

# Profiles From the Past

By Master Sergeant Patrick V. Garland (Retired)

*“The maintenance of good order among our troops under the peculiar condition of service in France was most important, and for this purpose, a military police was essential. Such a force, under the control of the Provost Marshal General, corresponded to the police department in a well-organized city, except that its jurisdiction included only those in the military service.”*

—John J. Pershing<sup>1</sup>

In the early stages of World War I, it became apparent that an organization of military police was needed. As the American Expeditionary Forces were organized, military police duties were considered additional duties or temporary assignments. Two military police companies were assigned at the division level, and their responsibilities consisted of supporting that particular division. A military police corps, including a centralized division of criminal investigation (DCI), was necessary to provide area-wide police services. However, locating suitable leaders and troops for such an organization was problematic.

In his *Report of the Provost Marshal General*, which was written after the war ended, General Harry H. Bandholtz states, “Conduct of operations on a large scale in foreign territory introduced into military administration the necessity for military police control and administration far beyond any requirements ever encountered at home.”<sup>2</sup> He later adds, “In May 1917, an attempt was made to organize a criminal investigation section within the military police services. Its members were to be selected from the military police personnel in each command and to operate coordinately within the military police unit. A chief of this section was appointed on the staff of the Provost Marshal General, but the system or organization was faulty in that it lacked centralized control and was wholly dependent upon the initiative of individuals for its operation. No means of securing trained personnel, nor of training it, was in force, and the effort was fruitless.”<sup>3</sup>

This early attempt to create an organized criminal investigation section took place while Brigadier General William H. Allaire was serving as Provost Marshal General. His DCI staff was made up of Major Allan Pinkerton and Lieutenants Bernard A. Flood and Walter Dunne Gelshenen.<sup>4</sup>



**Brigadier General  
Harry H. Bandholtz**

Before America entered the war, Pinkerton (who was the grandson of President Lincoln’s chief spy during the Civil War)<sup>5</sup> was the president of the New York office of the Pinkerton Detective Agency. He had assumed a leadership role in that organization when his father, Robert S. Pinkerton, died and left his estate (which was worth more than 3 million dollars) to his wife, son, and two daughters.

The younger Pinkerton, who was an avid sportsman, owned and rode racehorses and polo ponies. He also raced his 36-foot sloop, “Pinkie,” and was a member of a yacht club on Long Island.

New York authorities arrested the young Pinkerton twice during 1904. In April, he and others were arrested during a raid at a cockfight that was held in his father’s stables in Brooklyn. In November, he was arrested for creating a disturbance.<sup>6</sup>

As America prepared to enter the war, Pinkerton volunteered for Army service and was appointed “major of infantry.” He served as the assistant provost marshal at Tours and Bordeaux, France, before being assigned to the DCI. Sometime during his service in France, Pinkerton was injured in a gas attack; the injury eventually led to his death. After the war, he returned to his position with the detective agency.

Pinkerton died in New York City on 7 October 1930, leaving his mother, wife, and son. His death was attributed to the effects of war gas. He was buried in Section C, Lot 572, Grave 3, Graceland Cemetery, Chicago, Illinois.<sup>7</sup>

Lieutenant Bernard A. Flood was a well-known New York City Police Department detective whose exploits are described in a previous *Military Police* article entitled “Who Was Barney Flood?”<sup>8</sup> Flood entered the Service through the Army Reserves, New York Division.

Walter Dunne Gelshenen was more difficult to track down. He was born to multimillionaire banker William H. Gelshenen and Katherine Dunne Gelshenen on 1 December 1888 in New York City. He was the youngest of four children. In addition to William’s position as president of Garfield National Bank and Trust Company, the family was very involved in a variety of

business enterprises and in social and political activities. They also frequently vacationed in Europe, visiting France on many occasions.

When Walter was just 13, his father passed away, leaving Mrs. Gelshenen and her four children as beneficiaries to an estate worth more than 10 million dollars. At the time, Walter was a student at Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts.<sup>9</sup> Since he was a minor, his share of the estate was placed in a trust—although, he also received a substantial amount of cash and jewelry. On 1 June 1907, Mrs. Gelshenen married another wealthy man, Henry J. Braker, who was an importer.<sup>10</sup> Mr. Braker died the following year, and his wife and her children inherited additional millions in cash and personal belongings.<sup>11</sup>



Walter D. Gelshenen

Walter Gelshenen married Alein Lawson at the St. Regis Hotel in New York on 14 September 1912. The newlyweds honeymooned in Paris. But Walter lived the “high life,” joining the Atlantic Yacht Club and several other social organizations. On his passport applications, he listed his occupation as “None at this time.” His marriage suffered, and the couple went their separate ways.

During Summer 1914, war broke out in Europe. By September, German troops had entered Belgium and France. Although many in the United States were outraged, the government remained neutral and adhered to a “hands off” policy. Some Americans felt that they owed France their support. Many of the ultra rich donated huge amounts of money to man and equip an American hospital near Paris and to provide ambulances to transport wounded allied soldiers. Ivy League colleges and universities joined in the effort, urging students and alumni to volunteer as ambulance drivers. Led by Harvard University, as many as 300 colleges contributed men to what became known as the *American Field Service*. These men funded their own way to France. They were not paid, but were provided with uniforms and rations in the same manner as French army troops. The earliest volunteers arrived in France in 1914; most arrived within the following two years. Ambulance sections were formed and assigned to support French army divisions.

Gelshenen, who was proficient with the French language, was one of the volunteers. He applied for a passport to travel to France effective 25 July 1917. Upon his arrival in France, he found that American ambulances were well-manned and that new drivers were being assigned to transport materiel units (TMUs) (units that were transporting munitions to French army units) rather than the Section Sanitaire Units (SSUs) of the ambulance

drivers.<sup>12</sup> The TMU drivers were referred to as *camion drivers*. Gelshenen was assigned to TMU 397, where he served for two months.

When the U.S. Army arrived in France, American Field Service volunteers had the option of remaining with their units or joining the U.S. Army. Gelshenen selected the latter option, was commissioned as a second lieutenant, and returned to the United States for training. He completed his training in March 1918 and returned to France, where he was initially assigned to the Army General Ordnance Depot and eventually to the DCI, Office of the Provost Marshal General. He served there until February 1919, when he returned to the United States for discharge at Camp Dix, New Jersey.<sup>13</sup> While with the DCI, Gelshenen was promoted to first lieutenant.

Gelshenen applied for another passport to travel back to France for specialized medical treatment in 1919. (At that time, it was apparently necessary to obtain a new passport for each overseas trip!) He died in Paris on 7 June 1920. He left most of his estate to his mother and older brother, William. His will specified that his estranged wife, Alein, was to receive no more than one dollar.<sup>14</sup>

#### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup>John J. Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, Vol. 1, Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York, 1931, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup>*Report of the Provost Marshal General: American Expeditionary Forces Commander in Chief's Report*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1942, Part I, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>*Report of the Provost Marshal General: American Expeditionary Forces Commander in Chief's Report*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1942, Part II, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup>Patrick V. Garland, “Genesis of Criminal Investigation in the U.S. Army,” *Military Police*, Spring 2008.

<sup>6</sup>“Allan Pinkerton Arrested?” *The New York Times*, 10 November 1904.

<sup>7</sup>“Allan Pinkerton Dies of War Gas,” *The New York Times*, 8 October 1930.

<sup>8</sup>Patrick V. Garland, “Who Was Barney Flood?” *Military Police*, Spring 2010.

<sup>9</sup>Tim Sprattler, e-mail, 8 December 2009.

<sup>10</sup>“Today Will See Many Weddings,” *The New York Times*, 1 June 1907.

<sup>11</sup>“H.J. Braker Leaves \$1,500,000 to Charity,” *The New York Times*, 23 September 1908.

<sup>12</sup>*History of the American Field Service in France*, Houghton-Mifflin Company, Boston and New York, 1920.

<sup>13</sup>Passport Application #11856, U.S. State Department, 16 September 1919.

<sup>14</sup>“Cuts Off Widow With \$1,” *The New York Times*, 26 May 1921.

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*Master Sergeant Garland retired from the U.S. Army in 1974. During his military career, he served in military police units and criminal investigation detachments and laboratories. At the time of his retirement, Master Sergeant Garland was serving as a ballistics evidence specialist at the European Laboratory. He remained in this career field until retiring from civilian law enforcement in 1995.*