Patton’s Diaries

By the People Transcription Campaign

Library of Congress
crowd.loc.gov
George Smith Patton (1885-1945)
Soldier
Brief Biography
Arete / Vir fortis
George S. Patton Papers

MANUSCRIPT DIVISION, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

CATALOG RECORD:
https://lccn.loc.gov/mm83035634

FINDING AID:
https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadms.ms000001
Excerpted and published selectively in 2 volumes by Martin Blumenson in 1974
War Diaries

- Mexican Punitive Expedition, 1916
- World War I, 1917-1919
- World War II, 1942-1945
Mexican Punitive Expedition, 1916

- Followed Francisco (“Pancho”) Villa’s attack on Columbus, New Mexico
- Led by General John J. Pershing
- First combat experience for Patton, aide to Pershing
World War I, 1917-1919
World War II

- North Africa
- Sicily
- France
- Battle of the Bulge
Two additional diaries

1910
Honeymoon

Fox hunting in Fauquier Co., Virginia, 1932-1935
Crowdsourcing Options

Original diaries

Annotated typed transcripts

July 22, 1943 (cont'd p.2)
Only killing stops good troops – defenses sap the vitality of those who make them. I feel that future students of the Command and General Staff School will study the campaign of Palermo as a classic example of the use of tanks. I had them back far enough so that the enemy could not tell where they were to be used; then when the infantry had found the hole, the tanks went through and in large numbers and fast. Such methods assure victory and reduce losses, but it takes fine leadership to insure the execution. General Keyes provided perfect leadership and great drive. The praise should be his.
Annotated Typed Transcripts

• Were prepared after the fact

• Differ from the original diary entries: Abbreviations are spelled out, nicknames are converted to full names, misspelled words are corrected, contexts are embellished, and the candidness of Patton’s observations is made more diplomatic.

• Are occasionally annotated and hand-corrected. Your transcriptions will capture these annotations and make the full transcripts word searchable

• Note: There is no typed transcript of the 1910 honeymoon diary. Patton’s WWII diary from May to December 1945 exists only as a transcript. The original diary pages are not in the collection.
Original Diaries
The importance of transcribing Patton’s original diaries: Capturing Patton’s observations as he wrote them.

The next slide shows one example of an important difference between the original diaries and typed transcripts.
Chenogne, Belgium, massacre of German prisoners, January 1, 1945

Original diary entry
“The Div is very green and took unnecessary losses to no effect. Also murdered 50 odd German med. I hope we can conceal this.”
(Jan. 4, 1945, entry)

Annotated transcript version
"The division is very green and took unnecessary losses to no effect. There were also some unfortunate incidents in the shooting of prisoners. (I hope we can conceal this.)"
Reveal podcast, “Take No Prisoners: Inside a WWII American War Crime,” July 28, 2018
Suggestions for coping with Patton’s challenging handwriting
Use the typed transcripts as a guide

• Find a page in the original diary to transcribe. Note the date.
  • Some daily entries are several pages long. You may need to go back several pages to find the date
• Locate the typed transcript for that entry. Read it to get a sense of what is going on.
• Go back to the original and begin transcribing. Refer back to the typed transcript for any words you can’t decipher.
Be certain, however, to transcribe the original diary entry as Patton wrote it!

Abbreviate what he abbreviated, misspell what he misspelled, retain the nicknames he used.

Use the typed transcript only as a guide.
Locating the relevant transcription
Downloadable month-by-month listing of transcripts

An aid to transcribing Patton’s original diaries

This list, with links by month to the monthly typed transcripts of Patton’s diaries, has been prepared as an aid to those who are transcribing Patton’s original diaries. As you may have discovered, Patton’s handwriting is challenging, making both common words and proper names difficult to read. In addition, he also abbreviated many military terms. After all, he was writing in war zones and needed to capture his thoughts quickly.

After you find a page in the original diary to transcribe, we suggest that you read the typed transcript of that diary entry to gain a sense of its content. This list, which is more finely broken down than the online display, will help you quickly locate the relevant passages. You may want to download the list and keep it open as you work through the original diary.

Important reminder: you should transcribe the original diaries exactly as Patton wrote them. The transcripts often vary from the original writings, sometimes in important ways. Abbreviations are spelled out, nicknames are converted to full names, misspelled words are correct, contexts are embellished, and the cadences of Patton’s observations are made more diplomatic. Use the transcript only as a guide for words you can’t read. Make certain that you transcribe the original entries exactly as Patton wrote them.

One additional note: There is no typed transcript of the 1916 Diary Patton kept on his honeymoon. We will have to help each other to decipher it. That is the benefit of crowd-sourcing!

Mexican Punitive Expedition diary, 1916: Links to typed transcripts

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<td>August 26-31</td>
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A warning about the unfiltered nature of Patton’s diaries

This transcription campaign may not be suitable for all groups of volunteers, particularly those at the K-12 level.
The diaries contain . . .

• Objectionable statements that reflect the callousness of war
• Anti-Semitic comments
• Possibly additional socially and racially intolerant views about other groups
• Likely use of obscenities and vulgar language