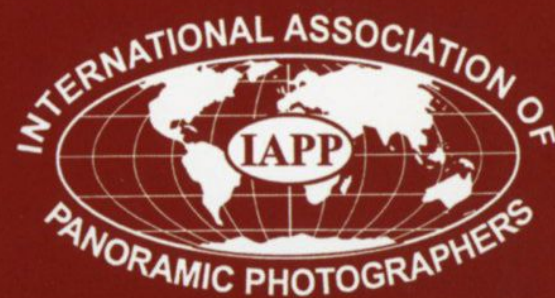


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Exhibitions:

Tears of Stone: World War I Remembered

By Jane Alden Stevens

While on a research trip to France a few years ago, I was deeply moved by the sheer number of monuments created in honor of those who died in World War I. The unprecedented number of wartime casualties introduced the concept that when a country loses a huge portion of its population in wartime, it has a need to acknowledge and defend the sacrifice in a public manner. In Western Front countries, the thousands of national, local, and private memorials that were built became, and continue to be, places of pilgrimage and remembrance, along with the hundreds of military cemeteries where soldiers lie buried.

A long-simmering curiosity about World War I was rekindled during that trip, and a new project titled "Tears of Stone: World War I Remembered" was born as a result. I brought to it a comprehensive knowledge of European culture and history, having earned a BA in European Studies and having lived and worked in Germany for many years. In addition, my 20 years as a fine arts photographer specializing in interpretive picturemaking had given me vast experience with both technical and aesthetic picture-making skills. This knowledge base provided me with a unique capac-



ity for the historical and visual research that the project required.

I began by spending a year researching the logistics of the project and writing numerous grant proposals seeking funding. I read many books devoted to the subject of World War I, and particularly to its aftermath. The Web informed me about local weather conditions, available daylight hours

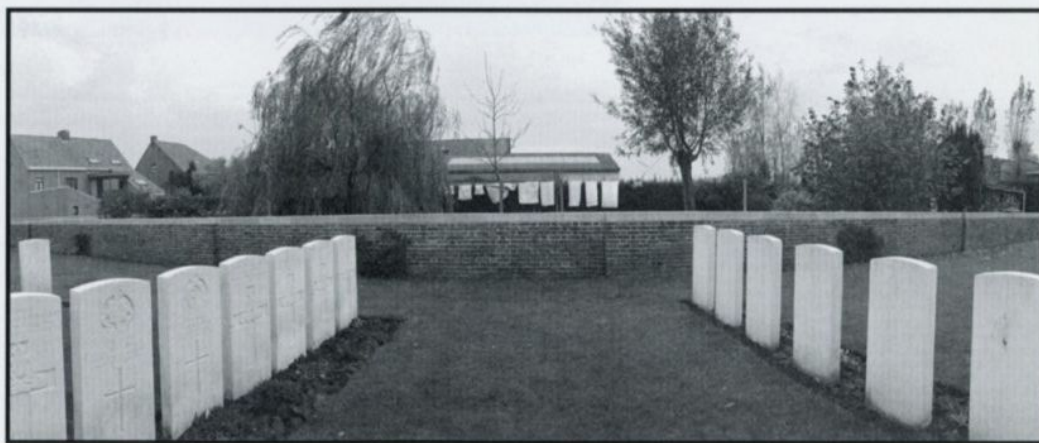
throughout the year, and specific sites that might be of interest. Because of this extensive planning period, I was ultimately able to shoot roughly 300 rolls of film at 189 various sites.

A series of camera and film tests conducted during this research phase was essential for determining which camera

would yield the type of picture I envisioned. Although all of my prior panoramic work was done on an AI-Vista Model 5D camera, I now needed something that would be more versatile and allow me to shoot more quickly. I ultimately chose two medium-format panoramic cameras, a Pinoramic 120 made by Kurt Mottweiler, and a Noblex Pro 6/150 U.

The Pinoramic 120 camera has an aperture of f200, with a 60mm effective focal length and a 120-degree field of view. It yields 6 exposures on 1 roll of 120 film, and has a bulb actuated pneumatic shutter. It allowed me to get extremely close to my subjects, while the Noblex made photographs with exquisite detail. Both of these cameras were convenient to use in the field, and the size of the medium format negatives yielded superior image resolution.

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Tears of Stone: World War I Remembered

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When the preliminary research was done and funding from the Ohio Arts Council, the English-Speaking Union, and the University of Cincinnati was in place, the shooting phase of the project commenced, which took a year-and-a-half to complete. I made a total of 5 trips to Europe, including Belgium, Germany, England, and France, with a stay of 10-14 days per trip. After each visit, I returned to the United States to process, print, and evaluate the results.

The limited amount of time for shooting during each trip presented a unique set of challenges. Since I did not have the luxury of staying and photographing in any given location for a prolonged period of time, every minute of each visit counted. I would arrive with a chart that outlined the time of day when sunrise, midday, sunset, and dusk occurred for the region I would be in. In summer, I could shoot for 13-14 hours a day, while in winter only 8 hours of daylight were available.

Since I was shooting primarily outdoors, inclement weather was definitely an issue, regardless of the time of year I was there. Fingerless fleece gloves with a leather palm were perfect for keeping my hands warm, yet provided me with the necessary flexibility for using the cameras. An oversized pair of snow gaiters fastened above the knees protected my ankles from the wind and my knees when kneeling on the ground. In addition, my raingear was absolutely waterproof, lightweight, and big enough to

accommodate the layers of clothing needed when shooting in winter.

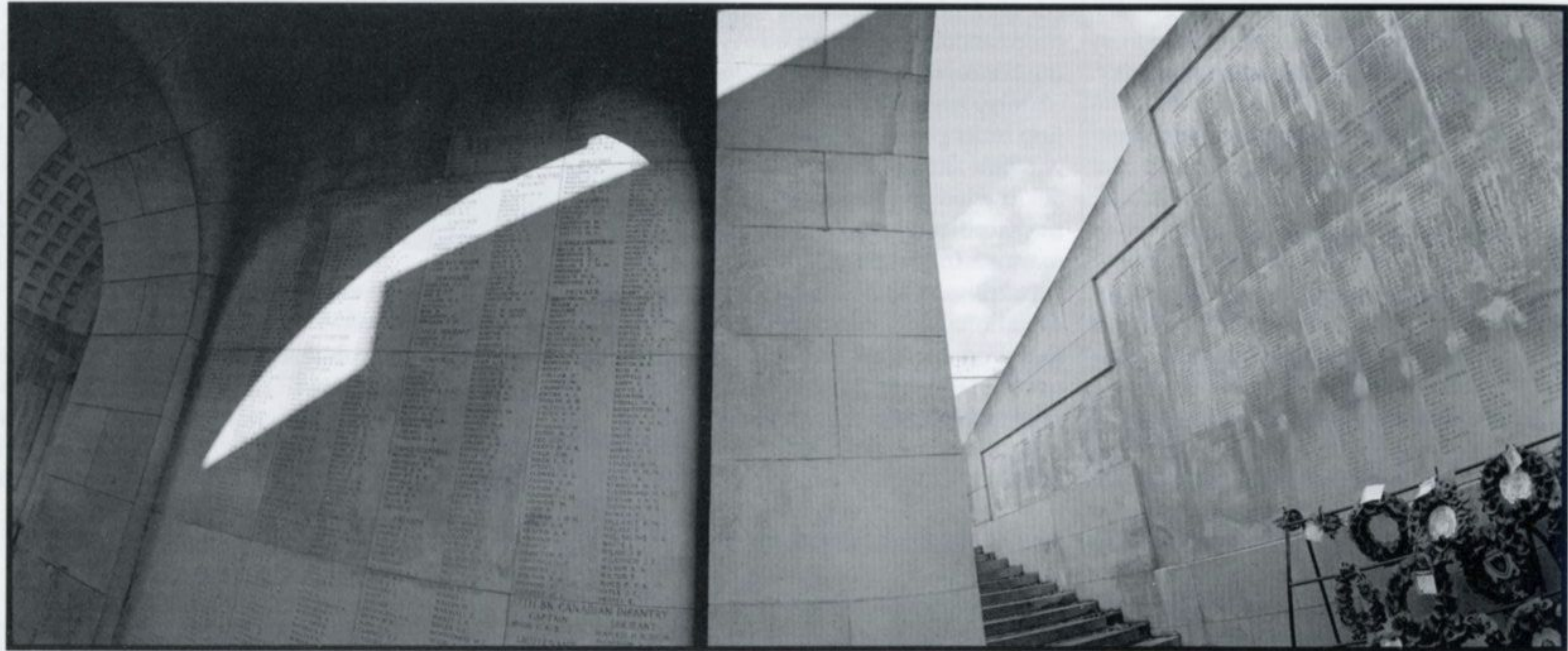
Using a fanny-pack style camera bag meant minimal back strain at the end of the day. This bag style can swing easily out of the way to rest on one's back while kneeling, squatting, or lying down on the ground, thus eliminating the usual putting-down-and-

trip, I had packed a lightweight tripod, but soon discovered that when the wind blew at speeds more than 5mph (which it always did), the tripod legs would vibrate. The resulting photographs were not as sharp or clear as I would have liked, so I carried a heavier, more stable tripod on all subsequent trips.

I had determined early on that, because

BW software and quad black inks, and printed them to 12"x28" on Wells River paper. Cone Editions also made larger (21"x48") exhibition prints for me on an Epson 9000 that were matched to the output of my own printer.

The resulting exhibition is a conceptual installation that allows viewers to participate in the process of remembrance.



picking-up routine that one experiences with normal camera bags. In addition, it came with a built-in rain hood which I used to protect the bag and its contents during the daily showers I experienced while out in the field.

Besides the rain, wind was also a real problem. The Pinoramic 120 required long exposure times, and that means absolute camera stillness. On my first

of the nature of the subject matter, this project would be shot with black & white materials and digitally printed on watercolor paper. Two digital printing workshops at Cone Editions Press in East Topsham, Vermont, provided me with hands-on experience with scanners and printers, and prepared me for the post-production phase of the project. I made most of the exhibition prints on an Epson 3000 with Piezography

A strip of molding which runs continuously around the gallery walls is affixed below the photographs. Scores of photographs of written comments from World War I cemetery visitors' books are made available on pedestals placed throughout the gallery.

Viewers are asked to write down their thoughts or observations on the reverse side of these pictures and to place

them at any location along the molding. Regardless of which side is facing out, writing is visible and the exhibition itself takes on the character of a memorial.

Going into this project, I knew that I would find many monuments, memorials, and war graves along the former Western Front. I was surprised however, to discover how many people were still making pilgrimages to these places. In fact, I found evidence of active individual and collective mourning everywhere I went. That the memory of these soldiers is still very much alive to current generations despite the passage of time reflects both the enormity of the human loss incurred during the First World War and humanity's ongoing need to find meaning in something that is essentially incomprehensible.

Although World War I memorialization was the catalyst for this project, undertaking acts of remembrance to lost loved ones is universal to the human experience, regardless of culture or era. "Tears of Stone" acts both as a reminder of the ongoing cost of historical events and as a mirror to the human heart.

"Tears of Stone" can be seen from May 24-June 29, 2002, at Cleveland State University's Art Gallery, and will be at Blue Sky Gallery in Portland, Oregon, in the fall of 2002. The exhibition is also available online and can be found at www.janealdenstevens.com. The interactive nature of the real world exhibit has been retained in the virtual version.

Jane Alden Stevens lives in Cincinnati, Ohio. ■

