

**TRAIL**



**BLAZER**

**Memories of your visits to  
Lorraine - France**



**70th INFANTRY DIVISION  
Oklahoma - City**



## INTRODUCTION

This brochure aims at reminding the 275th Infantry Regiment and 70th Infantry Division of their visits to Lorraine (France) from 1985 to 2005 in :

- Alsting
- Etzling
- Forbach
- Grosbliederstroff
- Kerbach
- Lixing
- Oeting
- Spicheren

Browsing these pages will give you the opportunity to live all the moments that you lived in each village again. You will also find some extracts of the articles published in the local newspapers concerning your visits in the region, which are good memories of the friendship between France and America.

**Have a nice reading!**



## ALSTING

Number of inhabitants: 2,574

### History

On 1st July 1870, France declared war on Germany. The situation of Alsting was really affected by that. On 10<sup>th</sup> May 1871, Alsace and some other parts of Lorraine were annexed to Germany and Alsting became a German village for the next 47 years. After the end of the war the village became French again.

In 1944, the village was severely bombed but on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1945, it was liberated by the American army.

In order to thank the Virgin for her protection during the war, the people of Alsting erected a cave.

### Monuments

The cave of Virgin Mary.



The memorial stele of the liberation by the Americans' army.



## ETZLING

Number of inhabitants: 1,204

### History

The 17<sup>th</sup> century was a long period of misfortunes and destructions. The population of Lorraine and especially the population near the German border in Moselle were devastated by plagues, wars and famines.

It was only during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, that Etzling was reconstructed. In 1789, the village counted 272 inhabitants.

The war commitment of the Americans and the landing on 6th June 1944 of American soldiers in Normandy gave back hope to the population

In early December, the allies moved nearer and the first shells fell on Etzling. A war of position took place 5 km from the village and lasted all winter.

### Monuments

« St Hubert » Church , 1890



A view of the devastated main street



## FORBACH

“Sous-préfecture”<sup>\*</sup> of the Moselle Department

Number of inhabitants: 23,000

### Economy

When the « Houillères du bassin Lorrain » (coal mines) closed down, a great number of inhabitants went to work in Germany. Since 1997, Forbach has become an active member of the association “Zukunft SaarMoselle Avenir”, whose aim is to encourage the development of the French and German cooperation.

### History



The courage and the bravery of the 274th and 276th regiments of U.S. infantry and of the 146th regiment of French Infantry put an end to 105 days of war (from November 28, 1944 to March 14, 1945). For the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the liberation, in 2005, the town of Forbach awarded the medal of recognition of the city to these regiments.

### Monuments



“La Chapelle Sainte Croix” (St Cross Chapel), in the Creutzberg forest. (Gothic architecture of 13<sup>th</sup> century)

“Le château du Schlossberg” (Schlossberg Castle)  
Built in the beginning of 12<sup>th</sup> century



\* a French administrative district



## GROSBLIEDERSTROFF

Number of inhabitants: 3,334

### History

During World War II the inhabitants of Grosbliederstroff were evacuated to the Charente\* department and the Coal miners were transferred to the mines of the Nord Pas-de-Calais. Many inhabitants were forced to join the German army. These soldiers are called “Malgré-Nous” (In spite of us). They were obliged to work in German factories. The village was bombed in 1944 and 1945 it was liberated by the American 275<sup>th</sup> Trailblazers.

### Economy

The main activity was the thermal power of 1954 to 1989 which belonged to the group HBL “Coal company” which closed down in 2004. Many people are currently working in Germany.

### Monument



“Le pont de l’amitié” (Bridge of Friendship) crosses the Saar river. It separates Grosbliederstroff in France from Kleinbliederstroff in Germany. Every day hundreds of residents cross the pedestrianized bridge in order to do their shopping, to work, or to go to cultural events.

The Museum “Souvenirs de Guerre” (= War memories) was created by the historical and archeological center of Grosbliederstroff directed by Christophe ULTSCH. Over time he collected memories related to World War II, the occupation and the liberation.



The memorial stele



\*Charente is a French « départ



## KERBACH

Number of inhabitants: 1,006

### History

KERBACH is a village that is part of the town of Stiring-Wendel. Kerbach appeared in the 18th Century after the immigrants' repopulation that followed the exodus of the Thirty-Years' War. The population is especially made up of farmers and miners.

### Monuments

- Moulin Neuf (the new Mill)
- Vieux Moulin (the old Mill)



The church of Kerbach.



## LIXING

Number of inhabitants: 900

### History

The history of Lixing was marked by the wars between Germany and France. The village became German just like Alsace. In 1918 it became French and then German again in 1940.



Between 1939 and 1940 the village was evacuated and its population moved to Charente\*. The village was liberated in March 1945 after the landing of American soldiers.

The village was marked by the exploitation of the coal mines of Forbach. The Coal Company of Lorraine coalfields was the main employer of the region. After the last shaft, La Houve, closed down in 2004, many people were forced to retire early.

### Monuments



The church is the main monument of the village.

\*Charente is a French "departm



## OETING

Number of inhabitants: 2,653



### History

During the war of 1870-1871, no battle took place in Oeting but the village was used as a camp for the French troops of General Bataille. It has been so even for the 1<sup>st</sup> World War.

When the village was occupied by the Germany in 1939, it was evacuated and its population moved to Charente\* .

The village was bombed from November 1939 to February 1945 and it was liberated by the Americans in February 1945.

### Monument



The parish of Oeting

\*Charente is a French "department" which is part of Poitou-Charente



## SPICHEREN

Number of inhabitants: 3,500



The sword which separates two ears from corn, on the coat of arms of the village, evokes the War between France and Germany of August 6, 1870.

### Economy

One of the characteristics of the population of Spicheren is the great number of Germans who settle in the village because of the border nearby.

### History

Many battles took place in the village of Spicheren during three successive wars:

From July 19, 1870 to May 10, 1871

1<sup>st</sup> World War: 1914-1918

2<sup>nd</sup> World War: 1939-1940

### Monument



Offered by the Association of the 70th Division of US Infantry to the village of Spicheren to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Spicheren, on February 21, 1945.

In memory of all the military and civilians killed during the War before the liberation of winter 1944-45.





# Different articles published in the local newspapers



## Christophe Ultsch & the 70th Infantry Division veterans

It is Mr. Ultsch who had the idea of this booklet. Since 1993 is Mr Ultsch has been a member of the American association of 70<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. He is the director of the museum of war memories. He keeps the memory and the relations between France and America going. Each year, he welcomes the veterans and organizes their stay.

*"It is always with big pleasure and emotion that we welcome our friends , as a strong bond unites us"*

Mr Ultsch





### Grossbliderstroff

During each visit to Grossbliderstroff the former US soldiers lay a wreath on the war memorial. It has become a custom also to visit the Museum of Grossbliderstroff devoted to their memory. Different events were organized during the over-years visits for example:

- February 10<sup>th</sup> 1999: A reception was organized in M Bernard Sandoval's honour, a veteran.
- May 19<sup>th</sup> 2001: The pupils of Victor Hugo secondary school welcomed the veterans. They played the last post for the American soldiers while laying a wreath on the war memorial.
- May 11<sup>th</sup> 2005: The students of BTS Trilingual Secretariat welcomed the veterans and accompanied them on their usual tour

### Alsting

The 275th regiment are back to France for their campaign. After Behren and Spricheren, they are celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation. It is an emotional time for everyone.

Survivors recall several highlights of their struggle during the 1<sup>st</sup> World War.

During their stay in ALSTING, they inaugurated the MZ4 which was used during the liberation.



### Forbach

The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation also coincided with the commemoration of the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War.

The ceremony began with the inauguration of the exhibition "Forbach, ville détruite, ville nouvelle" (Forbach, destroyed town, new town).

The ceremony was followed by a religious ceremony in place of worship in town. Then a wreath was laid on the commemorative plaque and on a "square" (Carré militaire).

The visit ended with a reception with the presence of many important people.

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## Lorraine

