

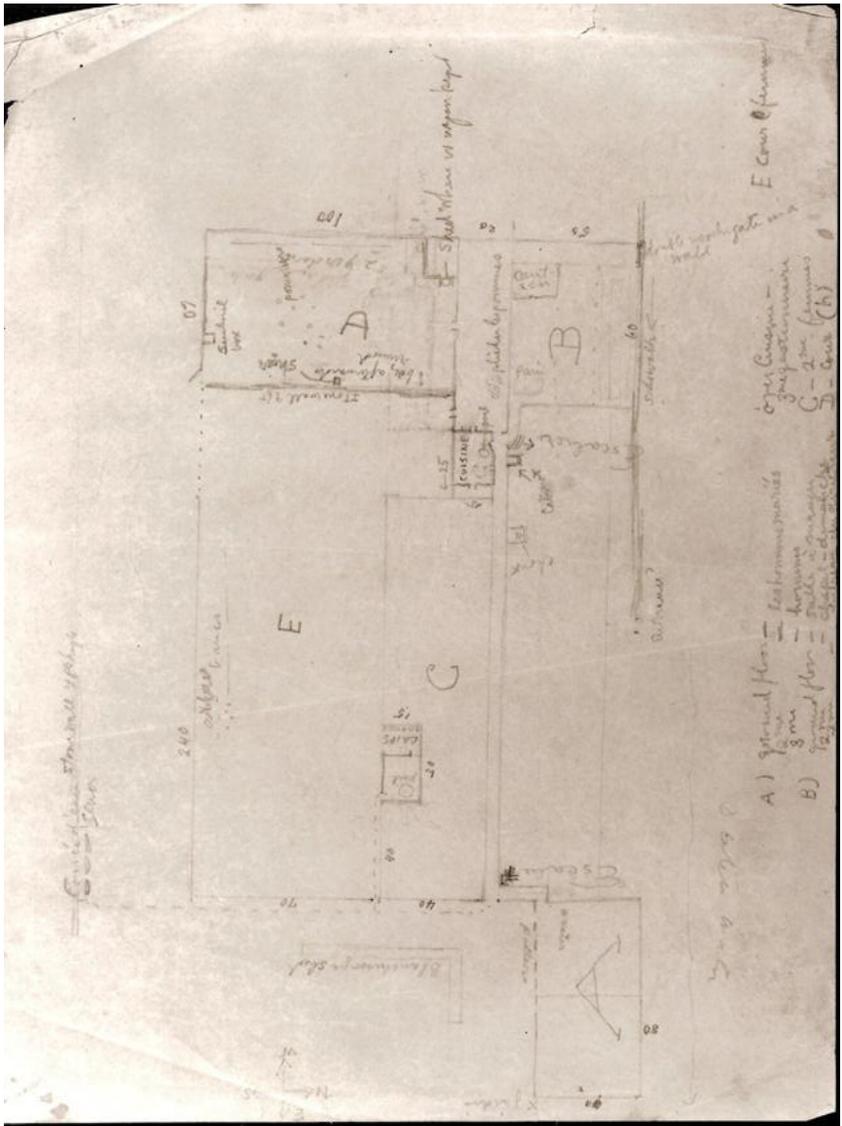
Cummings' Plan of the Dépôt de Triage at La Ferté-Macé

Michael Webster and Philip Persenaire

We publish on the following pages two plans of the Dépôt de Triage at La Ferté-Macé, site of Cummings' incarceration in the Enormous Room. The first is a photograph of a drawing Cummings made, probably in 1919, when he wrote much of *The Enormous Room*. [Houghton Library, Harvard University, bMS Am 1823.4 (4)] The second is a transcription of Cummings' map, made by Philip Persenaire and Michael Webster. In our transcription, we attempted to make the photo of Cummings' drawing more readable. However, we did not have room for all the captions on Cummings' map. The most important of these omitted captions is the key at the bottom that provides an overview of the entire three building complex. The Enormous Room was located on the third floor of building A.

A) ground floor –		
2me --les hommes maries		[2nd married men]
3me --hommes		[3rd men]
B) ground floor --salle à manger		[dining hall]
2me --chapel – dimanche		[chapel – sunday]
3me --bureau du directeur		[office of director]
over Cuisine –		[over Kitchen]
3me gestionnaire		[3rd gestionnaire]
C = 2me femmes		[2nd women]
D = Cour (h[ommes])		[Court (m[en])]
E Cour (femmes)		[Court (women)]

Our redrawing of Cummings' plan does not place, as his does, the *cuisine* or kitchen in the front of the middle building B. However, Cummings' drawing is somewhat confusing—he draws the *cuisine* as if it were outside building B, when in fact the text of *The Enormous Room* makes it clear that the kitchen was on the ground floor of the middle building, opposite the *cabinots*. When Lily, Renée, Lena, and Celina are nearly choked to death by the straw fire lit by the *plantons*, Lena staggers out of her *cabinot*, “tottering against the door of the cuisine opposite the cabinot” (124). In Cummings' drawing, the *cabinots* also appear as if they were outside the front of the middle building when in fact they are inside on the ground floor.



Our redrawing shows the “long gloomy corridor” (56) that led to the men’s *cour* as traversing the center of ground floor of B: most likely the *cabinots* were on the front of the building side of this corridor, while the *cuisine* was in the back. Our plan does not indicate the exits that certainly existed at each end of this corridor. In addition, our plan does not indicate the complex entrance to the dining hall at the chapel end of this corridor, where the prisoners would turn “a sharp right and then sharp left” into “a

courtyard where the prisoners would “[é]plucher les pommes” [peel potatoes].

Cummings’ plan of the men’s *cour* indicates many more details than the rather cursory indications he gives of the Enormous Room itself. Starting in the lower right of D and proceeding counter-clockwise, we see the locations of the “shed where w[ater] wagon [was] kept,” “2 girders,” some very small circles indicating the trunks of “pommiers” [apple trees], the “sentinel box” at the end of the *cour*, the “stone wall 9 ft.” on the left, a line jutting from the wall depicting the chinning “bar, afterwards removed,” and the outhouse—barely indicated by a drawing of a small box, with the leg-end “shier” [i.e., “chier” or “shit”]. Probably because it wasn’t visible to the male detainees, Cummings gives us no details of the women’s *cour* (E, to the left of D), indicating only the tree banks beyond, and behind them a “stone wall 4 ft high” and “sewer” where the clean-up crew (“Corvée d’eau”) deposited its daily load of waste.

At the upper right of the plan, Cummings shows us the four cardinal directions, the washing shed, and (just beyond the far corner of building A) the “jardin”—“the Directeur’s little garden in which it was rumoured he was growing a rose for his daughter” (63). In building A, Cummings makes only two short notations showing the layout of the Enormous Room itself: 1) the word “pillars” indicating the pillars that ran down the center of the room (though, as with the *cabinots*, he draws them outside the building) and 2) the word “water” indicating the bucket in the corner of the room that functioned as a water closet or toilet. At the front of the plan, Cummings draws a long arrow from right to left across the front of the building, moving from the “double wooden gate in a wall” at the far right of B, along the “sidewalk” in front of the wall, past the “Entrance,” and pointing left to the far end of “a species of square” where the detainees went “to catch water,” pushing and pulling “a curiously primitive two-wheeled cart over a distance of perhaps three hundred yards to a kind of hydrant” (157).

Work Cited

Cummings, E. E. *The Enormous Room*. Ed. George J. Firmage. New York: Liveright, 1978.