and keep 175,000 of them here and try to haul enough food over here to feed them and there is not enough food from the land here to take care of them. So I tell them that they will probably be sent over and will be put to work. They are afraid to be sent to Canada. They say that is English and the English will put them in chains. I told them they could do better work without chains and that the idea was a mistake. But, they say, that is what they have been told by the Fuehrer and he never tells anything but the truth. The German officers are afraid of having to go to work. . . .

"Every morning when I go thru and give them the radio news about the bombing of some town in Germany or the work of the Russians, they say that what we get is only propaganda. I appreciate their feeling sorry for my not getting the truth, but I have the privilege of walking around without a guard and can send my mail home thru the Post Office rather than the Red Cross. We are going to have a real job curing the festering sore that Hitler has planted in these poor souls. I am wondering if we will ever do the job satisfactorily and avoid a similar conflict in the future. They are so positive they are superior. They treat the poor Italians with utter disdain. I think they might deign to wipe their feet on the Americans but not much more."

He closed the letter with the observation that it had presented "a worm's eye picture of the enemy as I have seen him. I hope I give you a fair picture. The minister's son is getting in practice again."

12

What the war-ravaged country between the 38th's base at Beja and the coastal city of Tunis, as well as Tunis itself, looked like in the closing days of May 1943 is revealed in a letter written by Captain Pickens on May 20, three days after he had provided what he described as his worm's eye picture of the German prisoners he had been observing and with whom he had been talking.

Two days after he wrote the letter about the prisoners he was off duty and rode into Tunis, about a hundred miles eastward and a little to the north. His letter the next day gives an authentic picture of the North African region in northern Tunisia after fighting armies had swept across it.

"Yesterday was my day off duty and since transportation was available," he wrote, "I took the time to ride into Tunis and look the situation over. The route carried me thru Medjez-el-Bab and across the highly disputed Long Stop Hill. I find these places described in the April *Observers*, so I don't think I will be giving away any secrets if I mention them and tell a little of what I saw.

"I have learned one thing since being in the Army about where a war must be fought and that is, it must be fought on a road. The control of towns is important only if they are the centers of roads or important as ports. If they are the centers of networks of roads, they will contain supplies and men, but the roads are the main things. In this country from where I live you move only on roads. The ground is too rough otherwise. From Long Stop Hill on to Tunis the hills disappear and the open plains are before you. But the road must be occupied up to that point before you can fan out. Medjez is a road junction, and so important; otherwise there is little to the town except the fairly good-sized stream that divides it. The argument over the possession of it left its mark. The ruins are there and we crossed the river over an improvised bridge. The road from there on to Long Stop is pockmarked with shell holes and you can see signs of tank barriers of everything from broken two-wheeled carts to railroad ties and concrete slabs. To the top of the hill it is quite a climb and I can understand how it was a job to get the Bosche moved off. After you get over the hill and move along the plain into the city there are wrecked tanks scattered all over the rolling country. Trucks that have been burned dot the road. The area from about twenty feet away from sides of the road on out is marked unsafe. There are mines still planted. Some of these days some Arab will be pushing his six oxen along to turn the soil and will wake up with Mohammed. I feel sorry for him in advance, since he had no part in the making.

"Between Beja and Medjez we passed a prisoner of war camp with several thousand Germans behind the barbed wire. On the way home we saw them cooking

their evening meal around their individual tents. They had evidently been issued some of our individual C rations and were heating the meat and vegetable stew or heating water for their coffee. Across the hills you could see a hundred little fires smoking. In the background, on one hill, was a church with great gaping holes in it, one big hole in the steeple not quite big enough to make it topple over. I don't know which side did the damage, but the Germans now have it as a part of their scenery to study. A lot of the German material was stacked near the camp with rows and rows of captured trucks, half trucks and munitions. Some of the trucks, like the English lorries, were painted a dust color indicating their use in the desert crossing. Their tires do not look as good as ours, but they have probably been used a lot more and they may be made of synthetic rubber."

He turned his attention for a moment to report on attempts to procure souvenirs:

"Some of our folks have been trying to collect some souvenirs of various sorts. My only attempt has been to get an Iron Cross from one of our patients at the cost of five packages of cigarettes. Their medals are cheaply made and in this case, the trader said, if he ever got back to Germany, he could buy a dozen at half the price he got from me. I have no interest in collecting guns, but if I run across a good camera, I think I might withhold it from my government or keep a good pair of German field glasses."

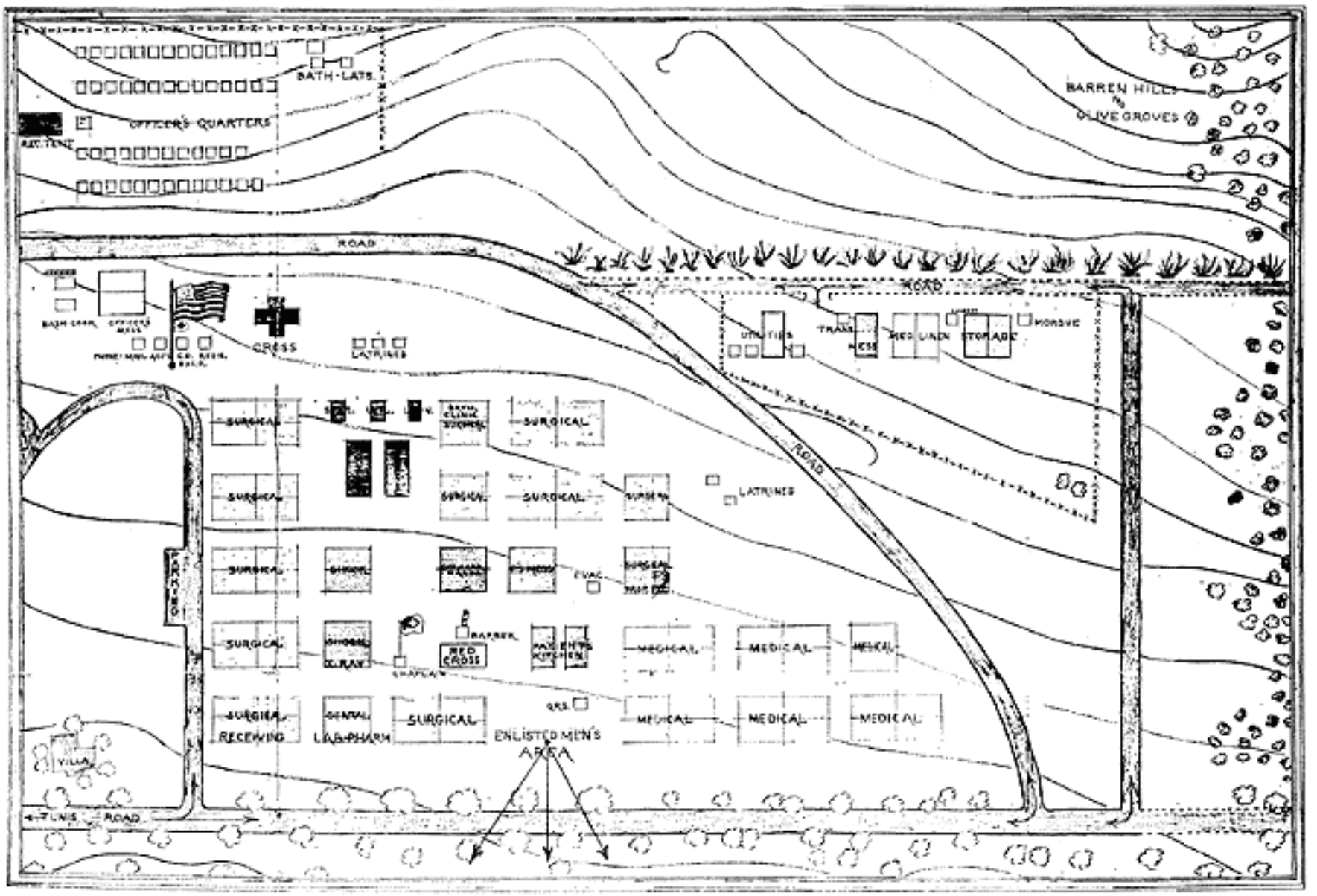
An American soldier's view of an ancient African city is revealed in his report on that May day in the capital of Tunisia:

"Entering the town of Tunis, you are just one truck load out of hundreds. The British have taken the town. The road is packed with moving traffic and the dust is thick. On the edge of town we passed under a great Roman viaduct that carried water from one section to another back many centuries ago. It's a mammoth thing and stretches clear across the city. Then we passed the first gate, reminding me of the gates into Jerusalem. We stayed on the outside of the walled city, since this is confined to the Arabs now and that section is 'out of bounds' to the troops. Around this walled city within a city runs a stone wall some thirty feet high and three or four feet thick. There are many gates leading into the restricted area with names such as Porte de France, Porte de Bab-el-Kadra and Bab-Saddoun. I bought some postcards of them and will mail them to some of my friends. In the city proper it looks like most of the others. There is little difference between the appearance of Oran, Algiers, Constantine, and Tunis. In Tunis there are less Arabs in sight and not every ten steps does an Arab boy try to shine your shoes. There are fewer beggars, less indication of malnutrition. This may be because we have controlled the city for too short a time. There are great numbers of Italians living in the city. The people are better dressed, cleaner looking than in any of the other cities in North Africa. The whole town looks more modern with the possible exception of Algiers. Street cars are running when they buck the traffic line of British lorries and American jeeps. The jeeps are driven by Americans, British and French. You see the yellow color of the desert 8th Army and the Crusaders' Cross of the First Army and the olive drab of the Americans. The French officers still wear the snappy uniforms of the Allies and drive our jeeps with the tricolor painted on the hood. The tallest soldiers and the blackest are the Senegalese and they are meaner looking than even the Gouams. They are all meeting in Tunis and moving in an ever running stream up and down the streets.

"The Germans pretty well cleaned out the town," he recalled. "They bought nearly all the merchandise of any value with their Bank of France notes. These notes they must have printed by the thousands and paid their soldiers well. Now only the Bank of Algiers notes are negotiable. The storekeepers will try to give you France bank notes in change if you don't watch closely. They now know they are hooked with them and are trying to reduce their losses. The Germans bought all of the perfumes that were any good, paying as high as 2,500 francs for an ounce of Chanel's or Guerlain's best. On our exchange that would be $50 for an ounce, right high price to smell good for such a short time, it seems to me. They also cleaned out the cognac and wine markets, too. And before they left, it is said they smashed the telephone exchange and the radio stations, but left the power plant running and the water supply untouched. They obviously left in a hurry."

Of clothing, kodaks and other items, he reported:

"This is the first town we have been in where clothing could be purchased without coupons. I saw a fancy looking sports coat made of good wool that I could have bought for about 3,000 francs, but somehow it looked a little out of place with the rest of my dusty uniform, so I didn't buy it. In one shop I found a kodak exactly like my little blue one. I paid 98 cents for mine ten years ago and have carried it many a mile since. The duplicate in Tunis was 800 francs—$16. I laughed at the shopkeeper and asked if he had any film to go with it and when he said no, I just laughed some more. The old law of supply and demand at work. I didn't find anything worth buying except the post cards. As you know, I seldom buy anything anyway and unless I see something I can't live without, it can stay on the shelves. I did search for some leather covers for telephone directories but none were in sight. There were plenty of those things back in Algiers, but I don't know



This layout by Clarence O. Kuester, Jr., shows the general plan of the medical and surgical tents of the 38th's encampment near Tunis, Tunisia, North Africa. The road at the bottom of the drawing leads toward Tunis, left.

when I will have a chance to see them again. If I find any I will get a bunch and send them to you."

The city of Tunis, he reported, had been left in good shape as far as bombing was involved. "I saw only about five places," said he, "where the bombs intended for the docks area missed fire. There were five holes with the sides of the buildings glaring at you. The rubbish had been cleaned up. The docks, however, had not fared so well. I think the American Air Force had done that job and they made a systematic destruction of the whole area. It was complete and I don't see how it will ever be used again. Someone suggested that the Germans might be put to mending it, but it will take a long time. The airport was treated in somewhat the same way. The German planes are lined up but useless. I don't know whether we did that or whether the Germans destroyed them before running to the hills on Cape Bone. In either case, they are fit subjects for the junk man."

He didn't have the time to have a look at ancient Carthage. It was "just five or six miles away," said he, "but we did not have the time to buck the traffic and get over there. If I ever get another chance I will try to see what is left of the ancient city. People tell me that there is little to see, but I still would like to pass over the ground and think about the glorious days when Carthage and Troy were the great cities of the world."

On their way home that day from Tunis, said he, the water supply ran short and the dust and heat were enervating. "We stopped at a British camp and asked for water. They offered us a spot of tea, but we compromised for water. From three to five in the afternoon in any English camp you can get a cup of tea. They will never let a war interfere with their afternoon tea."

Captain Pickens did get a chance to go back to Tunis, and much earlier than he had hoped he might. Three weeks after writing of the first visit to the coastal capital, he wrote again. And this time he got into Carthage. The letter, dated June 10, affords a further close view of the old city, its people, its hodgepodge of merchandise available for purchasing, and even a bit of its history in the days of the Roman conquest of Carthage and that region of Africa.

"The day before yesterday," he began the letter of June 10, "I had an opportunity to visit Tunis and the neighboring city of Carthage. I say Carthage the city, but what I saw were the remains of the city plus the museum and the cathedral. The White Fathers, Les Peres Blancs, run an elaborate establishment there and have collected a lot of things to show the tourists. But I am getting ahead of my story.

"We had no transportation, so Bob Miller, from Lincolnton, and I started out the other morning at about 6:30 to see if we could 'thumb' our way to Tunis. It is supposed to be beneath the dignity of an American officer to stoop to such a level for travel, but I was determined to see that section come 'hell and high water.' We cornered an American ambulance driven by a French lieutenant who was off to Tunis in a cloud of dust. He had to get there in a hurry and several times I wished I had stayed in the oat field at home.

"He talked a little English, said his mother was born in Brooklyn. I don't know why it is that so many of these folks over here claim some kin to Brooklyn, even the German prisoners say they have relatives in Brooklyn. Flatbush fame has spread with the skill of the Dodgers. Our driver also spoke German very fluently, having himself been born in Alsace. Our conversation would have made you laugh if you could take your eyes off the road long enough to listen. It was a real mixture, but we managed to get our mutual stories across.

"We had to stop in Medjez-el-Bab to get some pictures and to build a sort of ford across the river, but still made record time in getting to Tunis. There our host insisted on our stopping at the French Officers' Club for a spot of coffee. It was then over 100 degrees in the shade and coffee was the last thing I wanted. He had coffee and we had a glass of vermouth with some ice added. It was the first time we had seen ice since we left our last station. It was welcome. Then our host said, after he had made a telephone call, that he would accompany us to Souks, the Arabic bazaars or markets. He was anxious that we not get stuck in trading with our Semitic friends. He didn't know it, but I didn't have enough money with me to get hurt. We tried the first gate into the section marked 'out of bounds' for American and British troops and the Tommy MP turned us back but said if we would go down the street for two blocks and turn right we could get into the markets without the interference of the military police. I don't know why that section was forbidden unless for typhus or the threat of Italian snipers, neither of which we were afraid of, since we have been inoculated so many times against typhus and the accuracy of the Italian marksmanship has been discredited too much of late. So in we went to a great maze of little streets with hundreds of holes-in-the-wall shops manned by all types of Arabs, from dignified, well dressed men to moth-eaten, vitamin-lacking, unwashed sons of Abraham's handmaiden. They worked with silver, tin, copper, brass, and empty 88- and 105-millimeter shells. They made shoes from goatskins and rugs from camels' hair. They had perfumes they claimed were the best from the island of the lotus eaters. They would sell you rayon scarfs evidently shipped over here for good will to the locals at a price of only 300 francs ($6.00), all handmade, they said, any one of which could be bought in Grant's or Woolworth's at home for a mere 49 cents.

"All who could speak English had displayed their prize wares at the Sesqui-Centennial at Philadelphia in 1926 and had awards to prove it. They wanted to please the Americans, but of course the Germans had been there and had run the prices up because they had lots of money, Bank of France printed notes. They had not as yet discovered this currency had no value now. The descendants of the trading Phoenicians were aiding and abetting inflation, but they could arouse little interest from me. I saw nothing I would be proud to own. I did make one purchase, a palm leaf fan which has since come in handy in combating the heat of this tropical section. It cost me fifteen francs after an original price set at thirty francs. Either I have a Jewish strain somewhere in my background or the training as the son of a Methodist minister in making a little go a long way makes me wait when trading with these Shylocks. At that, the fan would probably sell to anyone in the know for ten francs. Our Frenchman appeared well pleased with our bargaining ability, altho Bob almost slipped once or twice on some socalled brass vases which would probably gather dust in Betty's attic as well as anything he could have sent home. I am sorry that I can't get steamed up on this business of sending you a lot of souvenirs. I did price a leather cover for the telephone directory, but at 800 francs ($16.00) I thought we could put up with the frayed edge until the telephone company would come thru with a new edition."

After their session with the Arab traders they walked to the officers' mess for lunch, where they had a meal, Captain Pickens reported, that was not as good as the one they would have had had they been back at the 38th's mess tent. After lunch they retired to the French Officers' Club "to sit under the broad canopy in front of the street and snooze a little and awake occasionally to watch the passing crowds. The British still outnumber us, but we saw the Gouams, Senegalese, French, the marines and sailors go by. We watched the Arabs with all of their clothes waving in the breeze, apparently not minding the intense heat, and the beggars as usual came by for their alms. We laughed at

two French naval officers who sat near us and jabbered along at a great rate and then when they got ready to leave, one of them dropped a bottle of champagne from his cloak and it spread nicely over the tile floor. I don't know any profanity in French, but I am sure there must have been some small amount of it spoken along with all of the gestures and tears."

It was while they were sitting in front of the French Officers' Club that an American officer came by and greeted them. He had crossed with the 38th from the States a year before as a member of a tank outfit. He asked them if they would like to visit Carthage, and when they replied that they would but that they would then have no way back to the hospital, he promised them that he would take them back, since he was stationed only forty miles from them. So they set out for Carthage some five miles away.

Captain Pickens tells about it:

"I had always connected Carthage with Hannibal and with his invasion of Europe thru Spain and across the Alps. I found that he was mixed up with the finish of Carthage. It seems that during the Second Punic War, about 202 B.C., he had carried the argument with the Romans over the possession of part of Italy and Sicily on into Italy with his elephants. While he was doing so well in Italy, with the help of the Gauls who were easy to persuade, some of the Romans had the bright idea of moving a fleet into Marseilles and they cut poor Hannibal's supply line and his connections with Spain. This made him hurry back to Carthage because he couldn't stand a siege, and when he got home he found Carthage capitulated. They asked for Hannibal's head, but he escaped into Asia and finally committed suicide in order to escape his relentless enemies. Then some fifty years later, when the Phoenicians felt a little stronger, the Romans jumped on her again on slight pretext and this time besieged the city and fought it out in the streets, and when the fighting was over, the population of something over 250,000 was reduced to less than 30,000.

"Then the Romans decided to finish the job and level the city. They sent the remaining population into slavery. Then to further finish the job, they burned the city and the blackened ruins were ploughed and the ground was sown with grain as a sort of 'ceremonial effacement.' Thus was the once principal city of the world, the pride of all Phoenicians, the crossroads of trade, the mecca of Semites, the outpost of civilization, left once more for the growing of grain or the pasture land of the nomads of this section."

Captain Pickens turned from the ancient history of the destroyed city to tell of what they found that day in June of 1943:

"Little is to be found today of that city. What we saw while wandering over this ground was what the White Fathers of the Catholic order had uncovered of the Roman work during the latter years. Apparently the Romans did a thorough job of not leaving a trace of their enemy. The Aryans won that struggle, but left traces which are still being argued on the battlefields today. The site of the city is there, but nothing else. The Romans rebuilt a little to the south in what is now Tunis and the Arabs built a little to the east in what is now Sidi-Bou-Said.

Major Paul Sanger, chief of surgical service, and Captain William P. Medearis, supply and utilities officer, brave for a moment the hot North African sunshine.

"On the way to Carthage we passed a principal airport where the stepchildren of Scipio Africanus the Elder left some of their wreckage after this last struggle during the twentieth century. Either they left in a hurry and destroyed many planes themselves or our air forces had done a good job, because none of these planes will ever take to the air again. Contrasting these modern engines with the five banks of oars and the huge rams on the galleys of old emphasizes the fact that the superior numbers will eventually prevail."

The visitors from the 38th spent some time in the museum at Carthage and then went across the hill to Sidi-Bou-Said, another holy city of the Arabs. And then they rode along the sea through La Goulette to Tunis in the late afternoon "and partook of another ice-cold vermouth before starting back thru Medjez-el-Bab and Beja over bombed-marked roads. We had enjoyed a busy day with some relief from the duties of war," he concluded the letter, "but we were tired."