

**A HISTORY OF SECTION  
647: UNITED STATES ARMY  
AMBULANCE SERVICE  
WITH THE FRENCH ARMY**

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A History of Section 647: United States Army Ambulance Service with the French Army by  
Robert Ware Bodfish & Dirk J. Luykx

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**ROBERT WARE BODFISH & DIRK J. LUYKX**

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*Written and Compiled*  
*by*  
ROBERT WARE BODFISH

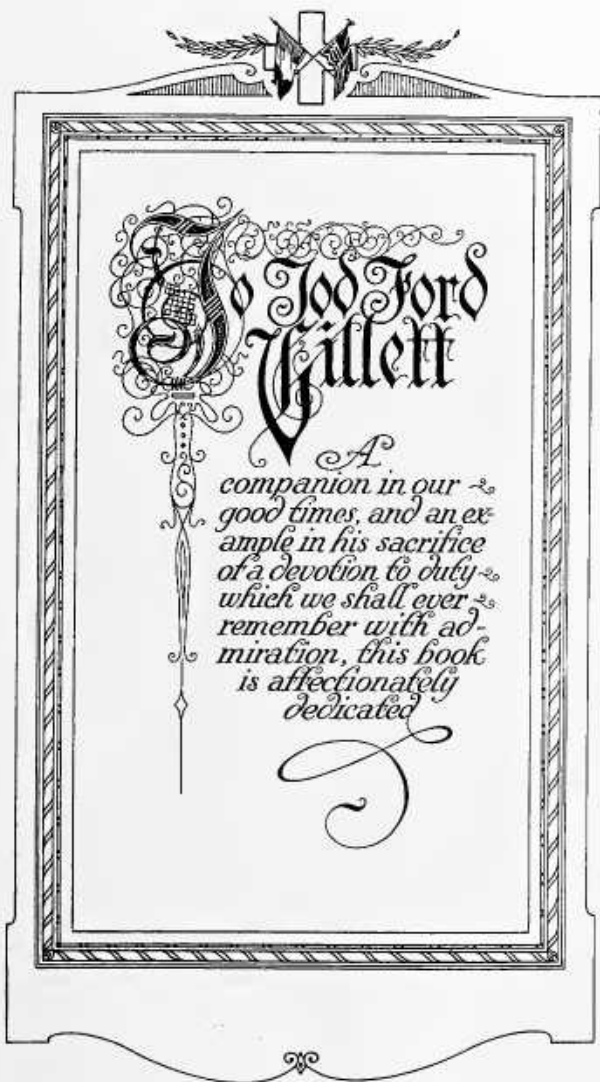
Maps and Drawings  
BY  
DIRK J. LUYKX

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Tod Ford Gillette







To Mr. and Mrs. Myron C. Gillett.

**W**e, the members of Section Sanitaire Americaine 647, wish to express our heart-felt sympathy to you in the loss of your beloved son  
**Tod Ford Gillett.**

No bounds can measure your loss of a son, and ours of a tried and true comrade. Fearless and able, no danger was too great for Tod to brave in rescuing his fallen comrades. It was on a day when personal risk met him at every moment that he made the final sacrifice for his fellows. There is no nobler death. This thought alone tempers our grief. We loved Tod the more as we grew to know him, and shall always remember him as America's best type of gentleman. We speak truly when we say that our loss is second only to yours.

Rich Anthony  
 Deane B. Bunker  
 William C. Bunker  
 Harry W. Bunker  
 Stuart C. Bunker  
 Donald J. Bunker  
 Gust Bunker  
 Francis Bunker  
 John W. Bunker  
 John H. Bunker  
 John K. Bunker

Robert C. Bunker  
 Henry C. Bunker  
 John C. Bunker  
 Eric D. Bunker  
 Daniel E. Bunker  
 Robert F. Bunker  
 Myron G. Bunker  
 James H. Bunker  
 Samuel I. Bunker  
 David J. Bunker

George K. Bunker  
 Charles L. Bunker  
 Thomas M. Bunker  
 William N. Bunker  
 John O. Bunker  
 John P. Bunker  
 John Q. Bunker  
 John R. Bunker  
 John S. Bunker  
 John T. Bunker  
 John U. Bunker  
 John V. Bunker  
 John W. Bunker  
 John X. Bunker  
 John Y. Bunker  
 John Z. Bunker

John A. Bunker  
 John B. Bunker  
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 John U. Bunker  
 John V. Bunker  
 John W. Bunker  
 John X. Bunker  
 John Y. Bunker  
 John Z. Bunker

Myron C. Gillett





## PREFACE



### ELLOW MEMBERS OF 647:—

You commissioned me to write and publish a history of our section. I have done the best that I could for you. There are those among you who will not be entirely satisfied with my effort. It would indeed be surprising if most of your criticisms are not good ones. I have simply written as I thought the subject could be best presented in a fairly readable manner. I have been forced to leave out many little incidents which might have enlivened a part of the story. I felt that there was a danger that too many isolated anecdotes might prevent the working out of a smooth, connected history. I have tried to balance the different portions of our work so as to give each its right proportion of space. I have intended to tell the truth about our life. I believe that I have told nothing to embarrass any of you. We lived the life of natural men, did our work as we saw it, and ought not to be ashamed of our good times. If I have succeeded in giving you a true portrayal, you, alone, can judge.

Let me thank all of you for your co-operation. I, especially, wish to thank those who contributed little favors to assist me, as Luykx, Anderson, and Wilder. Everything helped out.

If it is the proper place, and I believe it is, permit me, in the name of the section, to thank Lieutenant Smith for the tact and loyalty which he showed in his duties as our commanding officer. It is rare, even in our service, that a body of men have a superior officer who is able to respond so closely to the requirements of a position as did our Lieutenant. His name will be always linked with the best days of Section 647.

It is in place also that I thank Sergeant Swain in the name of the section for the constant, untiring efforts which he used in our behalf. He did his work well. He more than did his work. He put himself out constantly for the men of the section. He was no Top Sergeant in the ordinary meaning of the word. He was always a friend and helper who was never satisfied until his section received the best that could be found for it.

I wish that I could go on down the list of the men who were in a position to work for the section as a whole. "Horn" Snader, Andy, and Risley are among those whom I should want to praise were I to thank men particularly for extra attention to the welfare of the section and the men. But I must not assume too great a right to praise. Each member has that as his own, undelegated prerogative.

To Colonel Percy L. Jones and his subordinate officers who helped to perfect the work of the service, Section 647 sends its greetings. We congratulate them on their work and trust that the United States Army Ambulance Service with the French Army will long live in memory as a tribute to their efficiency.

Lastly, a closing word to you in the name of the Section. We have created a means by which we may keep in touch with each other now that the war is over. Let us make an effort to remember our friendship together, and let us try to meet again at some future time. As a practical suggestion I may say that there ought to be a slight

surplus from the printing of this book. That can always be used for the printing of cards to inform members of a proposed reunion. I shall be more than glad to have such cards printed so that any man desiring to promote a reunion may know who will be able to attend.

We had a good section. We grow more and more proud of it each day as we remember our life and work together. It ought to remain a living thing, not just a dead memory. This history, I hope, will help. Each one of us, alone, can make such life a certainty.

*ROBERT W. BODFISH.*

Palmer, Massachusetts, July 14, 1919.

## INTRODUCTION



It is perhaps necessary for the complete understanding of this History of Section 647 by readers not of the section that we insert a short foreword explaining the origin and nature of the service of which the section was a part.

The outbreak of the war in 1914 was followed rather closely by the efforts of Americans in and about Paris to help the French in whatever way seemed the most practical. Aid in the work of caring for the wounded appeared to be the most practical service. A partially finished school in Neuilly-sur-Seine, just outside the gates of Paris, was fitted up by an American Committee as a hospital, and hastily equipped ambulances were used to transport wounded about Paris and in the battle zone itself. This organization, thus begun, rapidly developed under the name of the American Ambulance and established a rear and front ambulance and hospital service. In 1916 the front work of the organization was separated from the hospital work and carried on independently under the name of the American Field Service. A. Piatt Andrew acted as the head of this service up to the advent of the American Army.

The work of the American Ambulance was paralleled during the early days very closely by Mr. H. H. Harjes and Mr. Richard Norton who operated two ambulance services under the British and American Red Cross respectively. In 1915 these were united under the American Red Cross with the official title, Motor Ambulance Sections of the American Red Cross. This service is familiarly known to us as the Norton-Harjes Ambulance Service.

All of these organizations secured their personnel through the enrollment of Americans already in France who desired to be of some immediate service, and through the enlistment of young men in America who were eager to contribute something towards assisting the heroic sufferers of Europe. Many of these men gave heavily to maintain the sections composing the different ambulance services. Other funds were raised by campaigns conducted throughout the United States. By both means and by the particular interest of a few wealthy Americans the services were able to work valiantly for the French Armies.

After the American declaration of war plans were formulated for the organization of an Army Ambulance Service to take the place of the volunteer services already at work. It is said that this program was initiated largely at the request of Marshal Joffre to the Surgeon-General of the United States Army. At all events, volunteers were sought for the launching of the United States Army Ambulance Service with the French Army, as the new organization came to be known. Colleges sent units and volunteers were trained for several months at Allentown, Pennsylvania, to take up the work. The first ten sections left for France in August, 1917.

Meanwhile the American Ambulance had been consolidated with the American Red Cross and then had been absorbed by the American Army. The American Field Service and the Norton-Harjes Service were also to be superseded by the Army Service as soon as it could be brought to France. Many of the volunteer drivers enlisted with the new service and several sections were left intact to continue their work. Where not enough men in a section enlisted to permit the section being left, the volunteers kept