

June 11, 2020

Captured 77mm German Cannon

(Pennsylvania Military Museum, T. Gum, Site Admin.)



Photo of 28th DIV Combat Service Identification Badge

On 5 August 1917 the 28th Division was federalized and began the ramp up for deployment to Europe as part of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF). By May of 1918 the Division was in Europe and started a training rotation with the British forces before being deployed to the front.

The machine gun and artillery fire that the men encountered was delivered by a German force that had spent years entrenching, fortifying, and readying itself. Advancement was not going to be easy on any front; however, the 28th Division performed with great heroism, engaging in several notable battles & offensives – including the Meuse-Argonne, Champagne-Marne, Aisne-Marne including the Battle of Fismes and Fismette, Oise-Aisne, and Ypres.

When the men returned to Pennsylvania, they brought with them countless artifacts.



One such item was a captured German 77mm cannon, pictured here (photographed at Museum, MM2016.5.1). The gun features a trail that extends out from bed and has two seats on either side of breech, behind a shrapnel shield, to work the gun. At the very back of the gun is a lever for maneuvering the gun into place. Beneath this, is spade that once in place would be “dug in”, this is what’s called, placing the gun in battery, or ready to fire. By digging the spade into the ground, the gun is able to fire and recoil in place rather than rolling backward and requiring the gun crew to move it back into place. Also note the barrel has cast marks of a German imperial crown, laurel branches and "WR" in script.

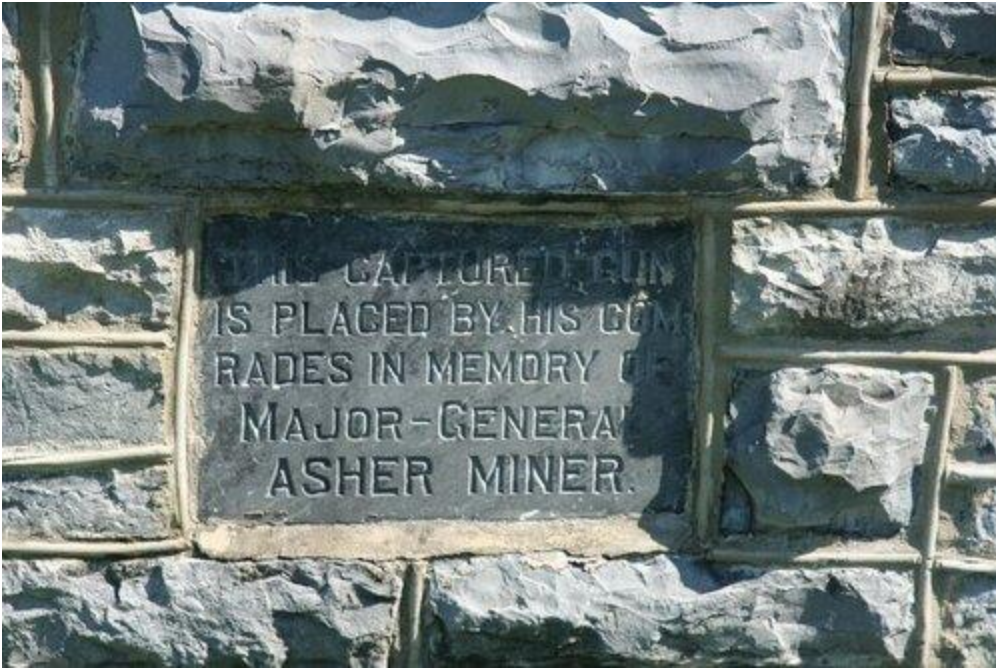


Photo of Asher-Miner Memorial.

Prior to conservation the 77mm cannon was displayed outdoors at the Pennsylvania Military Museum in front of the 28th Division Memorial. The 28th Division dedicated the gun and monument to the memory of General Asher-Miner that was dedicated on September 9, 1924, seven days after his death.

Miner served in the 109th Field Artillery and was from Wilkes-Barre. On Oct. 4, 1918, Miner advanced his position and was heavily shelled. He received a severe wound that later necessitated the amputation of his leg. Miner received the Distinguished Service Cross and Distinguished Service Medal, and after WWI, he was made Brigadier General as commander of the 53rd Artillery Brigade. He retired from service as a Major General and died Sept. 2, 1924.

This type of field cannon was one of the most commonly used by the Germans in WWI. They were rapidly produced in order to counteract the French 75mm artillery piece. In 1916 a new model 77mm gun was produced with increased barrel length, muzzle velocity and elevation capability.

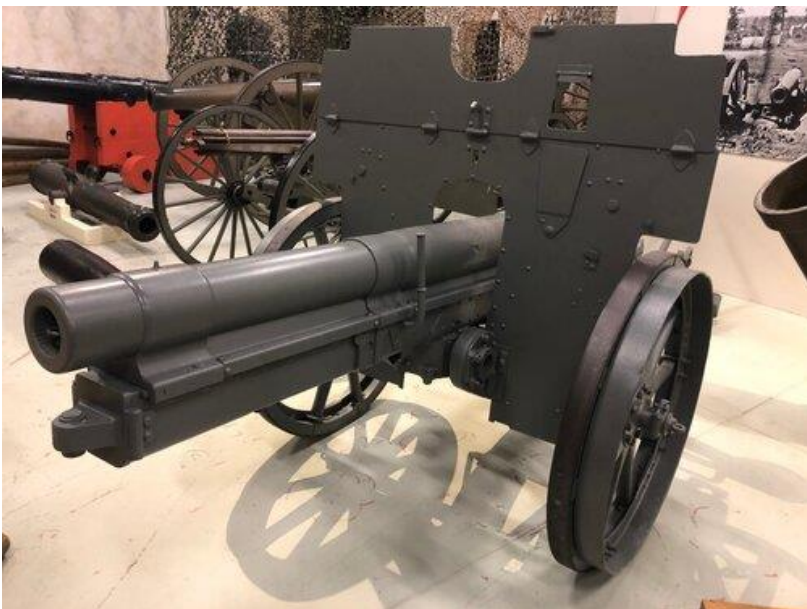


Photo of 77mm gun at Museum, MM2016.5.1

The 77mm gun was capable of firing a number of different projectiles including an anti-tank round, a gas shell, and a star (illumination round for nighttime use) shell.