



## My Life before the World War, 1860--1917: A Memoir (American Warriors Series)

By John J. Pershing

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Few American military figures are more revered than General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing (1860--1948), who is most famous for leading the American Expeditionary Forces in World War I. The only soldier besides George Washington to be promoted to the highest rank in the U.S. Army (General of the Armies), Pershing was a mentor to the generation of generals who led America's forces during the Second World War.

Though Pershing published a two-volume memoir, *My Experiences in the World War*, and has been the subject of numerous biographies, few know that he spent many years drafting a memoir of his experiences prior to the First World War. In *My Life Before the World War, 1860--1917*, John T. Greenwood rescues this vital resource from obscurity, making Pershing's valuable insights into key events in history widely available for the first time.

Pershing performed frontier duty against the Apaches and Sioux from 1886--1891, fought in Cuba in 1898, served three tours of duty in the Philippines, and was an observer with the Japanese Army in 1905 during the Russo-Japanese War. He also commanded the Mexican Punitive Expedition to capture Pancho Villa in 1916--1917. *My Life Before the World War* provides a rich personal account of events, people, and places as told by an observer at the center of the action. Carefully edited and annotated, this memoir is a significant contribution to our understanding of a legendary American soldier and the historic events in which he participated.

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#### Review

"A fascinating read. Pershing comes across as diplomatically and politically astute—a far more nuanced officer than one gets from his standard biographers."—*Timothy K. Nenninger, editor of The Way of Duty, Honor, Country: The Memoir of General Charles Pelot Summerall*

"A significant contribution to American military history. Pershing had a remarkable memory, and this memoir details his life from his childhood in a small Missouri town to his arrival at West Point and his military assignments across the globe. Greenwood's scholarship is excellent."—*Edward M. Coffman, author of The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I*

"It would be difficult to overestimate the impact that Pershing had on American military history. The man served as model and mentor to the generation of military minds that brought the nation through World War II. His memoirs deserve to be read and appreciated, but they require the carefully crafted context that Greenwood has provided."—*On Point*

"So many who achieve great things become fixed in stone as monuments. *My Life before the War* is a reminder that John J. Pershing was a real, living, breathing man who lived through and shaped extraordinary times. For any with an interest in either the man or the times, this book is highly recommended."—*The Journal of Military History*

"[. . .] What distinguishes *My Life Before the World War* is the author's sense of service. It is not about Pershing the man but Pershing the public servant."—*The Historian*

"This book is an invaluable resource for soldiers and civilians because it highlights the astonishing scope of one man's life experience, from Civil War partisan atrocities to the command of two million troops in France in 1918.

[. . .] [T]he most important lesson of *My Life Before the World War* derives from appreciating Pershing's disappointments, losses, and things he did not complete. Even more than success, it is failure and loss that marks our humanity."—*Army History*

#### About the Author

**John T. Greenwood** is former chief of the Office of Medical History, Office of the Surgeon General, U.S. Army. He is the editor of several books, including *Normandy to Victory: The War Diary of General Courtney H. Hodges and the First U.S. Army*.

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