

The Gellerts and Abington High School

Walter George Gellert was born in XX, 1889, in Pennsylvania.

He married Francis May Nickel (see below) in 1912 in Philadelphia, and probably around this time he converted from Judaism to Presbyterianism.

In 1920 they were living in Philadelphia Ward 35.

They had three sons (see below), Walter Gellert Jr. (1915-), William Francis Gellert (1921-1954), and John Franklin Gellert (1922-1945).

He passed away on 16 November 1938, in Miami Dade, Florida.

According to one of the ancestry websites, the last name Gellert has its origins in Germanic and Jewish cultures, particularly among Ashkenazi Jews, where it is derived from the Yiddish name "Gelert," which means "to shine" or "to be bright." The name is believed to have first appeared in regions of Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in Germany and Poland, where Jewish communities flourished. Historically, individuals bearing the name Gellert may have been associated with traits of brightness or brilliance, possibly reflecting their intellectual or artistic pursuits.

Francis May Nickel was born on 2 November 1889, in Philadelphia, and baptized a year later.



Her parents were Frank Nickel (1865-1931) and Mary Barbara Eckert (1867-1938).

In 1900 they were living in Philadelphia Ward 25, and both parents ultimately passed away in Philadelphia.

She had two sisters, Margarete who was born in September 1892, and Barbara Mary who was born on 2 February 1895, and one brother, Frank Nickel Jr, who was born in 1903, all in Pennsylvania.

In 1910 she (and parents) were living in Philadelphia Ward 35.

In 1912 she married Walter G. Gellert in Philadelphia.

In 1920 they were living in Philadelphia Ward 35.

They had three sons (see above and below).

Records from 1930 and 1935 indicate that they lived in Abington, Pennsylvania.

In 1938 husband Walter (or both of them) must have been living in Florida because that is where he passed away.

In 1940 her address was given as 429 SW 28th Rd, Miami Dade, Florida.

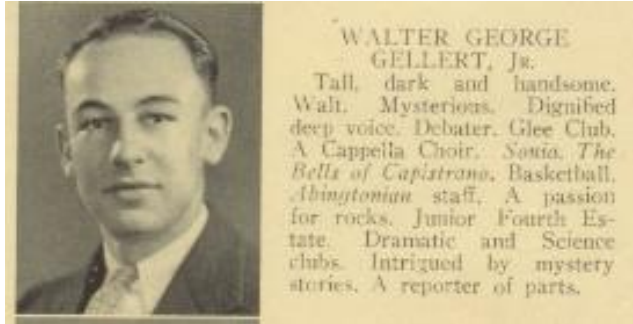
By 1942 she was back in Abington at 5 Jericho Rd., probably to be closer to her sons and their families.

She passed away in Hatboro in January 1972, at age 82, and was buried in Ambler.

Walter George Gellert Jr., was born on 15 August 1915, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

He was six feet tall with brown eyes and brown hair.

He graduated from Abington High School in 1933.



Source: 1933 Abington High School yearbook

He was already a partner in the Adelpia Pearl Button Co., 3509 N. Randolph, Philadelphia, when he enlisted at the War Memorial Building in Willow Grove sometime before 8 January 1942. He gave his home address as 207 Keith Rd., Abington.

On 8 January 1942, he gave his new address as Welsh Rd., Meadowbrook, and then on 7 September 1943, and again in April 1945, he gave his address as 414 Pepper Rd., Jenkintown.

Walter Gellert Jr. managed to survive WWII and passed away on 2 January 1999, at the age of 83.

William Francis Gellert was born on 7 February 1921, in Philadelphia, according to his enlistment registration card.

He was 5'11" tall with brown eyes, brown hair and freckles.

He enlisted in Willow Grove on 16 February 1942, giving his level of education only as grammar school. His enlistment registration said he was self-employed in Philadelphia and claimed to be a skilled mechanic. At that point he was married to Shirley G. Gellert and living at 117 Rosemont Lane in Abington.

At some point after the war they moved to 1127 Jericho Rd., Abington, and he worked as a salesman for a manufacturing company, according to his death certificate.

He took his own life early in the morning on 21 January 1954, in Upper Dublin Township.

John Franklin ("Jack") Gellert was born on 28 July 1922, in Atlantic City, NJ.



He was 5'8" tall with gray eyes and brown hair.

In 1930 and 1935 he lived with his parents in Abington.

In 1940, however, he gave the same address as his parents in Miami Dade.

There is no record of him attending Abington High School, but he attended Penn State in State College, PA, for two years in the Class of 1945 before he enlisted. Therefore he would have started at Penn State in the fall of 1940.

He enlisted in the army in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, on 30 June 1942, and entered active service on 6 November 1942. He was

assigned Army Service Number (ASN) 33 466 763. At that time he gave his place of residence as his mother's address at 5 Jericho Rd., Abington, and his mailing address as the Alpha Chi Rho fraternity, State College.

Jack was assigned to the 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Motorized Division, which went through various training and maneuvers and ended up at Fort Dix (New Jersey) on 12 April 1943. It was at Fort Dix, on 4 August 1943, that the division was reorganized as a standard infantry division and redesignated the 4th Infantry ("IVY") Division. Within the 4th Infantry Division there were only three infantry regiments – the 8th, the 12th and the 22nd. There were also several Field Artillery Battalions, Tank Destroyer Battalions, etc. On 19 September 1943, the Division went to Camp Gordon Johnston (Florida) for III Corps Carrabelle Maneuvers and instruction. On 1 December 1943, they arrived at Fort Jackson (South Carolina).

At Fort Jackson the 4th Infantry Division was alerted for overseas movement, and on 4 January 1944, the division staged at Camp Kilmer (New Jersey), with the intention of departing from the New York Port of Embarkation on 18 January 1944. It's not clear how they managed the logistics, but it was probably during this period in January that Jack Gellert married Ruth Swartley. Their address was 219 Corinthian Ave., Willow Grove. It's not clear how long Ruth S. Gellert stayed at this address following the mobilization of her husband.

The 4th Infantry Division arrived in England on 26 January 1944. Once in England the Division became absorbed in "an incredible degree of rugged and realistic training" for the amphibious assault on continental Europe. Soldiers rehearsed every step of the invasion in detail, starting with small-unit exercises and working up to the scale of the entire Utah force, which included not only the 4th ID, but also numerous other "attachments."

In fact, it was during this final dress rehearsal for the D-Day landings, "Exercise Tiger," that the division actually suffered some of its greatest losses. German E-boats infiltrated the exercise area and torpedoed several of the landing ships, killing at least 749 of the force, an incident that was little acknowledged until long after the war.

The 8th Infantry Regiment was a key part of the 4th Infantry Division, which participated in major WWII European operations including:

- The Normandy landings (D-Day, Utah Beach, June 6, 1944)
- Breakout from Normandy (Operation Cobra)
- The liberation of Paris
- The Hürtgen Forest conflicts
- The Battle of the Bulge
- The advance into Germany

The 4th Infantry Division, reinforced by some of the 90th Infantry Division, assaulted the northern coast of German-held France during the Normandy landings, landing at Utah Beach against relatively light resistance (as compared with the massive resistance at Omaha Beach) on 6 June 1944. Jack's 8th Infantry Regiment of the 4th Infantry Division was the first surface-borne Allied unit (as opposed to the parachutists that were air-dropped earlier) to hit the beaches at Normandy on D-Day, 6 June 1944. Before daylight, assault troops of B, C, E and F companies of the 2nd Battalion of the 8th Infantry Regiment of the 4th Infantry Division had descended their rope ladders and loaded onto 20 LCVPs (i.e., landing craft, vehicle, personnel – or "Higgins" boats) and were circling near the transport ships until step-off time. Before 0900 the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 8th Infantry Regiment had destroyed all resistance along a two mile stretch of Utah Beach. Jack Gellert could even be in one of the following photos.

As a Corporal (rank E-4 – below Sergeant, above Private First Class) in the 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division during World War II in the European Theater, Jack would have

typically served as a small-unit leader, bridging the gap between enlisted men and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) like sergeants. He would probably have been in charge of a fire team (4–5 men) or served as assistant squad leader in a rifle squad (~12 men). His main duties would have been:

- Tactical leadership: Directing fire and movement of the fire team during combat.
- Training & discipline: Ensuring men were proficient with weapons, fieldcraft and maintaining discipline.
- Communication: Relaying orders from the squad leader (Sergeant) to the men.
- Logistics & welfare: Overseeing ammunition distribution, checking equipment and responsible for soldiers' well-being.
- Combat role: Actively fighting as a rifleman or automatic rifleman while also managing subordinates.

In combat, he would have been responsible for assault & defense (leading small-unit maneuvers under enemy fire, coordinating suppressive fire, grenade use, and tactical movement); urban & rural operations (clearing houses, forests, and hedgerows); and morale & cohesion (keeping his men organized under chaotic conditions, replacing casualties quickly).

High casualty rates meant Corporals often assumed full squad leadership if the Sergeant was killed or wounded. They had to operate under extreme stress, often in poor weather and brutal terrain, like the Normandy coast and the Ardennes winter. As a result, the Corporal was critical to the success of U.S. infantry operations in WWII. While generals planned battles, Sergeants and Corporals executed them on the ground—translating orders into immediate action under fire.



*U.S. Soldiers of the 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, move out over the seawall on Utah Beach after coming ashore. Other troops are resting behind the concrete wall. Probably 6 June 1944.
Source: Army Signal Corps*



Assault troops of Colonel James Van Fleet's 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, with full equipment soon after landing in Northern France. 9 June, 1944.

Source: Signal Corps Archive from Ireland and United States

The 8th Infantry Regiment then moved inland and relieved the isolated 82nd Airborne Division at Sainte-Mère-Église, countering several German attacks on 7 June. The 4th ID then cleared the Cotentin peninsula and took part in the capture of Cherbourg on 25 June, which it held until relieved at the end of the month by the 101st Airborne.

After taking part in the fighting near Périers, 6–12 July, the 4th ID broke through the left flank of the German 7th Army, helping to stem the German drive toward Avranches.

On 25 August the division entered Paris with French army units, and gave French forces much of the credit for the liberation of their capital. During the liberation of Paris, Ernest Hemingway took on a self-appointed role as a civilian scout in the city of Paris for his friends in the 4th ID. He was with the 22nd Infantry Regiment when it advanced from Paris, northeast through Belgium, and into Germany (see below). J. D. Salinger, who met Hemingway during the liberation of Paris, was with the 12th Infantry Regiment.

On 6 September the 4th ID moved into Belgium through Houffalize, and finally into Germany on 11 September. It attacked the Siegfried Line at Schnee Eifel on 14 September 1944, but was stopped after small gains over the following days. The 8th and 22nd Infantry Regiments also failed to take Brandscheid and their offensive halted on 17 September in the face of German counterattacks.

Slow progress into the Zweifall area of Germany continued in October, and by 6 November the 4th ID was fighting in the Hürtgen Forest. The 8th and 22nd Infantry Regiments had a gap wedged between them in forest fighting, which stopped the offensive on 19 November. During five costly days of combat in the Hürtgen Forest the Division advanced only 1.5 miles. Eventually the 8th Infantry Regiment reached the edge of the Hürtgen Forest on 30 November but was unable to advance further.

On 3 December the 4th ID was relieved by the 83rd Infantry Division and moved to Luxembourg, only to meet the German Army's winter Ardennes Counteroffensive head-on in the Battle of the Bulge starting on 16 December 1944. Although its lines were dented and losses were heavy, it managed to hold the Germans at Dickweiler and Osweiler, finally took the town of Echternach on 27 December, and in early January crossed the Sauer River and overran German positions in Fohren and Vianden.

On 17 January 1945 the 87th Division relieved the 4th ID along the Sauer from Echternach to Wasserbillig. The 4th ID resumed its offensive and crossed the river at Bettendorf on 22 January 1945. It returned to Belgium on 28 January 1945, but was back in Germany on 1 February, breaching the outer defenses of the *West Wall* along the Schnee Eifel River near Brandscheid on 4 February 1945. On 9 February the 8th Infantry Regiment crossed the Prüm River, and stormed the town of Prüm on 12 February. Against heavy German resistance it then retreated and the 4th ID defended the Prüm River between Olzheim and Wutzerath from German counterattacks. After regrouping, the 4th ID crossed the Prüm River in force on 28 February near Olzheim (see maps). Initially the 4th ID could make only negligible gains, but within a week it was advancing well, and by the end of March it had crossed the Rhine.

However, it was during that first difficult week crossing the Prüm River, on or about 28 February (initially reported on one of the official documents as 5 March, but revised afterward), that Cpl. Jack Gellert was killed in action in Willwerath, Germany, only 2-3 km south of Olzheim, with gunshot wounds ("GSW") to the chest, elsewhere described as "battle injuries not intentionally inflicted by self or another person." He was temporarily interred in his uniform on 8 March 1945, at the U.S. Military Cemetery No. 1, Foy, Belgium, which was located four miles north of Bastogne. It has not been confirmed, but it is thought he belonged to Company C of the 8th Infantry Regiment because he was buried at Foy between Pvt Miller (Company C, 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th ID) and soldier (rank unknown) Cline, also Company C, 70th Tank Battalion, 4th ID.

The next of kin was formally notified of her loss on ??

On 14 January 1948, the next of kin, Ruth S. Gellert (by that time remarried as Ruth S. Maxson), relinquished her rights to direct the final disposition of the remains. Jack's mother then declined the army's standard offer to bring his remains back to the U.S., and he was disinterred on 1 October 1948 for removal to a permanent site that would be under the care and supervision of the American Battle Monuments Commission. The remains were prepared and placed in a transfer box on 7 October 1948, the casket was sealed on 9 November, and final burial took place at the U.S. Military Cemetery Henri Chapelle (Plot H, Row 7, Grave 40) in Belgium on 28 April 1949. He was awarded the Purple Heart.

The 4th Infantry Division suffered the greatest number of battle casualties of any U.S. infantry division that was only engaged in one campaign or theater of World War II:

- Total battle casualties: 22,660
- Killed in action: 4,097
- Wounded in action: 17,371
- Missing in action: 461
- Prisoner of war: 731
- Days of combat: 299

See

<https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/article/4th-infantry-division-the-easy-victory-at-utah-beach/>

<https://www.normandyamericanheroes.com/blog/4th-infantry-division-operation-neptune-utah-beach>

Here's a **historically accurate, immersive account** of what a **Corporal in the 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division** likely experienced on **D-Day, June 6, 1944**, based on documented operations at **Utah Beach**:

Dawn – 0200–0400 Hours: Embarkation and Crossing

The Corporal and his fire team are already aboard a Landing Craft, Infantry (LCI), rocking violently in the dark English Channel. Seasickness plagues some of his men; he checks on them despite his own unease. He ensures weapons are dry and ready—**M1 Garands cleaned and loaded, grenades secured, ammo belts tight**. Orders come down: **H-Hour** is approaching. He reviews the plan once more: **land on Utah Beach, push inland to secure the exits**.

Pre-Landing – 0500–0630 Hours: The Run-in

The sky lightens; naval gunfire pounds the French coast. The Corporal feels the concussions through the hull. He briefs his fire team one last time over the roar:

- "Stay low. Follow me. Keep moving off the beach. Watch for mines."
- He checks his gear: **M1 rifle, bayonet, entrenching tool, two bandoliers of ammo, first-aid pouch**.

As they near shore, German artillery begins to splash in the water. A shell lands close—spray and shrapnel rattle the LCI. The coxswain yells: **"Ramp down! Go!"**

H-Hour – 0630–0800 Hours: Utah Beach

The Corporal leads his men down the ramp into waist-deep water. Bullets snap overhead, but the 4th Division lands slightly off course, in a sector with **lighter resistance than Omaha**. He urges his men forward through obstacles—Belgian gates, Czech hedgehogs, barbed wire—mindful of **mines**. A man from another squad trips one; the blast is deafening.

On the sand, they find cover behind a dune. The Corporal checks his fire team: all present. He spots a German **machine gun nest** firing intermittently. He signals one man with a **Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR)** to lay suppressive fire while he and another toss grenades. The nest falls silent. He shouts to move inland.

Midday – 0900–1300 Hours: Pushing Inland

Following causeways through flooded fields behind the beach, they encounter sporadic sniper fire and pockets of resistance. The Corporal keeps his men spread out—one hit could otherwise kill them all. He directs fire on a farmhouse holding German riflemen; once cleared, they push on. They link up with tanks from the **70th Tank Battalion** supporting the advance.

Casualties mount in other squads; he absorbs stragglers, briefly commanding **nearly a full squad**. His voice is hoarse from shouting orders over gunfire.

Afternoon – 1400–1800 Hours: Securing the Objective

By late afternoon, the regiment captures key inland positions, cutting German defenders off from the beach. Exhaustion sets in, but the Corporal's work isn't over:

- Organizing **hasty defensive positions** in a hedgerow.
- Redistributing ammo and rations.
- Reporting losses to the platoon sergeant.

Nightfall – 2100 Hours: The First Night in France

As darkness falls, they dig foxholes in the bocage. The Corporal checks on each man—some cry silently, others clean weapons obsessively. He writes a quick note in a damp notebook: *"Made it off the beach. Lost Miller and Grant. Pray tomorrow's better."*

Machine gun bursts and distant artillery echo through the night. He tries to sleep in his hole, rifle across his chest, finger near the trigger.

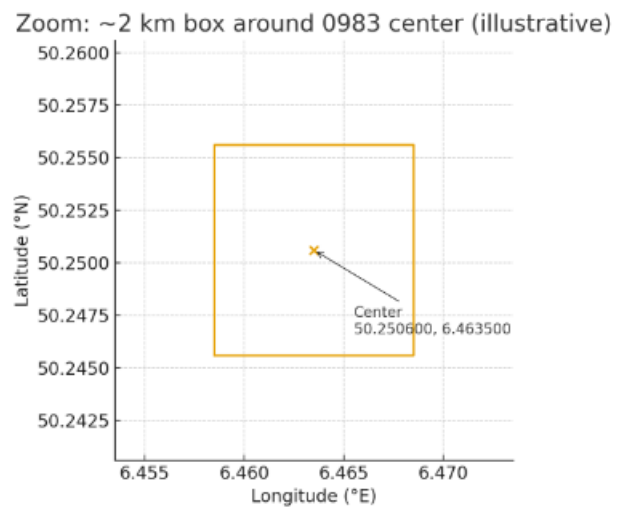
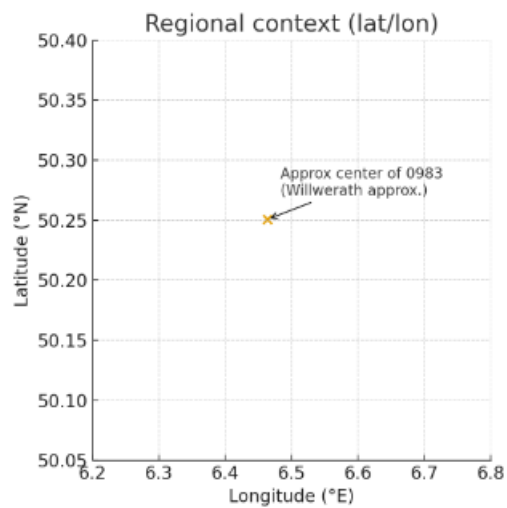
This was the Corporal's D-Day: leadership under fire, constant danger, responsibility for lives beyond his own. While Utah Beach was less catastrophic than Omaha, for those on the ground, it was still a brutal initiation to the liberation of Europe.

C Company was led by **Captain Robert C. Crisson**, who was wounded on D-Day and succeeded shortly after by **Captain John R. Garrabrant**

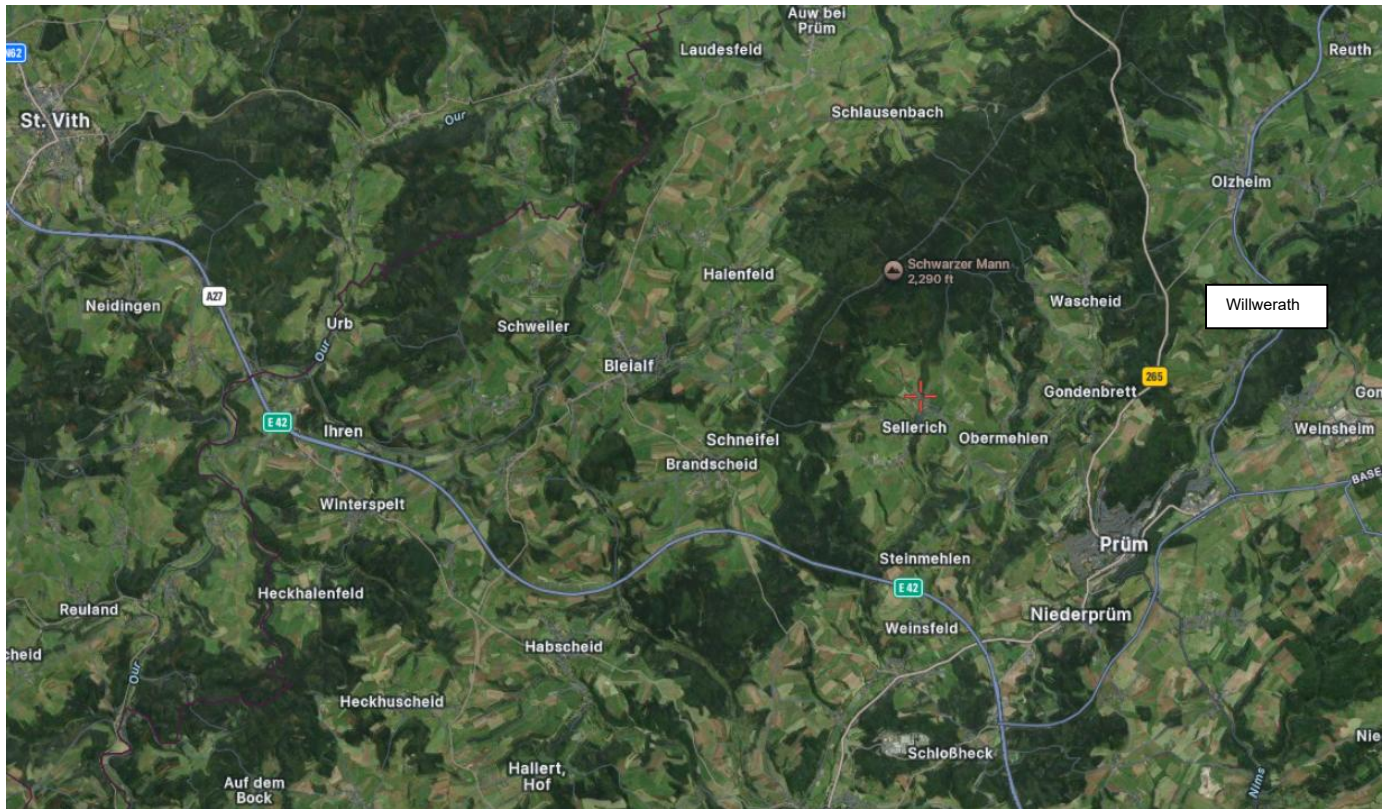
Companies **B and C** landed on the sector code-named **Tare Green**.

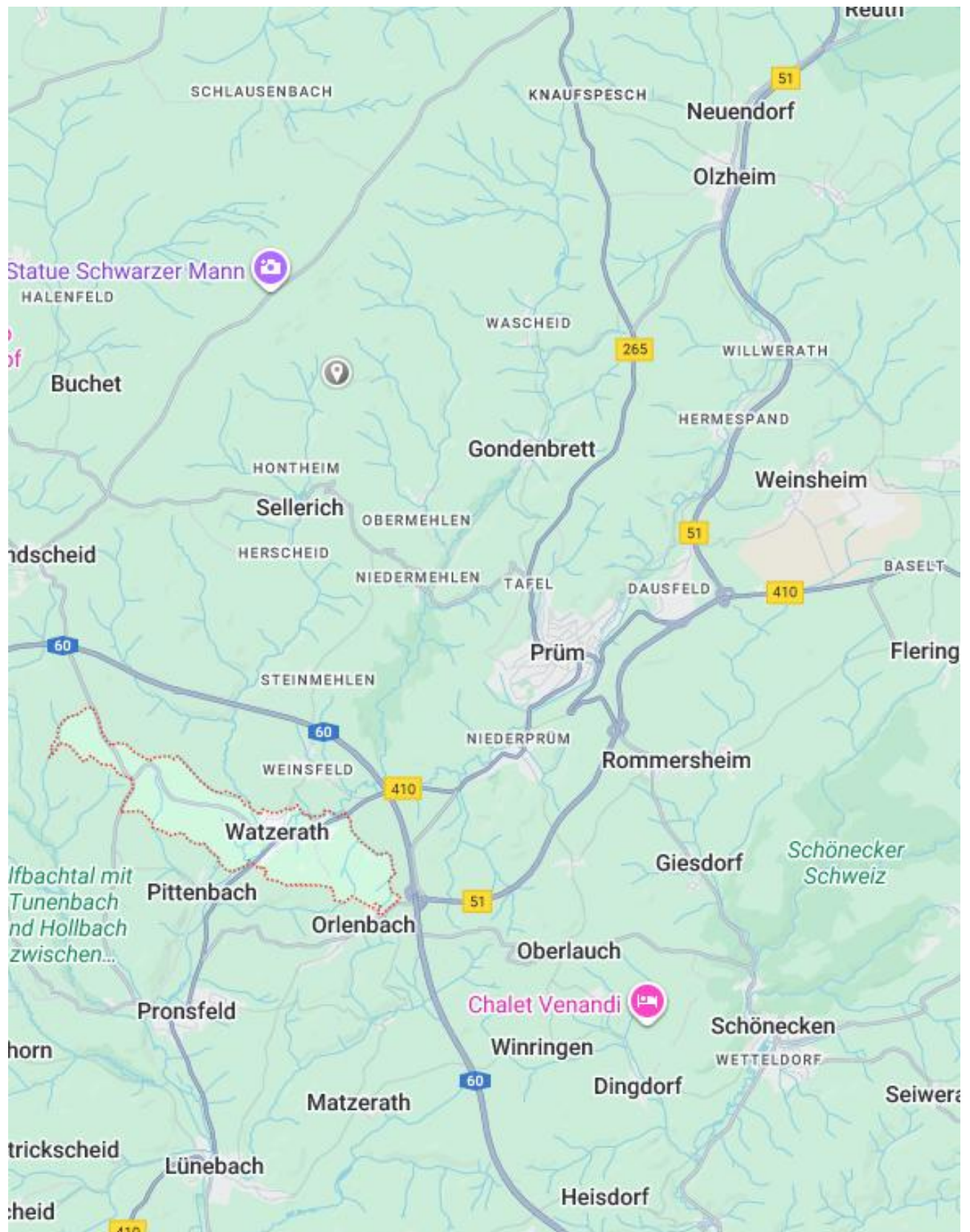
Consult the U.S. National Archives, including:

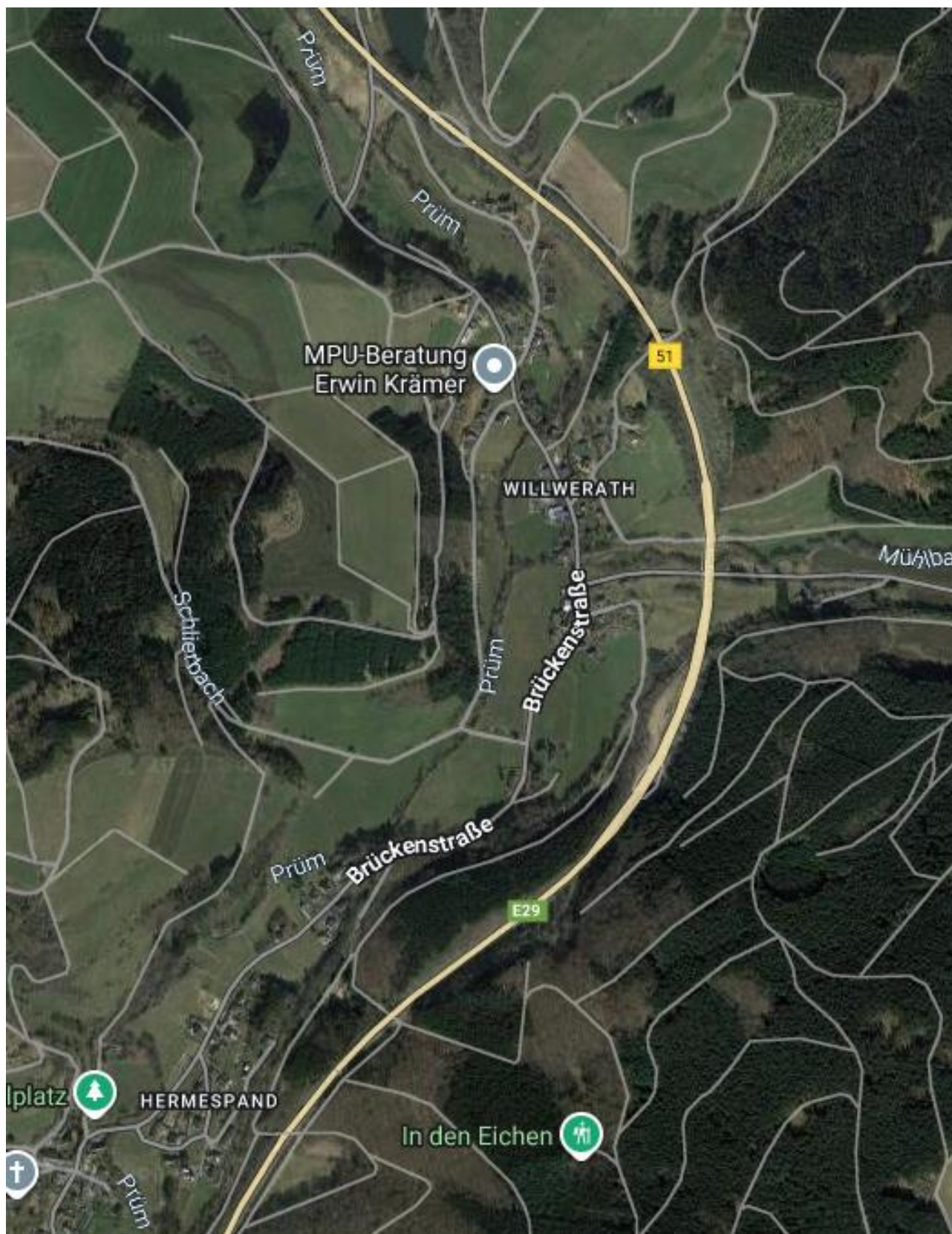
- Morning reports
- Company rosters
- Unit operational reports (after-action reports)



Done — I converted the wartime four-figure grid **0983** on the GSGS-4416 / AMS M641 **T1 (Trier)** sheet into a modern lat/long approximation and marked it on a simple contemporary map.







Some excerpts from the 1942 Abington High School "Oracle" yearbook

CHARLOTTE L. COLLADAY

Classical

Honor Roll student. Member of Student Council. Fun-loving. Hobbies—riding and knitting. Etiquette and Latin clubs. Attended C.S.P.A. conference in New York. Girls' Hi-Y. Ever Since Eve. J.F.E., Abingtonian, and Yearbook staffs.



D. ELIZABETH GOLD

Classical

Goldie. Lively, spirited. Varsity hockey, two years. Honor Roll. Sports writer for Abingtonian and Yearbook. Latin, Bowling clubs. J.F.E. Vice-president, Camping Arts club. Ardent chemistry student.



RUTH SWARTLEY

Classical

Ruthie. Demure. Popular. Secretary-treasurer of Student Council. Won three Civic Attitude awards. Oracle co-editor. Yearbook staff. Ever Since Eve. Vice-president, Girls' Hi-Y. Glee club. A Cappella choir, orchestra. Laboratory technician, her future career.



Student Council

Demonstrates democratic action in homeroom and school . . . teaches parliamentary procedure through practice . . . utilizes practical government in meetings . . . builds leaders of the future . . . develops initiative . . . inculcates democratic feeling in student body . . . encourages responsibility . . . Edward Bailey, president.

First Semester	Officers	Second Semester
Edward Bailey	PRESIDENT	Edward Bailey
Barbara Harkness	VICE-PRESIDENT	Robert Quay
Ruth Swartley	SECRETARY	Lois Wheatland
	TREASURER	James Bailey



Officers
deliberate
Swartley, Bailey, E. A.
Lissfelt, Harkness.

Publications

Co-editors



Landis, Swartley.



January
Staff

Rogers, Swartley, Kistler,
Gold, Taylor, Colladay,
Welsh.

1942 Y