

# POTTINGER FAMILY OF RAILSBOUGH

**James John Pottinger**, Private, Royal Army Medical Corps. Railsbrough, South Nesting.

**John William Pottinger** (also known as Billy), 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant, American Army. Railsbrough, South Nesting. John emigrated to America on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1904, and became naturalised on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 1910. He later moved back to Shetland.

**George Spence Pottinger**, Private, Tank Corps, American Army. Railsbrough, South Nesting. George emigrated to America on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1913, and became naturalised 26<sup>th</sup> November 1918.

**Laurence Pottinger**, Private, Seaforth Highlanders. Railsbrough, South Nesting.

Their parents were John Pottinger and Joan W. Morrison. They had three sisters one of whom, Barbara, emigrated to Canada, and other brother Archibald, who emigrated to New Jersey, U.S.A. on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1908, worked as a gardener and later became naturalised as a U.S citizen on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1921. Their father John had spent time in America from the late 1870s to the early 1880s.



General Pershing and his staff, confronted with a high casualty rate, were poised to consider some hard-gained lessons from the Allies.. Some officers considered tanks with great interests. Gen. John J. Pershing himself, as Commander in Chief of the American Expeditionary Forces, requested, on September 1917, that 600 heavy and 1,200 light tanks be produced in the United States. Already in many offensives, French or British tanks were deployed in support of the American infantry (under joint command). However, among the types in use, only one type was lent to the US troops in sufficient numbers, the Renault FT, although with provisional French crews. Quite quickly, the staff wanted to have trained US crewmen to stay fully independent and under Captain Dwight Eisenhower's supervision, many of these tanks were shipped to Maryland, Camp Meade, with the 65th Engineer Regiment, to create the first American Armoured unit.

*Renault FT with US troops in the Argonne, 1918*

In mid-March, this unit was renamed 1st Battalion, Heavy Tank Service and was prepared to be shipped back in France in the late March. Eisenhower's talents were however not lost, and he was kept at home to supervise the tank training centre at Camp Colt in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The 1st Battalion was back on the frontline in early April and participated, until November, in many American offensives. Lt. Col. George Patton, in particular, militated for the use of domestic tanks, and as a stopgap solution the Renault FT was chosen for licence production. Patton will eventually become the first active US tank officer in France. He was Pershing's officer in the Mexican Punitive Expedition of 1916, conducting the first motorised attack with three Dodge ACs accompanied by the 6th Infantry Regiment. He then joined France and reported to General Garrard in November 1917, testing a Renault FT at the Champlieu test grounds. He then headed the 1st Provisional Tank Brigade in August 1918. Later renamed the 304th light tank brigade, it was part of Colonel Samuel Rockenbach's Tank Corps joined to the AEF.

The AEF had armoured support for the last six weeks of the war, but the attrition rate suffered by engaged units was staggering. The tank corps was left with only fifty serviceable vehicles at the end of the Meuse-Argonne campaign. First actions of the AEF tank corps took place in the Saint-Mihiel salient in September 1918. The latter was divided into three tank corps, Patton heading the 1st one (304th brigade) with 144 Renaults obtained from the French, participating in the battle for St Mihiel. In addition, there was an addition of a heavy tanks corps provisioned with British-built Mk.Vs, operating with the American 27th and 30th Division before the end of the war. Since 1917, various constructors submitted designs, the diesel-electric Holt being one of the most promising. In the end, only Ford stayed in the loop, eventually leading to the 3-ton model. But only the M1917, 6 ton type was made available in enough quantity to be operated in the meantime.