



Largest Repository of Handwritten WWI Inscriptions Discovered American Explorer and *National Geographic* Photographer Jeff Gusky Urges Global Movement to Tell Stories of Nearly 2,000 Soldiers

Dallas (April 6, 2015)—Jeff Gusky announces his latest World War I (WWI) find – the world’s largest collection of handwritten soldiers’ names and messages to the future, inscribed on the walls of an ancient underground city in northern France. Hidden in darkness for nearly 100 years, these may be the last time these young men recorded their names before dying in battle. **Gusky** found these inscriptions, many of which look like they were written yesterday, in the [Underground City of Naours - Bocage Hallue](#) in the Sommes Department of northern France.

Soldiers often recorded their names, hometowns, serial numbers and street addresses. Gusky says, “I felt like I’d found the Titanic of World War I – several thousand WWI soldiers writing messages to the future declaring ‘I was here. I once existed. I was a living, breathing human being.’ We all want to know that our lives mattered and that someone will remember us when we’re gone. It’s just part of human nature.”

[The Associate Press broke the story on April 5. [Click here](#) to read it and see photos.]

Gusky has explored more than 100 underground spaces across northern France. [National Geographic](#) magazine broke the news of **Gusky's** discovery of [The Hidden World of WWI](#) in their August 2014 issue. His photographs were the magazine’s featured story marking the launch of the World War I centennial. **Gusky** believes that Naours makes history as the largest repository of Australian names, the largest repository of British names and the largest total number of handwritten WWI soldiers’ inscriptions on The Western Front, a claim corroborated by one of France’s leading experts on WWI archeology.

“Based on my knowledge of WWI archeology, I have independently concluded that **Jeff Gusky’s** claim is accurate. Like Jeff, I believe that the Underground City of Naours - Bocage Hallue is the largest repository of WWI soldiers’ handwritten inscriptions in existence on the Western Front,” says Gilles Priloux, a French engineer and lead WWI archeologist at the National Institute of Preventive Archaeological Research, or INRAP.

Gusky’s goal is to inspire people from around the world, particularly young people, to get involved in telling the stories of who these young WWI soldiers were. What happened to them? Did they live or die? What was their life like before the war and after the war if they were lucky enough to survive? **Gusky** is also committed to helping the Underground City of Naours - Bocage Hallue form strategic partnerships with foundations and universities that can donate resources and expertise to aid in the long-term preservation of this one-of-a-kind historic treasure.

Gusky has photographed nearly 2,000 individual WWI soldiers’ names representing:

- More than 1,000 names from Australia, including soldiers from Tasmania
- More than 500 names from the United Kingdom, including England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales

- 55 from The United States
- 20 from France
- 13 from Canada
- 1 from South Africa
- 1 from India

The Underground City of Naours - Bocage Hallue is full of surprises. Just six weeks ago, **Gusky** stumbled onto the first East Indian soldier's inscription that he's ever seen or even heard of. The inscription was made by Lieutenant Phatak, an officer from the [34th Poona Horse regiment](#). In December, **Gusky** found and photographed the first South African soldier's inscription as well as a room loaded with American names including two from his home state of Texas.

About *The Hidden World of WWI*

The Hidden World of WWI is a collection of recent black-and-white photographs revealing the haunting presence of WWI underground cities and century-old surface remnants that make 100 years ago seem like yesterday. The collection includes thousands of photographs of a world frozen in time on battlefields and in forgotten underground rock quarries, adjacent to the front-line trenches, that were quickly transformed into modern underground cities complete with power plants, rail, telecommunications, housing, chapels, hospitals, and an abundance of art and handwritten inscriptions. This hidden world shows us how soldiers on both sides of the conflict held onto their humanness while modern mass destruction raged above ground. You can find samples of the collection at www.JeffGusky.com. Follow ***The Hidden World of WWI*** on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and on [Twitter](#), where a new photograph will be revealed each day through 2019, the end of the WWI centenary.

About the artist

[Jeff Gusky](#) lives two lives – one as an explorer and fine-art photographer and the other as a practicing emergency physician. He is a *National Geographic* photographer and works on assignment for *The New York Times*.

Two books of black-and-white photography, multiple national exhibitions including the pairing of his work with the Spanish master Francisco de Goya and the legendary early 20th Century photographer Roman Vishniac, inclusion in a Broadway play and the honor of a Gusky traveling exhibition being ranked by *Artnet Magazine* on its 2009 list of the top 20 museum shows in America mark Jeff Gusky's fine-art career. He explores the world – photographing traces of the past that reveal how modern life affects our humanity and that inspire us to ask questions about the vulnerabilities of modern life that can help keep us safe.

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Press kit photos: <http://jeffGusky.photoshelter.com/gallery/Press-Hand-Outs/G0000rVIDAQOWK9w>,
password: HIDDENWORLD

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