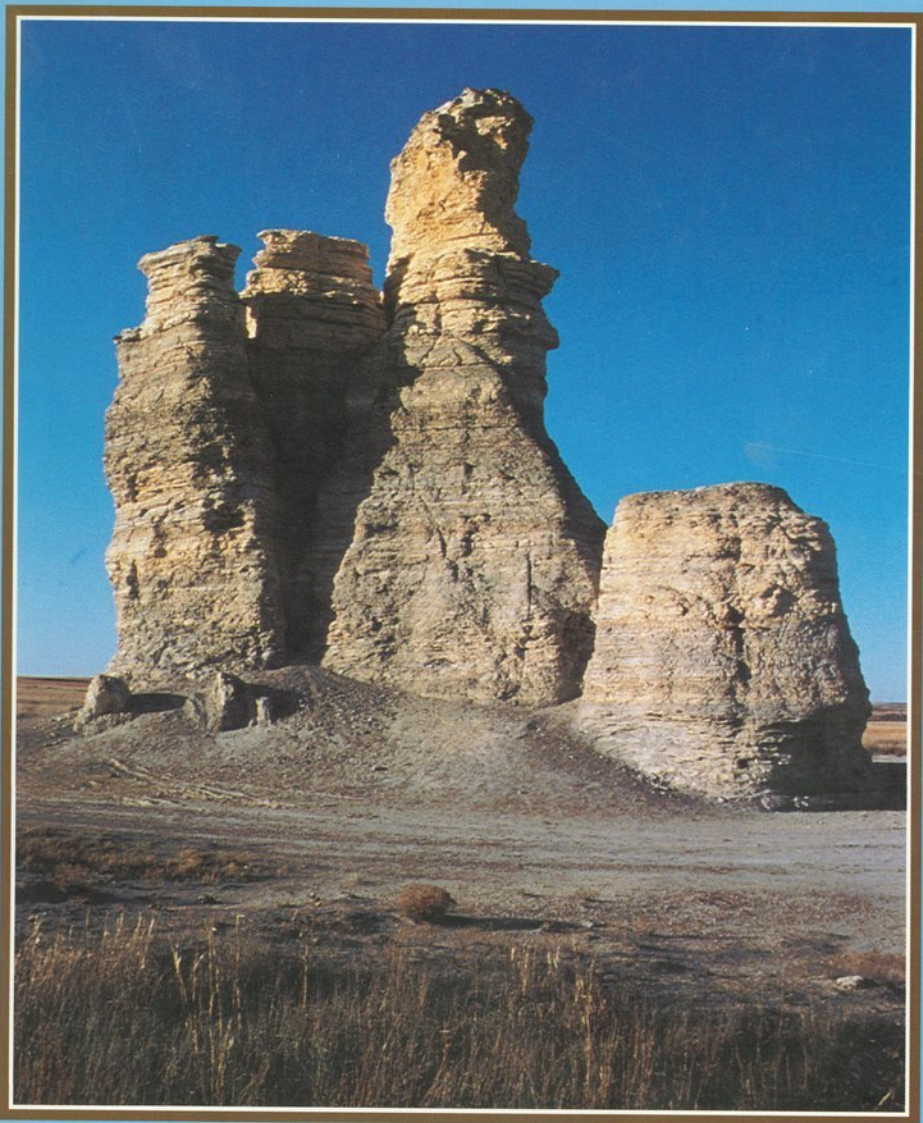


# KANSAS HISTORY

A Journal  
of the  
Central Plains

Volume 15, Number 4  
Winter 1992-1993

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U.S. paratroopers, France, June 8, 1944.

Nearly five years after war erupted in Europe and two and a half years after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Allied forces crossed the English Channel on June 6, 1944 (D-Day), launching their final drive toward victory on the Continent. Operation Overlord commenced with the landing of some 176,000 troops on the beaches of Normandy in northern France. United States forces successfully established themselves on two beachheads and, although casualties were quite heavy especially at Omaha Beach, the landing was a spectacular success. Nevertheless, the arduous drive toward the German "fatherland" and final victory took another eleven months; it was not yet time for celebration.

"Kansans," reported the Kansas City Star, "greeted the long-awaited news of the invasion of France with prayers and little fanfare. . . . Whistles and sirens sounded in many towns, but there were few demonstrations in the home state of General Dwight Eisenhower, Allied supreme commander." Paratroopers of two of Ike's U.S. airborne divisions were among the first to successfully reach the

Continent. They briefly celebrated the capture of a Nazi flag during the assault on a French village, but the weeks and months ahead proved difficult and costly.

When it finally ended, General Eisenhower paid tribute to the "truly heroic man of this war. He is GI Joe and his counterpart in the air, the navy and the merchant marine of every one of the United Nations. . . . He has uncomplainingly endured cold, mud, fatigue. His companion has been danger, and death has trailed his footsteps. He and his platoon and company leaders have given to us a record of gallantry, loyalty, devotion to duty and patient endurance that will warm our hearts for as long as those qualities excite our admiration."

Tens of thousands of Kansans, serving in every theater of the war, fall within this "truly heroic" category. The final photo essay in our series "Kansas At War" provides a glimpse of the hardships they endured while carrying out their duty "Over There" during the world's costliest conflagration.

# KANSAS HISTORY

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Cover: Castle Rock, Gove County. The rock formations of western Kansas are examined in "Portraits of Change" beginning on page 220. Back cover: World War II poster depicting American soldiers in battle. Action overseas is the subject of "Over There," the final chapter in our photo essay "Kansas At War."

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**OUR FIGHTERS**



**DESERVE OUR BEST**