

The Monuments Men Study Guide

The Monuments Men by Robert M. Edsel

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Summary

The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History is a nonfiction book by Robert M. Edsel and Bret Witter. This book tells the true story of a group of Allied soldiers whose job it was to protect and rescue historical architecture and art of all forms. Most of these soldiers worked with art in some way in their civilian lives and wanted to help protect the great art of Europe in face of the destruction of war. These men also found themselves saving priceless works of art stolen by Hitler and his Nazi soldiers, art that might have been lost to the world if not for the efforts of a few, brave individuals. The Monuments Men is a book that tells a story that has been long ignored.

The Monuments Men is a group of men and women who worked for the Monuments, Fine Art, and Archives, or MFAA during World War II in an effort to preserve fine art, documents, and monuments. These people traveled throughout Europe closely behind allied troops in an attempt to locate and preserve art. However, the Germans managed to steal many works of art from the beginning of the war. This allowed them to take the art and hide it throughout Germany and Austria for Hitler's grand plan, a cultural center much like the one in Florence, Italy.

As the war began, a soldier noticed the destruction of monuments in Africa and suggested that actions be taken to protect them. At Monte Cassino, an ancient monastery was destroyed in an attempted to remove German soldiers from its walls. The Germans were never inside the monastery. These events inspired allied leaders to find a way to protect these monuments as well as fine art.

The MFAA was formed. Several soldiers with a career in art or architecture, were chosen. These men were soon sent into the trenches, many beginning in France after D-Day. These soldiers traveled to known monuments to assess the damage, if any, and to post notices to protect them from further damage. Many of these soldiers traveled with the same army throughout their time in the war, some were stationed in specific areas, others moved from post to post.

As the Allied troops continued forward, the Germans began to retreat. As they did, some soldiers continued to steal art as they went. These thefts included the theft of the Bruges Madonna and the Ghent Altarpiece. These thefts encouraged the Monuments Men to begin looking for caches of art. In Paris, one soldier, Rorimer, made the acquaintance of a woman who worked in the Jeu de Paume in Paris and kept note of the works of art that passed through there during the occupation and where they went. With her help, Rorimer was able to find a large cache of art and records of the art stolen.

By the end of the war, the Monuments Men had found multiple repositories of art, including one that had thousands of bars of solid gold. One of the largest repositories was almost destroyed prior to the allied troops arrival. Hitler had issued a decree before his death instructing his men to destroy all documents and artwork that might fall into

allied hands. The Gauleiter in Altaussee believed this included a salt mine there that contained hundreds of irreplaceable works of art. However, the man was outsmarted. The mine remained intact.



Prologue and Section One, The Mission: Chapters 1-9

Summary

Prologue and Section One, The Mission: Chapters 1-9

Prologue: The Monuments Men

The monuments men were a group of men and women from multiple nations who worked for the newly created Monuments, Find Arts, and Archives, or MFAA, to save works of art, monuments, and archives from the ravages of war. This was the first time in history that a special division of the military was tasked with such a responsibility. Most of the men and women who worked for MFAA had careers in art or history before their military service.

Chapter 1: Out of Germany

Heinz 'Harry' Ludwig Chaim Ettlinger was born in Karlsruhe, Germany in 1925. The Ettlinger family settled in Karlsruhe in the 1700s. The Ettlinger family began a clothing store, called Gebruder Ettlinger in 1850 that flourished until the 1930s. The store went bankrupt due to the ban on Jewish owned businesses.

Unable to work or provide for the family, Harry's parents decided to immigrate to Switzerland. Their applications were refused on several occasions until finally the Ettlingers were given permission to immigrate to the United States. They initially planned to leave Karlsruhe in January 1939 after young Harry's bar mitzvah, but moved up the date of both their departure and the bar mitzvah as the threat of war loomed. The family left Germany in October, 1938, just two months before Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass. On that night the destruction of thousands of Jewish businesses and synagogues took place. That same night, the men of Karlsruhe, including Harry's grandfather, were rounded up and sent to Dachau, a nearby internment camp.

Chapter 2: Hitler's Dream

Hitler, who had been an aspiring artist in his youth, wanted to build a cultural center in Germany much like that which existed in Florence, Italy. This German cultural center would feature a museum showing the finest in Germanic art. This cultural center would be located in Linz, Austria, Hitler's adopted hometown. Hitler imagined this cultural center as a monument to himself that would be similar to the monument to Charlemagne in Aachen. For this purpose, Hitler gave orders as his army conquered many European nations to confiscate works of art that had any Germanic connection, both from museums and private collections.

Chapter 3: The Call to Arms



A short time after the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese, museum curators throughout America, grew concerned about safeguarding their works of art. Some museums removed priceless artifacts from their museums permanently, while others moved them to safety each evening and returned them for viewing the following morning.

Paul Sachs, associate director of Harvard's Fogg Art Museum, had made a name for himself by teaching undergraduates how to deal with unique problems related to curating a museum. After Pearl Harbor, Sachs called a meeting of the museum directors to discuss their response to the threat of war. At this meeting, it was decided that museums should keep their doors open and allow for the public to take solace from their art. However, most museums continued to make preparation for the possibility of war.

Sachs also invited many museum leaders to attend a series of seminars dealing with museum safety. These seminars were presented by Sachs and his conservator, George Stout. These seminars helped museum leaders learn how to protect their artifacts from things such as flying glass from windows broken during air raids.

George Stout was deeply concerned about the safety of the world's monuments, fine art, and artifacts. Stout thought it would be ideal to have a special group of conservators who could travel into war torn areas to protect the artifacts. Stout even published a pamphlet in 1942 that discussed the challenges that were lying ahead for artifacts of the world in war time.

Chapter 4: A Dull and Empty World

George Stout was a small town kid who lived in poverty in order to pursue a career in art conservation, a highly specialized field that had few job prospects. As a part of his early work at the Fogg Art Museum, Stout used an abandoned card catalog from the university library to experiment with various chemicals. This experiment led Stout to begin the process of establishing a set of scientific principles for the evaluation and preservation of paintings and visual art.

As Germany began using what was later called 'lightning warfare,' Stout published a pamphlet about air raid techniques in order to help museum leaders understand how to protect works of art. Then, during 1941-42, Stout trained curators and pushed for a national conservation plan. However, Stout found that many museum leaders were more interested in creating a high-level cultural committee to advise the military. The committee would be made up of directors like themselves, rather than men who would be more willing to place themselves in dangerous situations to do the dirty work. Frustrated that he could no longer make a difference as a civilian, Stout enlisted in the navy.

Chapter 5: Leptis Magna

In January 1943, British troops were fighting in North Africa and had reached the ancient Roman city of Leptis Magna. The British had been accused several years before of causing damage to the Cyrene Museum. One of the British officers, Lieutenant



Colonel Sir Robert Eric Mortimer Wheeler, knew the potential of such an accusation being made again in regards to Leptis Magna. For that reason, Mortimer Wheeler urged the deputy chief Civil Affairs officer to keep the men from damaging the ruins. The deputy chief could hardly be bothered, so when he learned Mortimer Wheeler was an archeologist and director of the London Museum, he put him in charge of protecting the ruins.

Reports Mortimer Wheeler made in regards to Leptis Magna were sent to Sir Charles Leonard Woolley, a world famous archeologist and close companion of Sir Thomas Edward Lawrence, or Lawrence of Arabia. Woolley worked with Mortimer Wheeler to create a frontline monument protection program.

Chapter 6: The First Campaign

As the United States entered the war and became an ally of Britain, they became involved in the monument protection program that had been started by Woolley and Mortimer Wheeler. The U.S. Army asked Paul Sachs and other museum officials to help them find an American Advisor on Fine Arts and Monuments. Captain Mason Hammond, a Harvard classics professor working in Army Air Forces Intelligence was selected. However, Hammond was not informed about the aspects of his new job let alone given the tools, such as a list of monuments that required protection, before beginning. Hammond was not given supplies, transportation, or a typewriter with which to write his reports. When Allies landed in Sicily, Hammond was not able to follow until three weeks later. It seemed there was little for Hammond to do.

When the Allies entered Palermo, Hammond suddenly found himself with an overabundance of things to do. There were churches, cathedrals, libraries, and botanical gardens to safeguard from the Allied troops. Hammond begged for help, but no help came until it was essentially too late and the Allied troops were leaving.

In the fall of 1943, Stout finally got word that his 'brain child' was becoming a reality. Sachs wrote him about the Roberts Commission, a commission designed to create an entity to safeguard monuments, fine art, and artifacts in war zones. Stout took this news with a grain of a salt, however, aware of how difficult it would be to organize such an undertaking.

Chapter 7: Monte Cassino

In September, 1943, the Fifth Army landed near Salerno, Italy. The Allies were pushing Germany back, hoping to reach Rome before the onset of winter. However, the going was slow and the Fifth Army found itself in Cassino, Italy in January, 1944. The Germans were firmly positioned on a mountain ridge above a valley that had been nicknamed Purple Heart Valley because of the huge number of soldiers killed and wounded there. The situation was made even more difficult for the Allies by the historic monastery on the mountain top, Monte Cassino.

Eisenhower had already given orders that no historic monuments were to be bombed unless it would mean the death of Allied soldiers. For a month, Allied commanders



debated bombing Monte Cassino based on the suspicion that German soldiers were positioned inside the monastery. On February 15, 1944, the monastery was bombed, destroying all the structures that had existed above ground. It turned out, however, that the Germans were positioned outside the monastery and the bombing did little to move them out of the way.

Chapter 8: Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives

In the spring of 1944, the first Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives, or MFAA, men were selected and sent to England for training. Although they did not follow Stout's recommendation of several officers with sixteen men and specific supplies, they did provide a handful of educated men who were not of the elite 'sahibs' Stout disliked.

Among the new Monuments Men were the British commanding officer Geoffrey Webb, a Slade Professor at Cambridge. Lord Metheun and Squadron Leader Dixon-Spain were both veterans of the First World War. Also there was Ronald Balfour, the youngest of the British Monuments Men, a historian at King's College Cambridge.

American Monuments Men included Marvin Ross, an expert on Byzantine art. Walker Hancock, a sculptor who created the Army Air Medal. James Rorimer, a bulldog of a man who was one of the youngest to have become a curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Robert Posey, a quiet man who was something of an outsider in the group, he was an architect who grew up in rural Alabama.

Although pleased with the selected men, Stout was concerned about the lack of training and supplies provided to the new Monuments Men. However, Stout had faith that if they could just get into the war zone, these men could make a difference in their new roles.

Chapter 9: The Task

General Dwight D. Eisenhower issued an order on May 26, 1944 that dictated to military leaders that destruction of historical monuments and cultural centers should only be damaged or destroyed when military necessity dictated, but should otherwise be preserved. The following day, a list of protected monuments in France was distributed among Allied leaders. Military leaders felt the list included too many locations until Woolley explained that many of the monuments were churches or buildings unsuitable for military use. It was then decided that the MFAA soldiers would be divided, seven serving the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces, or SHAEF, and eight would be assigned to British and American armies and the Communications Zone.

Analysis

The author begins this section of the novel with, first, a chapter about Jewish family persecuted by the anti-Jew attitudes and laws in the years leading up to World War II, and, second, with a chapter discussing Hitler's great plans to build a cultural center in Austria like the one in Florence, Italy. This contrast not only introduces two important characters to the story, but it also shows both the cruelty and the fantasy of one



powerful man. Hitler was a man of contrasts, a man who so hated a single race of people that he attempted to eradicate them, but so loved art that he set out to collect as much as he could to offer it to his people. It is this man who was the motivating power behind the creation of the Monuments Men and it was, ironically, a young Jewish soldier who would play a small part in rescuing a great work of art from the destruction.

The Monuments Men began as a small idea in the heart of several young curators who wanted to find a way to save great art from the destruction of war. George Stout, a leader in a rare and often ignored art specialty, tried to spread the idea of art preservation during war. This idea was largely ignored even as museum curators tried to find ways to protect their museums from the possibility of attack on American soil. It was not until a soldier in a war zone recognized that great monuments and architecture was being damaged by careless soldiers and the perils of war that high command began to recognize a need for conservation efforts.

The formation of the MFAA was a milestone. Nothing like it had ever been created before. However, there was so much secrecy about the mission in Sicily that the first Monument Man, Captain Mason Hammond, had no idea what he was doing or how he was supposed to do it. Confusion and a lack of support would plague the Monuments Men throughout their existence.

Vocabulary

Product, establishment, graduation, cultural, prerequisite, relationships, popular, starvation, conservation, debonair, commented, rudiments, degradation, reparations, considered, corresponded, compiling, various, museum, detailed, perfectionist, analysis, culled, workman, committees, primping, principles, dedicated, convinced.



Section Two, Northern Europe: Chapters 10-23

Summary

Section Two, Northern Europe: Chapters 10-23

Chapter 10. Winning Respect

On June 6, 1944 the invasion of Normandy began. By August, the first Monuments men were on the ground documenting monuments listed for conservation. Rorimer, like several of the other Monuments Men, missed his first transport boat to Normandy because of a lack of communication. Once in Normandy, Rorimer ran into additional problems, such as a lack of transportation, causing him to have to grab rides wherever he could, and a lack of authority with commanders of a higher rank than he.

Rorimer saw many things as he performed his duties in Normandy. Rorimer came across many churches on his list that were undamaged save for the carefully destroyed towers Allied commanders bombed to stop German snipers. Rorimer also came across soldiers who shared their rations with French orphans after the abbey where they lived was destroyed. At the chateau of Comte de Germigny, Rorimer found soldiers building a road through the burned building. It was only by threatening to send pictures of the destruction to the Supreme Commander that the officer in charge agreed to halt the destruction.

Chapter 11: A Meeting in the Field

In August of 1944, George Stout called a meeting of the Monuments Men in the area to discuss their problems. The men were frustrated by a lack of supplies, including simple things like cameras and typewriters. There was also a terrible lack of radios for communication. Stout, who arrived in an abandoned German car he had taken for himself, encouraged the men to do whatever they had to to get the job done.

Rorimer, taking Stout's advice to heart, hired private transportation when the commander of his division refused to go a hundred miles out of the way to allow Rorimer to inspect Mont Saint-Michel, a medieval fortress off the coast of Brittany. Rorimer was pleased to find the monument still stood and had already been documented and posted with notices of protection by Posey. Unfortunately, the following day Rorimer was arrested as a German spy by a MP who did not believe that the MFAA really existed. Luckily, he was quickly released when the mistake was revealed.

Chapter 12: Michelangelo's Madonna

By September 1944, the Allies had liberated Paris and entered Belgium. A few days after the Allies reached Brussels, Belgium's capitol, German soldiers arrived at the



Cathedral of Notre Dame in Bruges and removed Michelangelo's Madonna. This statue is the only work by Michelangelo that left Italy during his lifetime. Along with the statue, the German's took several paintings. Balfour took statements from the dean of the cathedral as well as postcards with pictures of the statue to distribute to soldiers so that they would recognize the importance of the piece should they accidentally discover it.

Chapter 13: The Cathedral and the Masterpiece

In September 1944, Captain Walker Hancock arrived in Paris. Walker had traveled with the U.S. First Army through Normandy and found very little damage among the monuments on his list. Most of the sites had already been reviewed by fellow U.S. First Army Monuments Man, Stout. One morning, Stout woke Hancock early to take him to an art repository deep in a mountain cavern. Hancock was shocked to find *The Night Watch*, a huge work by Rembrandt, rolled up like a piece of carpet. However, given the situation, Hancock was happy just to see it still intact and in friendly hands.

Chapter 14: Van Eyck's Mystic Lamb

Captain Robert Posey was assigned to Patton's U.S. Third Army. In late September 1944, they were in Eastern France. Posey received a package from SHAEF with pictures of missing Belgian cultural treasures, including Michelangelo's Bruges Madonna and the Ghent Altarpiece. The Ghent Altarpiece, or the Adoration of the Mystic Lamb, was a huge altar with hinged wood panels depicting thematically linked paintings. This piece, considered Germanic because several of the panels were owned by the German state until the Treaty of Versailles, was on Hitler's list of artifacts he wanted removed from France. The altarpiece was stolen by Germans in 1942.

Chapter 15: James Rorimer Visits the Louvre

Monument Man James Rorimer was assigned to Paris in the aftermath of the German occupation. Part of Rorimer's job was to protect the city's priceless artifacts, monuments, and parks from the Allied troops who had come to liberate the city. For this reason, Rorimer found himself arguing with American commanders to stop them from using Jardin des Tuileries as an encampment.

As part of his work in Paris, Rorimer visited the Louvre Museum. The museum, Rorimer was shocked to discover, was mostly empty. However, after meeting Jacques Jaujard, the tireless and brave director of the French National Museums, Rorimer learned that most of the Louvre's works have been moved to secure locations.

After the German's took over Paris, they began to gather all the art works they could find, mostly from private collections, and prepared them for shipment to Germany. Jaujard found help in delaying these shipments from an unlikely source. Count Wolff-Metternich, head of the Kunstschutz, the German cultural conservation program, used the rules of the Hague Convention to prevent the removal of many works of arts from France. This stopped the looting of the priceless works belonging to the French state. However, Wolff-Metternich was removed from his position in 1942 because of his public objection to the theft of the Ghent Altarpiece.



In the aftermath of the German occupation, many French citizens throughout Paris were put to death or imprisoned for their perceived cooperation with the Germans. With this chaos going on, Jaujard decided to organize an art show at the Louvre in order to raise the spirits of the wounded citizens. This, however, proved somewhat difficult as Jaujard and Rorimer struggled to get permission from Bayeux to show their prized work of art, the Bayeux Tapestry.

Chapter 16: Entering Germany

Walker Hancock was in Aachen, Germany in the fall of 1944. Hitler demanded his soldiers and the citizens of Aachen fight until they were all dead, but the civilians surrendered on October 21. Very little of cultural significance survived the air raids in Aachen. However, Hancock did find that the Aachen Cathedral survived. Hancock learned that the vicar and a handful of young men stayed within the walls of the cathedral and placed their own lives in danger to put out fires as they began in order to save the building. Hancock arranged to return to the cathedral the young men who had previously been arrested by the Allies as well as to provide food to help them continue to work to save the building.

Chapter 17: A Field Trip

In late November 1944, Hancock traveled with Stout and a young colonel to the front lines in order to retrieve a Belgian masterpiece Hancock found on a previous visit. Hancock had been searching for the treasures missing from the Aachen Cathedral. The fighting just outside the building where the painting was located did not faze Stout as he carefully examined the painting before loading it up for the trip back to safety.

Chapter 18: Tapestry

On November 26, 1944 the Louvre opened its doors once again for an art exhibit. Part of the exhibit included items Rorimer saved from the Museum of the Palace of Versailles where the Allied soldiers had planned to use them to decorate General Eisenhower's temporary office.

In the weeks leading up to the art exhibit, Rorimer learned of the huge collection of private artworks stolen from private citizens in Paris. Twenty-two thousand pieces of priceless artwork had gone missing. Jaujard told Rorimer that many of the works looted in Paris were processed for shipment in the Jeu de Paume. A woman named Rose Vallard was a volunteer there for many years, including the years during the occupation. Rose knew where many of those works were taken, but she was reluctant to tell the French government because of their inability or unwillingness to work quickly to recover the works. Jaujard told Rorimer that Rose had been observing Rorimer and that Jaujard thought Rose might trust Rorimer with her secrets.

Chapter 19: Christmas Wishes

Robert Posey continued to travel with Patton's U.S. Third Army as they marched across Germany. As they moved from one historic place to another, Posey wrote out the history



of the area for the soldiers in order to entertain and to give the soldiers an appreciation for the monuments they were helping to conserve.

A few weeks before Christmas, Posey received gifts from his wife. Posey intended to save them for Christmas morning, but decided to open them early. Inside, Posey discovered that, against his wishes, his wife sent gifts for the local children. Posey gave those gifts to a group of children in exchange for their promise to send letters in French to his son.

Chapter 20: The Madonna of La Gleize

While walking the streets of La Gleize, Belgium, Walker Hancock found a remarkable wooden statue of the Madonna in the nave of the cathedral of La Gleize. Although crude in its artistry, the statue gave the cathedral a sense of grace. Found only fifty years ago, the Madonna had only stood in the nave a few years.

Chapter 21: The Train

Rose Valland was a plain, unattractive woman who often disappeared in a crowded room. For this reason, she was often overlooked by the German occupiers who took over the Jeu de Paume during the occupation. Rose, however, was determined to keep track of each shipment of looted art that left the museum. For this reason, Rose was caught on several occasions spying and attempting to steal information. Fortunately for Rose, she was never punished because she became something of a scapegoat for the Nazi overlords.

At the end of the German occupation of Paris, Rose witnessed the harried gathering of the last of the looted artwork. The artworks were crated and prepared for shipment. Thanks to Rose's patience and courage, she learned that the crates were headed to Germany on a train. With the help of Jaujard, Rose managed to have the train delayed until the Allied troops arrived, stopping all outgoing shipments to Germany. The most important artworks were removed from the train, but the rest were left behind on the train.

Rorimer befriended Rose Valland after Jaujard told him of her secrets. Rose showed Rorimer nine places where the Nazis stored their looted art. At the first eight, they found few of the artifacts they were looking for. The final location, the train, was thought to hold over a hundred crates filled with priceless art. When they found the train, it proved to hold little more than household goods. Upon seeing her reaction, Rorimer came to realize that Rose knew what was in the train all along. This realization led Rorimer to understand that Rose knew exactly where the rest of the art was, but she was still hiding the information.

Chapter 22: The Bulge

Less than two weeks before Christmas, the Allies were pushed back as a result of the Ardennes Offensive, or Battle of the Bulge. Many of the Monuments Men were also pushed back, prevented from their work by the advancing Germans. One Monuments



Man, however, was able to achieve a long dream. Robert Posey was given a gun and told to fire until he could not fire anymore.

Chapter 23: Champagne

Rose Valland came to Paris as a starving artist who realized starving was not as romantic as she thought. For this reason, Rose obtained degrees in fine art and art history. Rose worked as a private tutor to pay her way while volunteering at the Jeu de Paume. When the Germans invaded Paris, Rose was allowed to stay at the museum. At first, Rose tried to inventory each of the works of art brought in by the Nazis, but the Nazis quickly put an end to it. Instead, the Nazis allowed Rose to stay so that she could watch over the Jeu de Paume's remaining art, most modern art that the Nazis were not interested in looting.

In November 1940, Reichmarschall Goring came to the Jeu de Paume on a personal shopping spree. Goring was unhappy at the time because his Luftwaffe was losing the Battle of Britain and his personal mission to collect great works of art was failing. For this reason, he had chosen to go to Paris on a personal shopping spree. Goring had been given the right, by Hitler himself, to take whatever he wanted from the looting efforts of the Nazis after Hitler's choices were made.

Rose Valland had risked her life to keep track of the looted artworks that passed through the Jeu de Paume during the German occupation of Paris. Rose made notes of all the addresses she saw on the crates of looted works, was the only one who knew where to find many of the missing pieces. The one time Rose gave that information to anyone, the credit for the salvage of the artwork was given elsewhere. Rose wanted credit for what she had done. Rose wondered if she could trust Rorimer not only to rescue the works, but to give credit where it was due.

Analysis

The Monuments Men finally arrive in Europe in the aftermath of D-Day. They all find themselves stuck with no transportation and many have no cameras or other necessary equipment to document damage to monuments and mark them so that soldiers and citizens will not cause further damage. These things are problems that most of them fight to overcome because they believe in what they are doing and want to make sure it is done properly no matter the obstacles.

As several Monuments Men make their way through Europe, Rorimer finds himself stationed in Paris. Rorimer befriends the director of the French National Museum, a friendship that helps him in his attempts to locate and return great works of art to their rightful owners. Jaujard also introduces Rorimer to Rose Valland, a volunteer who has special knowledge of the whereabouts of art stolen by the Germans during their occupation. Valland is ambitious, however, and does not just give Rorimer the art. She makes him work for it. Valland wants to be sure she will get some of accolades along



with the American rescuers. Rorimer proves himself to be patient and determined, however, and he will eventually win her over.

As Rorimer settles in Paris and others spread out throughout Europe, art continues to disappear with the retreating German army. Many priceless works disappear, but none as precious as Michelangelo's Madonna or the Ghent Altarpiece. It is a crime that leaves the Monument Men more determined than ever to find the lost art.

As the Monuments Men work at saving art, they are continuously reminded that they are in a war zone. Posey finds himself living out a long held dream of firing a weapon like a true soldier. Others find themselves walking through streets that have recently been bombed, or meeting people who have spent months hiding from the Germans in order to protect what is precious to them.

Vocabulary

Horizon, ammunition, halted, attempting, population, unopposed, expected, industry, tactical, threatened, inspirations, virtual, abandoned, collapse, battalion, detonated, commanders, surrender, invisible, pylons, concrete, lintels, remained, alternate, scrambled, miraculously, cathedral, disintegrated, pilgrim, shattered, temporary.



Section Three, Germany: Chapters 24-36

Summary

Section Three, Germany: Chapters 24-36

Chapter 24: A German Jew in the U.S. Army

After his family settled in Newark, New Jersey, German Harry Ettlinger graduated from high school and was promptly drafted into the Army. While stationed in Macon, Georgia, Harry was given American citizenship before shipping out to Givet, Belgium. As Harry's unit was shipping out to join the 99th Infantry Division, Harry and two others were pulled off the transport truck for an unknown assignment.

Chapter 25: Coming Through the Battle

In February 1945, Walker Hancock found himself back in La Gleize, Belgium. Hancock was shocked to see the devastation that took place in La Gleize during the Battle of the Bulge. The only thing left of the La Gleize Cathedral was the Madonna. Hancock found resistance among the villagers, however, when he suggested he take the statue to somewhere safe. As a compromise, Hancock agreed to move the statue to the cellar in the home of one of villagers.

Chapter 26: The New Monuments Man

In December 1944, Stout received word that several new men would be assigned to the MFAA as assistants to the current Monuments Men. These men included Sheldon Keck, an esteemed art conservator, who would be assigned to Monuments Man Walter 'Hutch' Huchthausen. Lamont Moore, a curator at the National Gallery, was assigned to George Stout.

The last new MFAA man was Lincoln Kirstein, a well-known intellectual gadfly and cultural impresario who made a name for himself when he convinced Russian ballet choreographer George Balanchine to immigrate to the United States. The two men had then founded the School of American Ballet and the American Ballet Company in New York. When the war began, Kirstein tried multiple times to join the military, but was repeatedly refused because of dubious citizenship rules until he joined the Army. Kirstein was then denied multiple jobs within the Army until he finally was allowed to train to be a combat engineer.

As a member of MFAA, Kirstein expected to be part of a well-run, well-managed organization, but instead found himself stuck in England. When he was finally transferred to France, Kirstein found that there was no longer anything left to do. Stout, aware of Kirstein's unique personality, assigned him to Posey and the U.S. Third Army. As total opposites, Kirstein and Posey seemed to complement one another.



In January 1945, Posey and Kirstein were tasked with locating the missing treasures of Metz, France. To accomplish this, the two men interviewed reluctant officials. With Stout's help, Kirstein and Posey learned that the art of Metz was crated and prepared for moving as the Allies approached, but it was a punishable offense to think that the German town (Metz was given to France after World War I) could fall to the Allies so the art was not moved until the Allies' arrival was inevitable.

Chapter 27: George Stout with His Maps

In 1945, Stout was promoted, but it was a promotion he did not savor because it was more middle management than any sort of prestige. Hancock had replaced Stout with the U.S. First Army. As the First Army fought through the west side of Germany, Stout hoped that Hancock would come across artworks abandoned by the Germans in their haste to retreat. Also ahead of the First Army was the last known location of Count Wolff-Metternich, one of the most knowledgeable art officials in Germany and hopefully one of a few who might work with the Allies to recover lost art. Beyond the Reine was Siegen, a city that came up again and again in investigations. Stout hoped the Monuments Men would find large art repositories in Siegen. However, Stout also worried that the repositories would not be suitable to the priceless art that had been stolen, leaving the stolen art in poor condition. Stout felt that he and the other Monuments Men were truly in a race to recover the looted art.

Chapter 28: Art on the Move

Goring kept hundreds of looted works of art at his estate in Carinhall. When the Soviet Red Army crossed into Germany on February 8, 1945, Goring quickly began packing up his loot and placing it on personal trains. Items Goring could not load onto the train, such as large, heavy statuary and decorative works, were buried on the grounds. Goring and his wife also kept several small works with them to finance a possible escape from Germany.

Chapter 29: Two Turning Points

Monuments Man, Balfour, was on the trail of the Bruges Madonna when he arrived in Cleves, Germany with the First Canadian Army. While evacuating treasures from the heavily damaged Christ the King Church, Balfour was killed in an explosion.

Four days later, Rorimer arrived at Rose Valland's apartment with the news that he had been assigned to the U.S. Seventh Army. Rose showed Rorimer pictures of some of the key Nazi officials, including Goring, as well as documents referring to the many shipments that moved through the Jeu de Paume during the occupation. Rose also showed Rorimer documents on art repositories all over Germany. The most important, Rose told Rorimer, was the castle Neuschwanstein.

Chapter 30: Hitler's Nero Decree



In the face of the advancing Allied forces, Hitler issued a decree demanding that all resources within Germany that the Allies could use to continue their charge into Germany were to be destroyed.

Chapter 31: First Army Across the Rhine

Hancock was reassigned to the U.S. First Army. As they made their way deeper into Germany, first to Cologne and then Bonn, Hancock continued to look for the treasures of Aachen. Hancock found the citizens of these German towns to be angry and resentful of the Allied forces, but this did not change Hancock's determination to return the cultural artifacts to them at Aachen. To this end, Hancock continued to interview as many people as he could until he finally found information that led him to the assistant of Wolf-Metternich at the Konservator. This man gave Hancock enough information that they were able to find multiple art repositories, including a major one in Siegen.

Chapter 32: Treasure Map

Posey and Kirstein, still with the U.S. Third Army, arrived in Trier, a medieval city that was the birth place of Karl Marx, to find it terribly damaged. Posey and Kirstein created a five-person board consisting of local officials to begin repairs.

While visiting a local dentist, Posey learned the man's son, an SS officer, was an art scholar. Posey and Kirstein went to see the man and learned where Goring's collection had been taken after it left his estate at Carinhall. The art scholar then told Posey that the panels from the Ghent Altarpiece were in a salt mine at Altaussee. Posey and Kirstein were unaware, however, that they were speaking to Dr. Bunjes, one of the top men involved in the looting operation at the Jeu de Paume.

Chapter 33: Frustration

Rorimer was moving closer to the location where Rose Valland had promised he would find a large number of looted French works. Despite becoming aware of Rose's personal agenda, he continued to be excited to finally recover the art he had been searching for.

In Hitler's bunker, Hitler confronted his chief architect about reports that A Speer had been urging commanders to ignore Hitler's Nero decree. Speer was given a chance to support Hitler or remain defiant. Despite a letter Speer wrote announcing he felt Germany had lost the war, Speer swore allegiance to Hitler.

Chapter 34: Inside the Mountain

At Siegen, Stout and Hancock found the art repository they had hoped would be there. Inside they found thousands of treasures, including multiple crates marked Aachen. There were also works of art from Cologne and Bonn, including the manuscript for Beethoven's Sixth Symphony. Despite the fact that the air conditioning system had been damaged and the cavern was hot and humid, Hancock and Stout elected to leave the



art until they could come back for a full inventory and with proper help to pack and move the works.

Chapter 35: Lost

Captain Walter 'Hutch' Huchthausen and his assistant Sergeant Sheldon Keck were assigned to the U.S. Ninth Army. On April 4, 1945, they were driving east of Aachen to investigate reports of an altarpiece when they were hit by gunfire. Hutch died.

Chapter 36: A Week to Remember

In Meekers, Germany, two French women pointed out the entrance to a mine to several American soldiers, claiming there was gold behind it. Several days later, Posey and Kirstein arrived to check out the claims. Inside they found thousands of gold bars, gold coins, and other coins. They also found an overwhelming amount of art, packed without regard to artist, time period, or worth.

Stout received word of the find at Meekers and went to see it. Stout was surprised that his boss, Webb, was not allowed inside the mine only to learn that the operation was to be completely in American hands and Webb was English. A short time later, Eisenhower and his top commanders visited the mine. It was a carefree visit that was belied when they then went to the confinement camp at Ohrdruf. After that visit, Eisenhower declared that all soldiers not on active duty should see the camp to understand what they were fighting for. Later that day, news that President Franklin D. Roosevelt had died reached the commanders.

Stout found himself in the unenviable position of having to figure out how to move all the treasures in the Meekers mines in less than five days. The Russians were advancing and the Americans did not want to leave the treasures behind for them to loot. Without proper packing materials, Stout had to do the best he could. By April 7, all the treasures were on trucks and heading out of Meekers.

Analysis

As the Germans continued their retreat, they began to move art that they had stolen either for personal use or for Hitler. Goring moved a great deal of art during this time as he tried to escape the approaching allied forces. At the same time, the Americans began running into Germans who were willing to talk about the art. They learn of several possible large caches of art, one rumored to be in a salt mine in Altaussee. They also locate a large collection of art in a mine in Meekers. Moving the art proves to be something of a problem as the Russians were quickly approaching. Another problem that the Americans would only learn about later was Hitler's Nero Decree, an order to destroy anything the allies could find useful, such as documents and art.

The end of the war is in sight. The allied forces are moving into Germany and pushing the Germans further and further back. The Russians are right behind them. Hitler sees the writing on the wall, as do many of his officials. This places a great number of



priceless works of art in danger as retreating soldiers make rash decisions. At the same time, the Monuments Men are feeling a rush to find the art before the Germans make it disappear forever.

Valland continues to work with Rorimer. Rorimer gets an assignment to the Seventh Army, allowing him to travel near Neuschwanstein Castle, a location Vallard assures him is very valuable in the search for stolen art.

Vocabulary

Behold, treasure, occupation, sympathetic, attitude, damaged, historic, fabrication, garrison, conquered, suspected, inscription, creature, Romanesque, marvelous, restoring, interior, foundations, importance, territory, monuments, inclined, looting, campaign, consuming, pantomimed, accented, formed, discomfort, essential, supplies.



Section Four, The Void: Chapters 38-50

Summary

Section Four, The Void: Chapters 38-50

Chapter 37: Salt

The salt mines in Altaussee had been worked for hundreds of years by small families who were isolated from the rest of the world by the mountains of the area. In the 1940s their world was invaded by the modern world when Hitler decided to have all the art intended for his cultural center in Linz to be stored in the mines at Altaussee.

Many military leaders thought that Hitler might run to the Alps because it was well known that there were supplies stockpiled in the area, an area near the Austrian border that Hitler considered his home territory because of its nearness to his adopted hometown of Linz. For this reason, and the fact that the Russians were likely to reach Berlin first, Eisenhower ordered his troops south toward Austria. This was exciting news for the Monuments Men because it would bring them close to two reported art repositories, Altaussee and Neuschwanstein.

Chapter 38: Horror

As the Monuments Men advanced with the Allied troops, they came to pass several concentration camps in their paths. Even for those who elected not to visit the camps, the horrors they experienced with the sights and smells would stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Chapter 39: The Gauleiter

Dr. Emmerich Pochmuller, the general director of the Altaussee mining operations, learned that the salt mines were to be destroyed. These orders were part of Hitler's Nero decree. Pochmuller, however, had been told by Speer that destruction was not necessary if the operations could be rendered unusable for the Allies. Pochmuller decided to fight the orders for destruction by going to Gauleiter Eigruber. However, Pochmuller was unsuccessful.

Chapter 40: The Battered Mine

Rorimer arrived in Heilbronn in spring of 1945. There were rumors of art in the salt mines there. Rorimer was in a hurry to get to Neuschwanstein, but when he heard rumors of water flooding the mines, he decided to take a look. When Rorimer finally got permission to go into the mines, he discovered an American engineer was already exploring the mines without permission. The engineer informed Rorimer that there was three feet of water in the mine as well as multiple crates marked with the names of



German cities. Rorimer directed the engineers to begin pumping the water out, but did not stay to see it completed.

Chapter 41: Last Birthday

Hitler celebrated his fifty-sixth birthday in his underground bunker with a group of supporters whose main topic of conversation recently had been methods of suicide. Goring attended the party and then went to the Nazi retreat in the Alps known as the Alpine Redoubt where he learned much of his personal treasures had yet to make it to safety.

Karl Seiber, an art restorer in Berlin, visited the art works at Altaussee, including the panels from the Ghent Altarpiece. Seiber moved several paintings deeper into the salt mines in hope that they would survive the impending blast.

Chapter 42: Plans

In late April, 1945, an ordinance officer with the U.S. First Army found a munitions dump filled with amazing treasures. At Altaussee, Pochmuller orders the removal of crates containing explosives from the mines. At the same time, Rorimer was still struggling to get to Neuschwanstein. While on the road, Rorimer got word that Baron Kurt von Behr was at his castle in Lichtenfels, so he sent a telegram ordering his arrest. Unfortunately, the telegram was delayed and von Behr committed suicide with his wife before Allies could arrive.

Chapter 43: The Noose

On April 30, 1945, Adolf Hitler committed suicide. In his will, Hitler expressed his desire that all the art he came to possess before and during the war would be placed on display in Linz as he had originally planned. This will seemed to override Hitler's decree that all art be destroyed rather than fall into Allied hands. Confusion reigned and Eigruber was determined to destroy the salt mines at Altaussee.

Chapter 44: Discoveries

Stout arrived in Bernterode on May 1, 1945 to see what Hancock had found that was so exciting. In a mine hundreds of feet underground was a munitions dump that held more than four hundred thousand pounds of explosives. Behind that was a solid wall with no door. Inside Hancock had found a coronation chamber that held the coffins of past German leaders. Along with the coffins they found hundreds of paintings and other artifacts of the German state.

Rorimer received news that the U.S. Seventh Army was closing in on Neuschwanstein. Rorimer borrowed a jeep and traveled to the town of Buxheim, a place where Rose Valland had told him the Nazis stored overflow items from Neuschwanstein. In a back room of a monastery, Rorimer found stacks of Renaissance furniture, crates marked with the initials of well-known art collector, Pierre David-Weil, and pottery, paintings, and decorative works. Rorimer interviewed locals and found Martha Klein, an art restorer



who told Rorimer that Buxheim was used as a restoration place for the art looted from France.

Chapter 45: The Noose Tightens

On May 2, 1945, German forces surrendered. Two days later, Hans Frank, the Nazi governor-general of occupied Poland was arrested. At his home, nine world famous paintings were recovered, including two of three masterpieces stolen from the Czartoryski Collection in Cracow.

Dr. Bunjes was arrested and held near Trier despite the deal he attempted to make with Posey and Kirstein. At the same time, Goring remained free. Goring moved his art collection again, returning it to Berchtesgaden and an overflow to Unterstein. In Altaussee, the fight over the mine's future continued.

Chapter 46: The Race

On May 3, 1945, the First Battalion of the U.S. Seventh Army arrived in Berchtesgaden, followed quickly by the Third Battalion. There was little to no resistance in the Alpine Redoubt as Eisenhower had feared.

Rorimer finally arrived at Neuschwanstein and found it unharmed in the recent fighting thanks to Rorimer's information from Rose Vallard. As Rorimer searched the castle, he found a fireplace where Nazis had burned documents and uniforms. In another room, Rorimer found file cabinets stuffed with information on the art looted from France and their locations.

Chapter 47: Final Days

In early May, as the Russians arrived in Berlin, they began their search for Hitler and other high officials. In the flaktowers that overlooked the city, they found crates that contained paintings, sculptures, porcelain objects, and antiquities. A fire set a few days later at the unguarded towers destroyed some of these treasures. The destruction was not confined to Berlin, however. Some of Goring's private train cars in Unterstein were looted by starving citizens, who stole not only food but some of the precious artworks.

Posey and Kirstein, still with U.S. Third Army, were frustrated with the slow progress in reaching Altaussee. Added to their frustration was the news that Rorimer would take charge of the search at Altaussee. Posey and Kirstein were upset not for themselves and their own glory, but for the glory this would take from Third Army.

Chapter 48: The Translator

In Munich, Harry Ettlinger was given a role as translator. Harry had been taken from his unit and left in limbo because he was slated to take part in the translation corps for the Nuremberg trials. The paperwork Harry was given to work on that afternoon in May was paperwork from MFAA. Harry was now working with Rorimer in translating the documents discovered at Neuschwanstein.



Chapter 49: The Sound of Music

In early May, Stout and Hancock worked long hours slowly and carefully removing the treasures from the coronation chamber at Benterode. It was a difficult process that was often hindered by a lack of electricity in the mine.

Chapter 50: End of the Road

The U.S. Third Army suddenly changed course in mid-May 1945 to become the first troops to reach Altaussee. Posey and Kirstein arrived at Altaussee and quickly descend to the mine only to discover it had been blown.

Analysis

As the allied armies move further and further into Germany and toward the Austrian border, they begin to find more treasures. Hitler and his men have hidden art in many places, including salt mines and munitions dumps. The allies find more than they were hoping for when they stumble across some rare German artifacts. At the same time, the Germans are thrown into confusion when Hitler commits suicide as Russian invades Berlin.

The Monuments Men know, pretty much, where to find much of the art Hitler stole. The problem now is getting to it. Rorimer finally reaches Neuschwanstein Castle where he located hundreds of documents telling where the stolen art can be located, many of which Rorimer is able to confirm, is in a salt mine in Altaussee. The only problem is, as the war ends, many Germans are attempting to fulfill Hitler's Nero Decree. This could mean the destruction of thousands of works of art as well as important documents. This appears to be the case in Altaussee when allied troops finally arrive there.

Vocabulary

Interpretation, clever, undergraduate, passage, opinion, citizens, professional, demur, extensive, information, treasure, passionately, characteristic, extended, notorious, operation, prisoners, collection, stationed, imparted, conditions, underestimated, deterred, commission, indispensable, artillery, predicament, informed.

Section Five, The Aftermath: Chapters 51-54

Summary

Section Five, The Aftermath: Chapters 51-54

Chapter 51: Understanding Altausee

It is still debated whether or not Hitler intended for the artwork in Altausee to be destroyed. Whatever Hitler's intentions, the artwork was not destroyed. Some unknown person or persons moved the explosives from the mine and collapsed the tunnels, effectively sealing the artwork off from the destructive intentions of Eigruber. It is also still debated over who had the knowledge and the opportunity to save the art. Kirstein believed it was the miners, but they lacked some of the essential knowledge. Others believe Dr. Michel, the former director of the National History Museum Vienna, was instrumental in getting the bombs removed from the mine.

The author believes, however, that architect Albert Speer had a more direct impact on the events at Altausee. Speer convinced Hitler to change the wording in the Nero decree from total destruction of nonindustrial sites to crippling them lastingly. Then Martin Bormann's secretary, Helmut von Hummel, released documents to the mine's director, Pochmuller, that spurred him first to attempt to change the gauleiter's mind and then to trick him by sealing the mine's entrances with carefully placed explosives.

Pochmuller's orders to remove the bombs from the mine, however, were discovered and guards were placed at the entrance. Karl Sieber, the art restorer and Pochmuller's confidant, convinced two of the guards of the barbarity of the plan. Then a miner contacted an SS official he knew, told him the story, and received permission to remove the bombs. Pochmuller and Otto Hogler, the mine foreman, then oversaw the explosion that sealed the mine.

Chapter 52: Evacuation

Miners told Posey and Kirstein it would take up to two weeks to clear the debris from the mines. The following day, however, they had opened a hole big enough for a man to fit through. Posey entered, followed by Kirstein. Inside, they found seven panels from the Ghent Altarpiece, Van Eyck's Virgin Mary, and, further back, Michelangelo's Bruges Madonna.

Work began on recovering the works. However, within weeks of finding the treasures, the Monuments Men learned that the area in which the repository sat would soon be under Soviet Zone of Occupation. That meant the MFAA had four days to remove the treasures. Monuments Men Thomas Carr Howe Jr. and his assistant were sent into the mine to choose the most important treasures for removal. The work was hard as the



men were bogged down by electrical problems and bad weather. They missed their deadline, but were allowed to continue working due to disagreements in political circles over where the deadline was to be applied. The Bruges Madonna and the Ghent Altarpiece were taken out of Altaussee.

Chapter 53: The Journey Home

The work for the Monuments Men did not end with the war. Some of the men remained behind to catalog, document, and crate the discovered art. Rorimer worked closely with Harry Ettlinger, using Harry to help him get information from imprisoned Nazis, such as Heinrich Hoffman, Hitler's friend and photographer. Rorimer and Harry traveled to Berchtesgaden and Neuschwanstein. Harry also traveled to Heilbronn, the location of the flooded mine Rorimer had never inspected. Harry was responsible for bringing the treasures found in the mines to the surface. At this time, officials were beginning to wonder how they were supposed to return all this art to their rightful owners. Eisenhower gave orders that all the art would be returned to its country of origin and it would be left to each country to return the art to their rightful owners.

In November, Harry, who had gotten a letter from his grandfather describing the location of his priceless collection of ex libris bookplates and art prints, had a chance to look for his grandfather's treasures. Harry, despite trouble that caused him to be AWOL briefly, found the treasures and shipped them home to his family.

Chapter 54: Heroes of Civilization

Most of the surviving Nazi officials involved in the looting of artworks during World War II were arrested and punished for their actions during the war. Goring, Rosenberg, Kaltenbrunner and Frank were all executed. Albert Speer was sentenced to twenty years in jail. August Eigruber was executed. Hermann Bunjes killed himself in his prison cell. Bruno Lohse, one of the men in command at the Jeu de Paume during the Paris occupation was arrested by Rorimer and gave testimony against his fellow looters.

Many of the men responsible for the safety of the artworks at Altaussee lost their jobs and were imprisoned for their positions in the Nazi party. These men would spend much of the rest of their lives unable to find work. Several of these men, including Otto Hogler and Emmerich Pochmuller would also spend most of the rest of their lives attempting to get out the true story of what happened at Altaussee.

Jacques Jaujard was hailed a hero in France and was named Commander of the Legion of Honor, received the Medal of Resistance, and was promoted to the secretary-general of cultural affairs. Count Franz von Wolff-Metternich was also hailed a hero by the French. Wolff-Metternich worked with Allies after the war tracking down looted works. Rose Vallard worked in Germany after the war as a fine arts officer attached to French First Army. Rose was also honored by the French government for her actions during the occupation, including receiving the French Legion of Honor and the Medal of Resistance. A plaque honoring Rose Vallard's acts during the German occupation was placed on the Jeu de Paume in 2005, twenty-five years after her death.



Monuments Man Robert Posey accompanied the Ghent Altarpiece back to Belgium. He later received the French Legion of Honor for his work. In the fall of 1945, Posey returned home and worked as an architect until his retirement in 1974. His assistant, Lincoln Kirstein returned home as well where he continued his work in the ballet. Kirstein published an autobiography about his adventures in the war and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1984.

Walker Hancock returned home and built the little house he often dreamed of where he resumed his career as a sculptor. Hancock received the national Medal of Arts and the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

James Rorimer returned to the states and his work at the Metropolitan Museum. In 1950, he published his memoir. George Stout remained in the service of the MFAA. Stout traveled to Japan to serve as chief of the Arts and Monuments Division Headquarters of the Supreme Command for Allied Powers, Tokyo. Stout then returned to the Fogg Museum briefly before becoming director of the Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts. Stout then moved on to become director of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston.

For many years, the effort of the Monuments Men has been overlooked. There has never again been such an effort in any war since World War II. In 2007, Congress passed a resolution to honor these men and their efforts. The only surviving Monuments Man at the time was Harry Ettlinger. Harry returned home after the war and became an engineer. Harry has remained a supporter of Jewish and veteran causes. The only memento Harry has of his time at the war is a picture of himself with the Karlsruhe Rembrandt.

Analysis

The explosion at Altaussee, and the saving of hundreds of pieces of irreplaceable art, will never be fully understood. Too many people have attempted to take credit for what happened there. The author has his own opinions. In the end, however, the only thing that truly matters is that the precious art there, including the Bruges Madonna and the Ghent Altarpiece panels, were all recovered through the hard work of the Monuments Men and a handful of German and allied citizens who put themselves in harm's way to make sure they did.

Two Monuments Men are killed during their time in Europe. Many citizens died putting themselves in the line of fire for the protection of priceless monuments and art. It is important to note that this is the only time in war, before and since, that a squad of soldiers especially assigned to protect art, was organized and dispatched.

Some of the Monuments Men and their allies were honored with awards from their country or allied countries. These men returned to quiet lives working with art in their own chosen fields. They would live on in obscurity until their heroism was discovered by the public.

Vocabulary

Intended, committing, deliberate, historians, tremendous, vengeful, empowering, violence, previous, artwork, achievements, honors, repository, conspirators, paralysis, explosions, government, inconsistencies, complicated, palsy, accumulated, absurd, defense, misinformation, buttress, detonation, message, infantrymen, spearhead.



Important People

Major Ronald Edmund Balfour, First Canadian Army

Balfour was an art history expert at Cambridge University and a gentleman scholar before the war. Balfour joined the Monuments Men's original group trained by Stout in England. Balfour was the youngest of the original English born Monuments Men. Balfour was on the trail of the Bruges Madonna in Cleves, Germany, when he was killed in an explosion.

Private Harry Ettlinger, U.S. Seventh Army

Ettlinger grew up in the German town of Karlsruhe, Germany among a rich family history. When Ettlinger was still a young child, the laws in Germany began to change, causing hardship for his family as they lost business at their clothing store because they were Jews. Ettlinger's family would eventually immigrate to America, leaving just a short time before the famous Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass. Ettlinger joined the military six years after his family fled Germany. He joined the Monuments Men in May of 1945.

Captain Walker Hancock, U.S. First Army

Walker Hancock was an American sculptor who won a contest to design the Army Air Medal in 1942. Hancock would join the Monuments Men a short time later. Hancock traveled throughout France, Belgium, and Germany during the war. Hancock witnessed many things, including the group of men who hid inside a cathedral to keep the art safe and Stout acting as though he was on a Sunday stroll while investigating a painting in an active war zone.

Married to the love of his life only a few weeks before he left for Europe, Hancock spent much of the war writing letters to his beloved wife, Saima. It was Hancock's dream after the war to buy a small house in Massachusetts where he and Saima could work together. Hancock would eventually achieve this dream.

Captain Walter 'Hutch' Huchthausen, U.S. Ninth Army

Hutch Huchthausen was an architect and design professor at the University of Minnesota. Stationed in Aachen, Germany, Hutch was responsible for much of the northwest portion of Germany. Hutch was killed while driving outside of Aachen to investigate reports of an altarpiece. Hutch was hit by gunfire.



Jacques Jaujard, director of French National Museums

Jacques Jaujard was the director of the French National Museums, making him responsible for the safety of the French state art collections during the Nazi occupation from 1940-1944. After the occupation, Jaujard was responsible not only for putting the Louvre back together, but was also concerned with returning culture to the people. Jaujard opened the doors of the Louvre to the people and soldiers in Paris in an attempt to inject some normalcy back to their lives. Jaujard was also responsible for introducing Rorimer and Vallard, a coupling that led to the discovery of hundreds of stolen works of art.

Captain Robert Posey, U.S. Third Army

Robert Posey's family had a strong history of military service. Posey was assigned to the Third Army, commanded by General George S. Patton. Posey admired Patton greatly and served the Third Army with great pride.

Posey was something of a loner in the Monuments Men, content to do his work alone. Posey was close to his wife and often sent her long letters. Posey's wife was a kind woman who once sent gifts for the local children at Christmastime despite Posey's request that she not.

Second Lieutenant James J. Rorimer, Communications Zone and U.S. Seventh Army

James Rorimer was a curator of the Metropolitan Museum and specialist in medieval art. Rorimer was one of the first Monuments Men to land in Normandy in the aftermath of D-Day. Rorimer often found himself at odds with other soldiers, either in his fight to find transportation to check on monuments and works of art, or when he was forced to argue with soldiers and superior officers about protecting these monuments. Rorimer was a diplomatic person, however, who managed to make things work despite the headaches.

Rorimer found himself stationed in Paris soon after D-Day. There Rorimer met Jacques Jaujard, the director of the French National Museums. Rorimer and Jaujard worked closely together finding and returning many works to the Louvre Museum. Jaujard also introduced Rorimer to Rose Valland, a volunteer at the Jeu de Paume who was one of a few the Germans allowed to remain during the German occupation of Paris. During her time there, Valland was able to keep track of many works of art and eventually agrees to help Rorimer locate many of the large Nazi hideaways.



Lieutenant George Stout, U.S. First Army and U.S. Twelfth Army Group

An early expert in art conservation, Stout is one of the first in America to understand the Nazi threat against art, artifacts, and monuments throughout Europe/ He led the fight to establish a professional art conservation corps. Stout created a pamphlet that instructed museums in the many ways they could protect their art during war time. Stout also suggested the creation of a group of soldiers whose sole purpose would be to protect art.

When the MFAA was formed, Stout was one of the first soldiers to be assigned to it. Stout trained the first Monuments Men, a group of rag tag individuals, each of whom had some sort of experience in the art world either as an artist, architect, or museum curator. Stout then went into the field with these men and oversaw the recovery of hundreds of priceless works of art, including the recovery of the Bruges Madonna and the Ghent Altarpiece.

Rose Valland, Temporary Custodian of the Jeu de Paume

Rose Valland was a volunteer at the Jeu de Paume who managed to remain on staff during the occupation. Rose Valland was in a position to be made aware of the inventory and shipment of stolen French art by the Nazis. By placing her own life at risk, Valland made notes of the shipments and kept a list of the art that was taken out of the Jeu de Paume during the occupation as it was used as a kind of stop over for art throughout Europe.

Rose Valland was an ambitious woman. Therefore she was reluctant to give her lists of art and their locations to anyone. Valland wanted credit for what she had done and the risks she had taken. When she teams up with Rorimer, she realizes that he can help her achieve both the rescue of the art and the notoriety she desires. For this reason, she helps the Monuments Men find troves of stolen art.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower

The Supreme Commander of American forces during World War II, Eisenhower gave orders that monuments and cultural centers were only to be damaged if it directly impacted the safety of Allied soldiers. This gave the MFAA the power they needed to do what was necessary to protect many of these monuments and priceless works of art.



Objects/Places

Bruges Madonna

Michelangelo created a Madonna statue. Madonna was allowed to leave Italy. The statue was displayed in the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Bruges, Belgium. It was stolen as the Germans retreated through Bruges. The Madonna statue would be discovered in an old salt mine in Austria at the end of the war.

Ghent Altarpiece

The Ghent Altarpiece, also known as the van Eyck Mystic Lamb, is an altar piece displayed at St. Bavo's Cathedral in Ghent, Belgium. The altar piece has two rows of panels that display artwork. This altar piece was stolen during the German retreat. The panels would later be found in a salt mine in Austria.

Train

There is a train that Rose Valland claims contains precious works of art that the French government has allowed to stand unguarded. Valland insisted that Rorimer help her search this train, only to discover it holds only household goods. Rorimer realizes this was a test by Valland to see if he would cut her out of the glory of finding precious art.

Monte Cassino

Monte Cassino is an ancient monastery that sits atop a mountain. Despite orders not to destroy monuments, the Allied Forces bombed Monte Cassino because they believed the Germans were hiding there and it was the only way to force them into the open. It turned out the Germans were never in the monastery.

Rose Vallard's List

Rose Valland has kept lists of the art shipped through the Jeu de Paume and the places to where they were shipped. Valland eventually gave these lists to Rorimer so that he could find and rescue the stolen art.

Monuments, Fine Art, and Archives or MFAA

The MFAA, or Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives, is the organization formed to protect monuments and fine art from the ravages of war. This is the official name of the organization which employs the Monuments Men.



Madonna of La Gleize

Hancock comes across an exquisite wood carved Madonna outside the cathedral at La Gleize. When the area is bombed some time later, Hancock finds himself in a struggle with the local people when he suggests the Madonna be removed for safety. It is eventually agreed the Madonna will be moved into the cellar of a neighbor's house.

Hitler's Nero Decree

Near the end of the war, Hitler issues a decree telling his troops to destroy all stolen art and documents that might fall into the hands of the enemy.

Salt Mines

Hitler and his men used salt mines throughout the mountains between Germany and Austria to hide priceless art.

Rembrandt's Painting

As a Monuments Man, Harry Ettliger rescues a Rembrandt painting from his former hometown of Karlsruhe, Germany. Ettliger had always heard rumors of the painting, but never believed its existence until he rescued it.



Themes

Art Preservation

Art preservation was a relatively new idea in the 1940s. Not many people knew what it was or why it was important. However, as the war began to unfold in Africa, Italy, and France, soldiers and military leaders began to recognize the damage being done to ancient landmarks. This led to the formation of a group of soldiers whose sole purpose was the preservation, protection, and discovery of art and monuments.

Europe is full of priceless works of art. During the war, Hitler had his soldiers steal a great number of these works. The works were then hidden in hopes of one day using them in a cultural center in Austria. The Monuments Men found a great many of these works, working to keep them safe as they are moved. If not for these men, the great arts would have been lost or damaged. For this reason, art preservation is one of the most important themes of the novel.

Greed

Hitler once imagined himself an artist. However, he was rejected by an art school by a council he believed to be Jews. Hitler continued to enjoy art, however, and decided he wanted to create a cultural center in Austria like one in Florence, Italy. To do this, Hitler needed a large amount of art. Hitler began a large scale looting of art in occupied areas and from Jews.

As the war progressed and the tide changed against Germany, many of Hitler's soldiers continue to steal art as they retreated. This ended when Germany's army were pushed back into Germany. Then some of Hitler's generals, such as Goring, began to rid themselves of the art they stole themselves. Goring took select pieces that he knew were worth a great deal of money with him while he sent the rest of his art to a summer home and other locations.

If not for greed, Goring would not have stolen so many works of art. At the same time, Hitler showed his own greed in his decision to steal works of art not only from the Jews, but from occupied countries as well.

War

The book describes events that took place during World War II. It is war that made the necessity of a group like MFAA necessary. The MFAA was born out of the desire of museum curators and others to take care that monuments and fine art were not damaged by the war. For this reason, soldiers with a history of working with art or architecture were assigned to the MFAA to work behind the lines to find, document, and preserve art.

Many of the soldiers in the MFAA traveled to dangerous places. Some of the men were kept back far from the fighting, but others found themselves in the middle of it. Two of the Monuments Men were killed during their service. Several others found themselves caught in situations where they could have been injured in heavy fighting. The war is dangerous, and the Monuments Men discover this as they work to find and protect works of art.

Styles

Structure

The book is divided into five sections. Each section is divided by chapters. Each chapter has a name that relates to something within the chapter. The book is written in a subjective tone, filled with personal stories and excerpts from personal letters between the Monuments Men and their family or friends.

The book is structured in such a way that the reader is able to learn the story of the Monuments Men in a linear fashion. The author is careful to take the reader chronologically through the history, including certain elements of the raging war to keep the reader rooted in time. The book is well structured, including multiple pictures from the time period, a list of the participants and their history, and an extensive index that helps the reader find specific information.

Perspective

Tone



Quotes

Their job description was simple: to save as much of the culture of Europe as they could during combat.

-- Narrator (Prologue paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote outlines the job the Monuments Men were assigned to do and the job they successfully completed.

He didn't have any friends who weren't Jewish, but his parents didn't either, so that didn't seem unusual. He saw non-Jews at school and in the parks, and he liked them, but buried deep within those interactions was the knowledge that, for some reason, he was an outsider.

-- Narrator (chapter 1 paragraph 5)

Importance: This quote shows the mentality of a Jewish boy in the months and years prior to World War II.

Now, in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, the worst attack ever on U.S. soil, the tension had turned into an almost desperate need to act.

-- Narrator (chapter 3 paragraph 4)

Importance: This quote describes the mentality of the American people after the attack on Pearl Harbor, a catalyst of some of the events that led to the formation of the MFAA.

Unfortunately, nobody told Hammond, who arrived in Algiers for his mysterious new assignment knowing only that he would be working on conservation issues.

-- Narrator (chapter 6 paragraph 4)

Importance: This describes the reaction of the first MFAA man sent to conserve art behind an invading army. Hammond was given no information, no resources, and no instructions. This is a lack of support, or understanding, that will plague the Monuments Men.

As impossible as it seems, it was the duty of these eight officers to inspect and preserve every important monument the Allied forces encountered between the English Channel and Berlin.

-- Narrator (chapter 9 paragraph 9)

Importance: This quote illustrates the incredible task ahead of the new Monument Men.

The first soft strip of daylight was just touching the horizon as the dean and the sacristan, standing in the side doorway in their night clothes, watched the Bruges Madonna, the only sculpture by Michelangelo to leave Italy during his lifetime, disappear.

-- Narrator (chapter 12 paragraph 22)



Importance: This quote not only gives the reader more information about the Bruges Madonna, but it shows the shock and fear of those who know the sculpture the best as they watch it disappear.

The winter of 1944 was perhaps the most brutal period of the war on the Western front.
-- Narrator (chapter 19 paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote sets the tone for the chapter as Posey discovers his wife has sent, against his wishes, gifts for the local children. This is just another of the things the Monuments Men did.

But against the backdrop, she looked more miraculous and hopeful than ever, her beauty triumphant even in the midst of devastation and despair.
-- Narrator (chapter 25 paragraph 3)

Importance: This quote refers to the Madonna of La Gleize. It shows that beauty remains even during the ravages of war.

Success took conviction, a belief that the Monuments mission was not only right, but necessary.
-- Hancock (chapter 31 paragraph 7)

Importance: This is Walker Hancock's opinion of the Monuments Men mission.

It's the coronation chamber,' Hancock said. 'They were going to crown Hitler the emperor of Europe.'
-- Hancock (chapter 44 paragraph 9)

Importance: This quote is Hancock's reaction to seeing the caskets in a chamber in Bernterode.

The mine had been blown.
-- Narrator (chapter 50 paragraph 8)

Importance: The Monuments Men have heard about Altaussee and the art stored there, but when they arrive, they find the mine blown.

The reconstruction of Europe after World War II was one of the most complicated and comprehensive international efforts of modern time.
-- Narrator (chapter 54 paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote illustrates the aftermath of the war and the complications that allowed certain aspects of the Monuments Men to go unnoticed for nearly fifty years.



Topics for Discussion

Hitler's Desire for Art

Discuss why Hitler wanted to collect a large number of priceless works of art. What did Hitler plan to do with this art? Where did he get it? Where did he hide it? Why was it hidden?

Art Preservation

Discuss art preservation. What is art preservation? What does it consist of? Why was it a rare career choice in the 1940s? Has that changed? Why was it difficult to get a program like MFAA started?

The Impact of Pearl Harbor

The author discusses the impact of the attack at Pearl Harbor on the American mentality shortly after it happened. Discuss this impact. Why were Americans so deeply affected by Pearl Harbor? What were many of their concerns? How does Pearl Harbor compare with the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001?

Monte Cassino

Discuss Monte Cassino. What happened at Monte Cassino? For what reason? What impact did this have on the conservation efforts of allied troops? How did this help create the MFAA? What impact does it continue to have on history and the preservation of art?

D-Day

Discuss D-Day. What happened on that day? For what reason? How many Monuments Men arrived in France after D-Day? What was their job? What problems did they have? How did they work around these problems? How did this time structure how Monuments Men would continue to function for the rest of the war?

Bruges Madonna

Discuss the Bruges Madonna. What is the importance of this piece of work? Why was it stolen? Who stole it? For what purpose? Why do the Monuments Men begin investigating the whereabouts of this sculpture? Why are they encouraged to give pictures of the sculpture to troops? Who created this work?



Monuments Men Deaths

Discuss the deaths of two Monuments Men killed during the war. How were these men killed? What does this suggest about the safety of the Monuments Men in the field? Does this suggest the Monuments Men should not have been near the fighting?

Rose Valland

Discuss Rose Valland. Who was she? What information did she have about missing art works? Why was she reluctant to share this information? What finally convinces her to share the information? What is the result? Is Rose Valland a heroine?

Harry Ettlinger

Discuss Harry Ettlinger. The author begins the novel with the story of Harry's family. Why? What is significant about Harry's story? How is Harry's story a kind of ironic justice against Hitler? What does Harry do as a Monuments Man? Is this important?

Salt Mine at Altaussee

Discuss the salt mine at Altaussee. What is in the mine at Altaussee? Do the workers know about this? Why is it there? Why does the gautieler want to blow up the mine? Why do others want to protect the mine? What happens to the mine? Why do so many different stories come out about the mine after the war? Which are true?