



## A Minnesota Monuments Man

By Jon van der Hagen

"I believe that man will not merely endure; he will prevail. . . . because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance."

-- William Faulkner, *Pulitzer Prize Acceptance Speech*  
10 December 1950, Stockholm, Sweden

The movie *The Monuments Men*, came out in February 2014. It was the story of a small group of men who fought to recover priceless works of art and documents stolen during World War II by the Nazis. Many were faced with a moral dilemma: cultural preservation vs. self preservation. Some made a difficult choice and paid the ultimate price. The movie depicted actual events, but the characters were fictional composites of real people. Captain Walter J. Huchthausen of Minnesota was one of the real people—a Monuments Man—one of two such men killed in action. Eventually 345 men and women from 13 nations volunteered to help protect cultural treasures and icons. Here is more of the story:

In 1943, the Army Air Forces forged an unusual partnership with an eccentric group of academics. Under FDR's directions and with the assistance of the Roberts Commission, a small fellowship of art and architectural experts was organized to protect European, Mediterranean, and Far Eastern cultural properties from the devastation of war. If unable to protect properties, they were tasked with restoration. To accomplish this, they were provided rudimentary military training and commissioned in the military service, granting them both basic authorities and potential access to a large body of manpower for assistance. A less well-known responsibility was the security of administrative records, manuscripts and archives. Such papers could prove valuable to the military for intelligence. Records often included information about the operations of local government and infrastructure which would help maintain the operation of a community after occupation. It also alerted occupiers about resources that could be utilized in the event of crisis. Birth and tax records could be used to identify skills useful to the occupiers. Often included were records and notations of dis-



Walter J. Huchthausen was a University of Minnesota professor.

gruntled residents that could be exploited for political purposes. In the early stages of the war, Germans used such information to control the civilian population and remove dissidents. Simultaneously, the Allies and Resistance sought to destroy the same records to protect the native citizens and to stabilize alliances.

As the war progressed, and the Germans appeared to be losing, attitudes changed. The Germans, utilizing every means available, sought to destroy incriminating documents. By securing such documents, the Allies were able to provide evidence for later prosecution and propaganda, as well as the rapid re-establishment of war torn communities. The efforts to burn records and identification papers of inmates at Auschwitz is an example of this latter strategy, while RAF bombing in Den Hague and Denmark to destroy population records is an example of the former. All the aggressors understood the use of detailed records. Records could be used for propaganda as well: when the Germans were about to capture Oslo in 1940, the Norwegians removed large collections of administrative records and hid them in rural areas. Some of those

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Interior of Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, 1460 W. Almond Ave., St. Paul, built in 1942 and designed by Walter Huchthausen.

records revealed a relationship with Britain and France that, if discovered by the Germans, could have been exploited and manipulated to justify the invasion of Norway as Germany's effort to "protect" the Norwegians and heighten Anglo and Franco phobias.

Prior to this effort, it was customary, though repugnant, for victorious armies to plunder vanquished foes in order to replenish war chests, increase wealth, and pay soldiers. The Germans took it to the limit, using highly organized staff to systematically loot much of Europe in the name of Nazism and "for protection and advancement of the Germanic peoples." by reorganizing and re-distributing or destroying antiquities confiscated from Jewish and minority families, homes, collections and museums across Europe. In 1943, with directives from FDR, Eisenhower issued orders forbidding troops from looting or otherwise damaging areas of cultural significance, if such damage could be reasonably avoided. The unusual partnership or fellowship,

soon to be known as the Monuments Men, worked with the blessing and explicit endorsement of Eisenhower, which allowed them access to sensitive combat areas.

Monuments Men served in army operations and planning. In military efforts to capture European, Mediterranean and Far Eastern cities, Monuments Men helped to identify cultural centers and limit damages during offensive action. Monte Cassino anchored a major defensive German line in Italy. It was formidably occupied by German paratroopers and its intimidating location was a direct threat to the Allied advance. Monuments Men appealed to Allied commanders for restraint, hoping to avoid damaging the ancient Benedictine Monastery from pending bombardment. While history reveals that their efforts were rebuked at Monte Cassino, they were instrumental in Florence, Italy, protecting many of the cultural treasures that tourists now enjoy as a result of their endeavors.

To accomplish their tasks, Monuments Men contended with the elements—humidity, heat, wind, snow, rain, cold, and ultraviolet—in superhuman efforts to protect the brittle and fragile masterpieces. However, elements often included unstable structures, a fluid and volatile chain of command, unexploded ordinance, tempers, suspicion, firepower and the enemy—Axis, Allied and civilian—who might manipulate and hamper the recovery process for personal gain. At one time there were only about 35 Monuments Men to cover all of Western Europe, and figures suggest that two or three men might be tasked with covering nearly 600 sites. Such work was also done with limited enforcement authority, requiring the men to depend upon the "good will" of area combat commanders. The good will had to be earned: many of the Monuments Men were curators, artists and architects newly commissioned from their civilian lives and shipped to the front lines with no military experience to impress superiors.

Walter J. Huchthausen, one such Monuments Man, was born in Oklahoma in 1904. He moved to Minnesota with his family in 1923. His father, Jul Huchthausen, was a Lutheran minister who shared a pastorate in Minneapolis with his brother. Walter enrolled at the University of Minnesota, where he graduated with a BA in architecture in 1928. Fellow students, later alumni, described him as an outstanding student and dedicated designer who earned high academic honors as an undergraduate at the University. Jane King-Hession, an architectural historian quoted in a 2014 *StarTribune* news article, described him as a "stellar student" and "incredibly talented." Several drawings by Huchthausen were recently on display at a University exhibit honoring 100 years of Minnesota architecture. Huchthausen moved east to Boston and completed a master's degree in architecture from Harvard in 1930. He worked in Boston and New York, and also studied in Germany, working in German museums, from 1935-39, be-

fore returning to the University of Minnesota to join the faculty.

He became an Associate Professor at the University of Minnesota teaching design, painting, and drawing, until he voluntarily took an unpaid leave in 1942 to join the Army Air Forces. "He was not a seasoned soldier. So I sense some idealism from him," said King-Hession. Initially, working in civil affairs, he was earmarked for his academic abilities, skills, mastery of German language and culture, by the original Monuments Men. In his book *The Monuments Men*, Robert Edsel captured the sentiments of Huchthausen's colleagues, who described him as "professional, gregarious, knowledgeable, driven, and worldly."

Captain Huchthausen was re-assigned to the 9th Army and sent to the Aachen area, recently liberated by Allied forces. As the 1000-year old seat of Charlemagne's Holy Roman Empire, Aachen was steeped in culture and tradition sacred to the hearts of Germans. Huchthausen worked in very delicate and complex circumstances with weary, suspicious Germans (and Americans) who were certain that men like Huchthausen were merely collecting plunder for themselves and the Allied armies. Like many of the Monuments Men, Huchthausen's work was initially belittled by some ranking field commanders, who did not see the value of his contributions and did not want Monuments Men underfoot. He was often forced to improvise, working without the benefits of files, records, office materials or transportation—yet entrusted with the cataloging and initial restoration of damaged art and altarpieces.

Monuments Men like Huchthausen worked with combat area museums in order to reclaim lost and damaged art. Their work took them into private homes to identify looters and hoarders, into the lofts of castles to catalog, package and ship paintings and sculpture, and deep underground into deep sodden mine shafts in order to illuminate and restore altarpieces, cradling them gently on lifts so that they might be returned to grateful churches and monasteries.

Field reports filed by Captain Huchthausen from December 1944 until April 1945 revealed some of his duties,



Hitler examines looted art intended for his planned Führermuseum in Linz, Austria.

including the evaluation of schools, monasteries, castles and homes, restoration and damage control, cataloging of masterpieces, books and manuscripts, work crew assignments, legal documentation for prosecution and recovery, as well as liaison between civilians, artists, curators, administrators and combat commanders. Once located, he was also tasked with guarding and securing the antiquities until they could be moved to a central area for processing. Immediately upon the liberation of Aachen, the Monuments Men, including Huchthausen, discovered a horde of altarpieces stored (legally and otherwise) at the Suermond Museum in Aachen. It is perhaps a fitting legacy that his work on the altarpieces contributed significantly to the recovery of \$2,000,000,000 worth of European cultural treasures.

Their work was dangerous: Despite working near the front lines, they were rarely assigned escorts. In April 1945, Huchthausen and his partner were working quickly to preserve a large altarpiece collection east of Aachen. They entered an unsecured area and stumbled into a skirmish between German and American troops. His partner survived, but Captain Huchthausen was killed instantly by enemy machine gun fire. His body is buried in the American Military Cemetery in Margarten, Netherlands. Posthumously, he was awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster.

"Hutch's attitude toward his mission in the war was one of my best memories," wrote fellow Monuments Man, Walker Hancock, in a wartime letter that Edsel included in

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his book. "The buildings that he hoped, as a young architect, to build will never exist ... but the few people who saw him at his job — friend and enemy — must think more of the human race because of him."

When Edsel's book, *The Monuments Men*, was made into the movie in 2014, Huchthausen's part was minimized. Startlingly, his role was recast as a representative Frenchman. For the sake of cinematic drama and "artistic license," the richness and idealism that was Walter Huchthausen's persona, was sacrificed. However, the rest of us can begin to understand and appreciate the enormity of the courage, contribution and dedication of Huchthausen and all the other Monuments Men to a set of ideals. Ironically, the very act of war, fought with tremendous courage, defiles the soul, forces us to the edge of morality and onto a precipice of iniquity. It is the privilege of a chosen few to replenish the soul, and lead us back to our moral epicenter. Thanks, Walter, for helping us regain some of our soul.

Work of the Monuments Men continued in Europe and Asia years after the conclusion of hostilities. Though they were successful in locating and returning thousands of pieces of art, much is still missing and their work has been inspirational and instrumental in the formation of the Monuments Men Foundation, an organization which continues their original efforts in the reclamation of lost cultural properties.

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*Jon van der Hagen is a family practice and emergency medicine MD in the Brainerd/Baxter area. He volunteers regularly at the museum and is also on the board of directors for the Military Historical Society of Minnesota.*

## CURATOR'S NOTES

By Doug Bekke



Work continues in many areas. In December, the 34th Division exhibit was closed. It is currently being modified and updated, and in February it will be moved to the new Camp Ripley Education Center that is in the final stages of its construction. The new exhibit will not be in a room but in a large 3 x 26 foot exhibit case so the modifications will be substantial.

In early January I received the last order of military

badges through the PX. This will allow us to at last complete the new exhibit in the museum's Honors room on military badges from all branches of the service. When this project started several years ago I thought it would be a quick and easy exhibit, but it turned into a real monster. When you actually have to find all the badges, you start to realize how many there are. There are many badges, especially from the Air Force. The last order contained mostly Coast Guard badges. It will be a great relief to

complete this project and move on the many other projects waiting to be completed.

With the move of the 34th ID exhibit and the badge exhibit I have had a pause in my work on the Vietnam exhibit, which is currently scheduled to open 18 July 2015. The Vietnam exhibit will occupy the space now used by the 34th ID. I seek many short stories from Vietnam vets about their service for the exhibit.

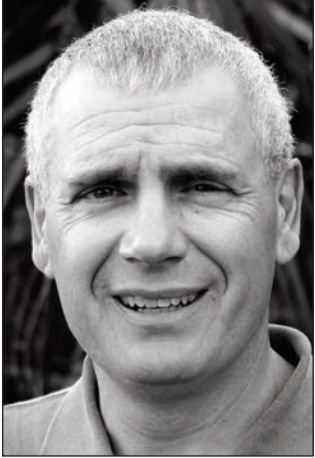
In November I visited the workshop in Michigan where the large wooden spoked wheels for the WWI German 15 cm howitzer are being recreated. The maker has an impressive workshop and the visit was like a trip back in time to the era of horses and wooden wheels. There are few people in the world who retain the skills needed to make these wheels. Last fall, General Jon Trost completed and assembled the wooden wheel parts of the wheels for a WWI German Trench Mortar that we are restoring. He is an amazing wood worker and did a very impressive job. It is all the more impressive when one considers that he had never made wheels like this before and it was very difficult figuring the angles and cuts. Thank you, General Trost.

I continue to assemble pieces for the pending WWI exhibit that will open in the summer of 2016 in the space currently occupied by the Civil War Exhibit.

The next two years will be very busy. Many thanks to the museum volunteers who are doing a great job helping to keep work on our mission moving forward.

## DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

By Jeff Thielen



Going back to the “basics” has been a principle of sports coaching for years. Going back to the basics as a non-profit means defining what we do and how and why we do it. The basics of the Military Historical Society of Minnesota can be found in our mission statement.

“The mission of the Military Historical Society of Minnesota is to educate the public on the service of Minnesota’s veterans, preserve a record of their service

through exhibits of the Minnesota Military Museum, and to preserve the artifacts related to their service for future generations.”

Key to this mission statement is “educating” the public.

As we enter another new year and look at goals for the organization, we have to go back to the basics and ask ourselves if we are doing the best job possible of educating the public on the service of Minnesota veterans. Are we reaching the people we need to reach? Are we reaching all that we could be?

Over the past few years the number of visitors at the Minnesota Military Museum has shown a steady decline despite our efforts to keep people walking in the door.

This trend is not restricted to our museum, but is also reflected in museums across the country. Research and surveys show smaller museums reflect this trend more than larger ones. Part of this could be explained because younger Americans between the ages of 18 to 44 are visiting museums at a rate declining more dramatically than their older counterparts. Meanwhile, 54-year-olds and over are actually increasing their attendance, although not enough to balance out the deficit in the younger demographic.

What this means for the Military Historical Society of Minnesota is we may need to look at new ways to increase the number of people we educate to best achieve our mission goals and the basis for our existence. There are many possible ways to make this happen.

In 2015 we will be opening a number of new or renovated exhibits that we hope will increase the number of people we educate. We will be exploring potential partnerships for the museum library to increase usage, and will be working more closely with teachers to increase student involvement at the museum.

We are always looking to educate and involve more students and one option we will look at in 2015 is to explore the feasibility of developing and funding some form of “mobile museum” that could be used to take our education efforts to the students instead of waiting for them to come to us.

This would be a major undertaking for the organization and there are many details that would have to be worked out; however, if we are going to achieve our basic mission it may be an option we cannot afford to ignore.

## George Leach is Featured Veteran

Major General George E. Leach was born in 1876. He was raised in Minneapolis and attended public schools, eventually graduating from the U of M Law School in 1897. He enlisted in “B” Battery of the 1st Minnesota Field Artillery in 1905 and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant.

In 1916 the Minnesota National Guard was ordered to active federal service to deal with problems on the border with Mexico. Major George Leach commanded the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Minnesota Field Artillery Regiment.

In WW I Leach commanded the 151st Field Artillery Regiment, part of the famous 42nd Rainbow Division under General MacArthur, who regarded Leach as the finest artillery officer in the army.

Leach was elected mayor of Minneapolis in 1921, 1923, 1925, 1927, 1937, and 1939. He ran unsuccessfully for governor in 1926 and 1938.

In 1931 Leach was appointed Chief of the National Guard Bureau and in 1937 he was President of the National Guard Association.

He commanded the 34th Infantry Division from 1940-41 while it underwent vigorous training and preparations for its eventual participation in WWII. He retired from the Army in 1941.



Major General George Leach in 1931.

## OUT OF THE ARCHIVES

By Chad Conrady



The website for the archives is complete. It can be accessed through the main museum website using the menu link labeled "Archives." Once on the archives site a visitor can review some of the policies regarding use of the archives and other reference services. In addition, after reading these policies a researcher may contact me directly for a reference request or to have materials pulled for their visit by filling out the "Reference Contact

Form." Another portion of the website is devoted to donating archival materials to the museum. The first part of this page introduces visitors or potential donors to what exactly archival records/materials are and the two types of value that an archivist uses to appraise potential archival donations. This page also gives a brief synopsis of the museum's collection policy and provides examples of the types of material that are most often considered historically valuable or significant, as well as collecting exclusions.

The next, and probably one of the most important parts of the donation process, is the donor form. In addition to agreeing to physically transfer materials to the museum, it transfers any copyright ownership held by the donor to the museum. Because most things held by an archive are unpublished, copyright law stipulates that a copyright is active for 120 years in the case of unpublished and/or anonymous material (where the creator of the material is unknown). If the author of the unpublished work is known, then the copyright term is the life of the creator

plus an additional 70 years. Without the donor signing over copyright to the museum, researchers wanting to publish their research containing photographs or portions of written works will need to contact the creator or their heirs in order to gain permission to publish the materials.

Just as a simple aside, those materials that are created by the Federal government are always in the public domain; so are Minnesota state government records unless a particular department decides to claim copyright to them. Like the reference section of the site, the donation portion also has a form that a potential donor can fill out to initiate the donation process. Aside from the basic contact information two other fields should be filled out in order to help me determine where the materials fit within the museum's collection policy and their enduring value. By working with me and using the form, I will be able to more fully understand and appreciate the background and historical significance of a donation—versus mailing or just dropping things off.

I have also created blog entries on the website, allowing visitors to the site to see a sampling of some of the materials that have been arranged or nearly completely processed. So far I have posted blogs on the payroll records of the Headquarters Company, 34th Division and the enlistment record of a member of Company K, 2nd Minnesota Infantry Regiment. As mentioned in a previous column, access to the museum's archival finding aids is also accessible through the new archives website. Collections that will be accessible soon are historic St. Peter Armory Records; Company D, Second Minnesota Infantry Records; and the Kenneth Murphy Papers. The museum/archives has also joined Twitter under @MNMilMuseum. So far, I have posted pictures of interesting things that I have come across with processing collections and when new blogs have been posted. In the future I will post photos of the construction of Doug's new exhibits and of events happening at the museum or at Camp Ripley.

### New archive section added to military museum's website

Thanks to the fine work being done by our archivist, Chad Conrady, we now have a new website providing links and helpful information on how you can use the resources available in the museum's archives. Also, don't miss Chad's blog.

Click on "Archives" in the left menu bar on the museum's homepage [www.mnmilitarymuseum.org](http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org)

### 38 volunteers recognized at 2014 staff appreciation dinner

Thirty-eight people attended the annual Volunteer and Staff Appreciation Dinner held October 24 at the Camp Ripley Town Hall.

The evening got underway with a reception hosted by MHSM Board President Nick Ostapenko, followed by a steak dinner. Then came special awards for services rendered during the past year, drawings for prizes, and finally gift baskets for the ladies and museum caps for the men.

As always, "a good time was had by all."

# DONOR HONOR ROLL, July-September 2014

## MEMORIALS

October - December, 2014

### Given by:

194th Tank Regiment Assn.  
Rodney Hannula  
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Richard and Betty Hayes  
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Duane Marholz  
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### In Memory of:

George R. Brankato  
BG (Ret.) Bernie Cahill  
MG (Ret.) Robert Blevins  
Donald Youngquist  
Gary J. Forbord  
Lyle A. Haney  
MAJ (Ret.) John McQuaid  
David Byron

## ARTIFACT DONATIONS

(October 1, 2014 – December 31, 2014)

The museum gratefully acknowledges donations of artifacts from the following:

Erik Brun ▪ William Englehardt ▪ Harold Fiala ▪ Mike Galdonik ▪ John E. Gallas ▪ Neil Gosman ▪ S. Haugen ▪ Gerald Johnson ▪ Lowell Kruse ▪ Jacqueline Lindman ▪ Bill Maher ▪ Jim McDuff ▪ Robert Meisch ▪ Melvin Miller ▪ Minnesota Historical Society ▪ LeRoy Rockman ▪ Donald Slavik ▪ Leland P. Smith ▪ Thomas Surdyk ▪ Tom Swanson ▪ Richard D. Swenson Contributions

## CONTRIBUTIONS

(October 1-December 31, 2014)

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TO THE MAX  
**give**DAY 

NOV 13, 2014

It was another successful Give to the Max Day. Donors contributed a record total of \$5,360 to the museum on November 13, most of which will be matched by a grant to the museum from the Katherine B. Andersen Fund of the St. Paul Foundation. Statewide, Minnesotans broke a record in philanthropy on that day, donating more than \$18 million to their favorite schools and charities during the 24-hour giving marathon.

## SPOTLIGHTED RECENT DONATIONS



Lee Smith donated a wonderful collection of early Minnesota National Guard badges for shooting, proficiency in drill, faithful service, etc. These badges were all locally procured and unlike today, when regulations specify the exact design, these badges were designed on the unit level or by individuals for unique presentation, so they vary greatly in purpose, pattern, and materials. Because they were made by local jewelers all are exceptionally well made.

Bill Maher donated a WWII German extreme cold temperature flight suit in very nice condition, along with artifacts from the man who brought it home from WWII. Many times things like this were brought home by veterans with the intention of using them. A flight suit was perfect for ice fishing on a Minnesota lake, and a camouflage paratrooper jacket perfect for duck hunting. During WWII the Navy issued millions of denim trousers and cotton work shirts. Try to find a set now. They were too handy and practical to leave in a drawer. Rare badges and medals often survive, but the most common items are often the rarest and hardest to find today.

Power Foundation ▪ Paul Monteen ▪ Richard Nash ▪ Todd Neuman ▪ David Newhall ▪ James Nygaard ▪ Daniel Olmschenk ▪ Kris Olson ▪ Stephen Osman ▪ Joan Ostapenko ▪ Nicholas Ostapenko ▪ John Overton ▪ Cindy Peterson ▪ Douglas Pietrowski ▪ Pillager Senior Center ▪ Donald Pitt ▪ James and Kathy Proctor ▪ John and Janet Roe ▪ Alan Roemeling ▪ Karen Seifert ▪ Gary Shrout ▪ Harry Sieben ▪ Leland Smith ▪ Eugene Somers ▪ Jordyn Soukup ▪ Katherine B. Andersen Fund of the Saint Paul Foundation ▪ Ken Streiff ▪ Thomas Surdyk ▪ Ethyl Tate ▪ Jon van der Hagen ▪ Joseph Vita ▪ JoAnne Blowers Volkman ▪ James Weaver

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## Museum receives two grants for new exhibits

The Minnesota Military Museum was recently rewarded with a \$1,500 grant from the Minnesota Power Foundation to support updates to the museum's Women in the Military exhibit. The exhibit highlights the involvement of women in military service over the past 100 years.

The Benton Telecommunications Foundation has given a \$9,600 grant to support the museum's planned new exhibit about the Vietnam War. Scheduled to open in July 2015, the new special exhibit will mark the 50th anniversary

of the start of major US combat operations in Vietnam. The service of Minnesota Vietnam veterans will be highlighted through their stories, artifacts, and photographs. Attention will not only be given to combat, but also to the stories of mechanics, cooks, clerks, logisticians, and other support troops from all branches of service. The Benton Telecommunications Foundation was founded by the Benton Cooperative Telephone Company in 2007.



Cheryl Scapanski, Benton Foundation Treasurer, presents a \$9,600 check to Jeff Thielen, Executive Director (left) and Doug Bekke, Curator (right). They stand in front of the Vietnam section of the museum's permanent America at War exhibit.



Carl Thesing of Minnesota Power presents a \$1500 check to museum administrator Sandy Erickson. Also pictured L to R: Dean Witt and Kelly Desormey of Minnesota Power and 1LT Janell Johnson, MNARNG. The gift will fund improvements to the Women in the Military exhibit.