

John Joseph Pershing

- Born near Laclede, Missouri, on 13 September 1860
- Attended the State Normal School, then graduated from the United States Military Academy, 1886
- Commissioned a second lieutenant and assigned to the 6th Cavalry, July 1886; performed garrison and field duties in the Southwest and Northern Plains, 1886-1890, and participated in the Wounded Knee campaign
- Professor of military science and tactics at University of Nebraska, 1891-1895, studying law concurrently and receiving his degree, 1893
- Promoted to first lieutenant and assigned to the 10th Cavalry, October 1892
- Served in Montana, 1895-1896
- After a brief tour at Army headquarters, was assistant instructor in tactics at West Point, 1897-1898
- Served with the 10th in Cuba, including operations at San Juan Hill
- Promoted to major of volunteers, detailed in ordinance, and assigned to Army headquarters and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of War, 1898-1899, where he organized a Bureau of Insular Affairs
- Reverted to a regular captaincy, June 1901, and assigned successively to the 1st and 10th Cavalry
- Served in the Philippines as a department adjutant general and engineer officer, collector of customs, and cavalry squadron commander, participating in actions against Moros, 1899-1903
- Served on the War Department General Staff, 1903-1904, and as assistant chief of staff of the Southwestern Division, 1904
- Attended the Army War College, 1904-1905
- married Frances Warren, 1905
- military attache to Japan and an observer of the Russo-Japanese War, 1905-1906
- At President Roosevelt's nomination, was promoted to Brigadier General over 862 senior-ranking officers, September 1906
- Commanded the Department of California, 1906; and Fort McKinley, 1907-1908; was assigned to the Office of the Chief of Staff, 1908-1909
- Governor of Moro Province and commander, Department of Mindanao, 1909-1913
- Commanded the 8th Infantry Brigade at the Presidio of San Francisco, 1914-1916, where in 1915 he lost his wife and three daughters in a fire
- Led the Mexican Punitive Expedition, 1916-1917, receiving promotion to Major General during the campaign
- Promoted to General, October 1917; commanded the American Expeditionary Forces in France in World War I, 1917-1919
- Advanced to the rank of General of the Armies, September 1919; moved his headquarters to Washington, prepared a report on the war, and made an extended tour of military inspection, 1919-1921
- Chief of Staff of the United States Army, 1 July 1921-13 September 1924
- Retired from active service, September 1924
- Established the War Plans Board. Pressed for national preparedness, a strong Army, increased efficiency and economy, officer schooling, and a well-regulated militia.
- Chairman of the American Battle Monuments Commission, 1923-1948, and headed the Tacna-Arica Boundary Commission, 1925-1926
- Died at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington, D.C., on 15 July 1948.

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The Pershing Suite



Walter Reed Army Medical Center
Washington, D.C.

The Pershing Suite

The Pershing Suite is named after its most famous patient, General John J. Pershing, Commanding General of the American Expeditionary Forces during World War I. Following the "War to End All Wars", Congress awarded Pershing the rank of General of the Armies. Because of political infighting and Congressional dislike of other high ranking General Officers, Congress wanted no confusion as to who was the senior officer. Later during World War II when it became politically desirable to have U.S. officers of equivalent rank to Allied officers, the General of the Army rank was created and given five stars. Pershing as General of the Armies was still considered senior and some have equated his rank to six stars, although he never wore more than four. Because of his unusual rank and the esteem with which he was held by Congress, General Pershing was considered to be on active duty the remainder of his life.

In May 1941, at age 81, he left the Carlton Hotel in Washington, D.C. where he had resided and moved to Walter Reed General Hospital. While the suite was being finished, he stayed on Ward 4, the male officer medicine ward. He passed the time as many retired men do. He slept late, read the papers, wrote some letters, played cards, listened to the radio, and visited with friends. Shocked by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he wrote President Roosevelt and offered to do whatever he could. However, he knew that this war was not his war but belonged to the men who had earlier worked for him and to the sons of the Doughboys of World War I.

Before sailing for the invasion of North Africa, George Patton came to pay his respect and for a stirring farewell. Before

leaving, Patton got down on his knee and asked Pershing for his blessing. Pershing squeezed his hand, "Good bye, George. God bless and keep you and give you victory." Patton rose and saluted his old commander who likewise rose and smartly returned the salute.

General Pershing's health was relatively good until a stroke in September 1944. However he made a significant recovery from this episode, and subsequently secretly married a long time friend, Micheline Resco, in his suite on September 2, 1946. His general health slowly deteriorated. He went into a coma and died in his suite on July 15, 1948 at the age of 88.

Subsequently other famous officers were hospitalized in the Pershing Suite, to include General Peyton C. March, Chief of Staff of the Army during World War I. He was hospitalized at Walter Reed General Hospital circa 1954 and died here on April 3, 1955. At times the suite was used as overflow for the labor and delivery service. President Eisenhower was a patient in the Pershing Suite for approximately one month during his 11 month stay at Walter Reed between May 1968 and March 1969. He used the Pershing Suite while the Presidential Suite on Ward 8 was being redecorated. The area was closed after the hospital moved to the new facility in 1978 but when space got tight it was used off and on for administrative space. Since 1999 it has been used by the Walter Reed Society.

Some information from: [Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing](#), Frank Vandiver, Texas A&M University Press, 1977. [Pershing: General of the Armies](#), Donald Smythe, Indiana University Press, 1986.