan L. Lawson
ALLAN L. LAWSON
Captain, QMC
Member

s/ C. W. Steinsiek
C. W. STEINSIEK
Captain, QMC
Member

s/ John A. Boutin
JOHN A. BOUTIN
2nd Lt, QMC
Member

A TRUE COPY:



C. C. WASSON
Capt QMC

NOTE: The Board Findings and Roster received from the Field Board are filed in the 293 file of Pvt Francis Archambeault, 31 375 778.

NARRATIVE OF INVESTIGATION
AT RIMBURG, GERMANY
COORDINATES 3/K-85
ON 8, 9 AND 10 MARCH 1949

On the above dates an investigation was conducted east of Rimburg, near the Rimburg mill on German territory, for the purpose of locating the remains of T/Sgt. WADE J. VERWEIRE JR., 35346981; Pfc. JOHN W. KREIGH, 33764399; Pfc. ANTHONY T. DRABECKI, 35555353; who became missing in action while on a mission to destroy pillboxes east of Rimburg.

This team first visited the burgermeister's office at Ubach-Palenberg in order to obtain information regarding the removal of American deceased, unknowns in particular, in the years following cessation of war, and also to secure information as to the course and kind of fighting. Here it was learned that American deceased neither were discovered nor interred in the cemeteries falling under the jurisdiction of the office in Ubach-Palenberg (see exhibit "A"). The same inquiry was made at the burgermeister's office in Merkstein which is responsible for the area east of Rimburg. It was stated that fighting in the community of Merkstein started on 27 September 1944 and the occupation was established on 6 October 1944. No American deceased other than three (3) airmen had been buried in the Merkstein cemetery, which were disinterred in 1946 by an American team. No information as to any grave sites in the community could be given (see exhibit "B").

This team then proceeded in questioning the population in order to locate a person present during the days of combat. By this a Mr. Fischer was contacted who had come into contact with American fighting troops. He stated that on 27 or 28 September 1944 American troops appeared in his house and established a first-aid-station there. All wounded from the vicinity passed this place, were cared for and evacuated to the rear. Questioned for information regarding the particular happening as prescribed in this case Mr. Fischer stated that it was forbidden for him to move around thus he held no information although the location concerned is only about 600 meters away. But he says that American troops stationed in the area started a search for American deceased shortly after fighting had ceased and that the deceased found were evacuated to the rear (see exhibit "C").

A Mrs. M. Steffens, then in employment at the farm "Hofstedt", stated that a German first-aid-station had been established in the buildings of that farm. When questioned regarding the delivery of American wounded at the station on the critical date she declared that a wounded American soldier was delivered on 28 or 29 September 1944, and that she could learn by overhearing the conversation of the delivering German soldiers: this soldier came from the

Narrative of Investigation at Rimburg (3/K-85) (cont'd).

pillboxes located near Rimburg and that he was the only survivor of a group of soldiers who had formed a patrol. Nothing was said as to the whereabouts or place of interment of the others (see exhibit "D").

A Mr. K. Vetten, former supervisor of the farm-estate Rimburg who is well acquainted with the territory, stated that he does not know about the recovery of deceased in the railroad cut south of the farm-estate Rimburg or on the field covering the area between railroad and Wurm River. The field in question was cultivated in 1945 but no remains, not counting a foot belonging to a German deceased, were discovered. He further says that it can be assumed the deceased were removed by own troops (see exhibit "E").

At last this team contacted the cemetery caretaker of Merkstein, Mr. Michael Wesender, who holds this position since June 1945 and is able to give information, based upon records and personal knowledge, about all discovered and in the Merkstein cemetery buried deceased of German as well as foreign nationality. He stated that no American deceased is buried in the cemetery taken care of by him except the three (3) airmen the remains of which were disinterred and removed on 10 April 1946. Unknowns interred there are positively of German nationality. He also says that in the territory concerned no American deceased was found in the years following cessation of war, and that American troops searched the whole area for deceased after fighting had ceased not caring of what nationality and removed them to an unknown destination, presumably Margraten, Holland (see exhibit "F").

As the search of this team so far was of negative result, a thorough investigation in presence of the cemetery caretaker was made in the area concerned. Partly covered foxholes found in the slopes of the railroad cut mentioned were dug up - nothing was found. The pillbox about a hundred (100) yards behind the railroad cut on a hill was thoroughly inspected and the entrance uncovered. An American steel-helmet bearing neither initials nor digits was found, and it possibly might belong to one of the missing. Next the whole surrounding area was searched and every foxhole as well as place that could possibly be a grave was dug up - but all efforts were of negative result. Therefore it is presumed that the deceased in question, after having been recovered by the crew of the respective pillbox, were buried or held there until their surrender which, according to circumstances, must have taken place soon thereafter, and then reported the presence of these deceased to the occupying troops. These might have taken care of the removal.

Narrative of Investigation at Rimburg (3/K-85) (cont'd).

CONCLUSION:

It is the opinion of this investigator that the deceased in question were removed by own troops. This belief also is strongly confirmed by the fact that no deceased American soldiers at all were ever found in the years following cessation of war.

Gerard M. Croize
DAC 6618

Der Gemeindedirektor
der Gemeinde Ubach-Palenberg
Abt. IV

Ubach, den 8. Maerz 1949

B E S C H E I N I G U N G

Der Einmarsch der amerikanischen Truppen in den Ortsteil Ubach-Palenberg erfolgte am 4. Oktober 1944. Gefallene amerikanische Soldaten wurden nicht aufgefunden, ebenfalls erfolgten keine Beisetzungen auf den Friedhoefen der Gemeinde,

Saemtliche abgeschossenen Panzer im Gemeindebezirk wurden im Jahre 1948 von Altmaterialfirmen abtransportiert.

Soweit hier bekannt ist, wurden saemtliche gefallenen amerikanischen Soldaten waehrend den Kampfhandlungen nach rueckwaerts (Holland) abtransportiert.

I.A.

(Siegel)

gez. Wienands

The "Gemeindedirektor" of the
Community Ubach-Palenberg
Section VI

Ubach, 8 March 1949

S T A T E M E N T

Occupation of the town-section of Ubach-Palenberg by American troops took place on 4 October 1944. No deceased American soldiers were discovered and no interments were made in the cemeteries of the community.

Armoured vehicles put out of action in the territory of the community have all been removed by salvage-firms in the year 1948.

As far as known, all deceased American soldiers were evacuated to the rear (Holland) while fighting still was going on.

I.O.

(Stamp)

s/ Wienands

I hereby certify that this is a true translation of the above to the best of my ability.

Gunter Daske
Gunter Daske
German interpreter

A TRUE COPY:

gd

PAUL H. MUELLER PHM
Major Cavalry
Operations Officer

(Exhibit "A")