

Description

At The Crossroads



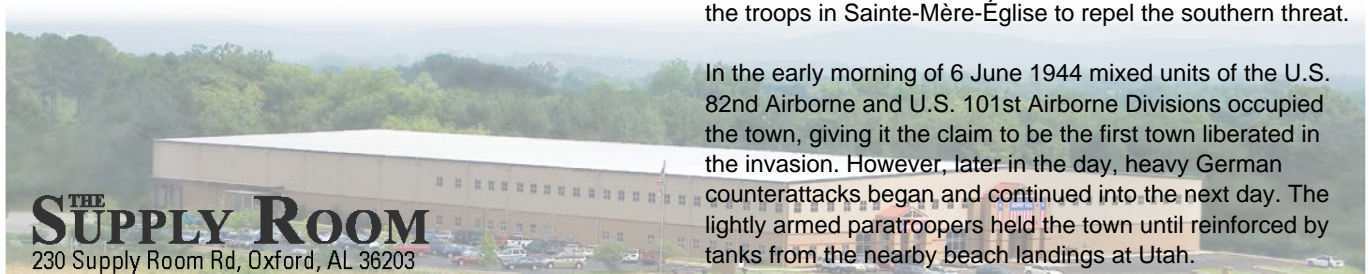
On June 6, 1944, mission Boston was initiated by the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division as a component of Operation Neptune. Neptune was the code name for the airborne assault behind German lines, which launched the Normandy invasion. It was the first major action of Operation Overlord.

Approximately 6,420 paratroopers jumped from nearly 370 C-47 Skytrain troop carrier aircraft into an intended objective area of roughly 10 square miles located on either side of the Merderet River on the Cotentin Peninsula of France five hours ahead of the D-Day landings. The drops were scattered by bad weather and German anti-aircraft fire over an area 3 to 4 times as large as planned. Most of the troops missed their drop zones entirely. The 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment jumped accurately and captured its objective, the town of Sainte-Mère-Église, which proved essential to the success of the division. The town was significant in the World War II Normandy landings because the village stood right in the middle of route N13, which the Germans would have most likely used on any significant counterattack on the troops landing on Utah and Omaha Beaches.

The early landings, at about 0140 directly on Sainte-Mère-Église resulted in heavy casualties for the paratroopers. Some buildings in town were on fire during the night, and they illuminated the sky, making easy targets of the descending men. Some were sucked into the fire. Many hanging from trees and utility poles were shot before they could cut loose. The few who did make it alive to the ground were almost immediately taken prisoner. After the initial excitement, curiously, the Germans went back to bed after the immediate threat subsided.

The timely assembly enabled the 505th to accomplish two of its missions on schedule. The 3rd Battalion captured Sainte-Mère-Église by 0430 after small firefights. It set out roadblocks and took up defensive positions against expected counterattacks. The 2nd Battalion established a blocking position on the northern approaches to Sainte-Mère-Église with a single platoon while the rest of the unit reinforced the 3rd Battalion when it came under heavy attack from the south by infantry and armor at mid-morning. The platoon delayed two companies of German for eight hours, allowing the troops in Sainte-Mère-Église to repel the southern threat.

In the early morning of 6 June 1944 mixed units of the U.S. 82nd Airborne and U.S. 101st Airborne Divisions occupied the town, giving it the claim to be the first town liberated in the invasion. However, later in the day, heavy German counterattacks began and continued into the next day. The lightly armed paratroopers held the town until reinforced by tanks from the nearby beach landings at Utah.



At The Crossroads, depicts paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division on 7 June 1944. Private John Steele's parachute can still be seen caught on the spire of the town church. Also evident are vehicles that have recently arrived in the town. After almost 30 hours of fighting, these soldiers are taking a brief moment to relax and recover before moving inland to continue the fight across France. They were truly at the crossroads of the Normandy invasion.

Image Size: 25" x 16.5"
Overall Size: 31" x 23"
Public Edition

Size	
25 in x 16.5 in	