



To the Last Man

A National Guard Regiment
in the Great War, 1917-1919



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Jonathan D. Bratten

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Editor
Michael L. Hogg

This book is dedicated to the memory of my father,
David (1937-2020), who taught me that the true
importance of studying history lies in the people
who make it.

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Introduction

To the Last Man

The summer sun was setting on the farm fields around the tiny village of Givry bringing 20 July 1918 to a close. Dark groupings of trees cast their shade on the slopes between the small French towns of Belleau and Bouresches. The trampled fields of wheat belied the struggle that had taken place over the mile of sloping ground between the hollows of Belleau Wood and the low rise that had been labelled by Allied planners as Hill 190. Crumpled olive drab-clad bodies told the tale of murderous machine gun fire and the deadly accuracy of German artillery. On the summit of the hill, 38 year-old Maj. James W. Hanson, commanding the US Army's 1st Battalion, 103rd Infantry Regiment, paused from directing the digging-in efforts to jot down a note: "Tell the Colonel we have taken and are consolidating the position, but have had tremendous losses, have less than 200 men in the line available for duty but will hold the position to the last man."¹ Folding the note, he passed it to Capt. Wesley H. Woods, commanding Company B, who was being taken to the rear, too wounded and exhausted for duty. Hanson had led his own four infantry companies (A, B, C, and D), the regimental Machine Gun Company, and Company H of the 104th Infantry in the assault on Hill 190 that afternoon. Out of the thousand or so men that had charged out of Belleau Wood behind a hasty American barrage, barely 200 made it to the top of their objective; they were now scattered out in hastily-dug foxholes, consolidating their positions and preparing for the German counterattack they thought was coming.²

Nine years later, Hanson, now a brigadier general and the Adjutant General of the Maine National Guard, gathered his memories to reply to an inquiry into the new regimental motto of the 103rd Infantry, "To the Last Man." Adopted in 1924, the regimental motto was thought to have presaged the regiment's service in the Great War. It was commonly believed that it referred to the regiment's famed predecessor, the 20th Maine Volunteer Infantry, and Col. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain's stand on Little Round Top at the Battle of Gettysburg on 2 July 1863. But Hanson knew differently. He stated, correctly, that there was no correspondence or report ever showing that Chamberlain used the phrase, "To the last man," although the sentiment was apt to the event. As Hanson strained his memory across the intervening years, he remembered his own hot July day on the sunny fields of France, where he had led his own Maine men up a hill and watched in pain as many of them fell. With this in mind he wrote to

the commander of the 103rd that the origination of the phrase lay in recent memory, not in the distant past.³

Until Germany's invasion of Poland, World War I was *the* war. It stood out in popular memory as the moment that the United States emerged from isolationism and entered the world stage as a real power. In a period of only two years, the United States Army put four million men and women in uniform, and further, took two million of them and sent them across an ocean to serve on another continent. It was a watershed moment for the US military, and for the society that it served. The military establishment had never accomplished such a feat. Only the maelstrom of World War II forced "The Great War" into the background of popular American memory.

Perhaps no organization was affected by World War I more than the National Guard. Before World War I, the National Guard was looked upon as merely the "militia"—to be relied upon only for homeland defense and for volunteers during wartime—rather than the nation's strategic reserve. After the war, having fought alongside their regular counterparts, the National Guard was seen as a fighting institution that could carry its weight. Guard divisions full of citizen-soldiers were some of the first to be mobilized and sent overseas. In fact, the first full Army division in France was the National Guard's 26th Division, which eventually bore the nickname "Yankee Division," so called because its units all hailed from New England. As time went on and more and more replacements arrived to fill its battle-scarred ranks, the division's New England flavor was leavened and nearly erased by an influx of men from other parts of the country. Yet it remained always the Yankee Division.

This is the story of one of the four infantry regiments of the Yankee Division, the 103rd Infantry Regiment. It is the story of leaders learning how to adapt in never-before encountered circumstances for the US Army and the National Guard. From mobilizing a peace-time force, training it, equipping it, and sending it overseas, to wartime innovations and lessons learned in the crucible of combat. It is but a snapshot of what the US Army and individual combat units experienced throughout the war. That experience would be repeated many times over the next century as National Guard and Reserve units deployed alongside their active duty counterparts to fight the nation's wars. Regulars and Reservists would serve side-by-side during the war. While this often served to erase prejudices and increase mutual respect, it also caused friction between officers from each component.

It is the story of the young men from communities large and small across northern New England who marched away to war together in 1917, full of

excitement and optimism. And it is the story of the families that waited for them at home; the National Guard—then as now—is a community-based organization. Fellow soldiers were connected to each other by more than just the brotherhood of arms; for many, they were bound by blood. Brothers such as Fred and Lewis Hoskins of Milo, Maine—a town of less than 3,000—joined up in Company F. Accompanying them was their nephew Leroy Hoskins. The roster for Company B, from Rumford, Maine, listed seven Arsenaults, with two more in the Machine Gun Company. Every company could boast of sets of brothers serving in its ranks. Old New England Anglo-Saxon families served alongside Franco-Americans. Native Americans, too, were represented in the ranks: Eastport, Maine’s Company I included nine Passamaquoddy Indians, from the Nation’s village at Pleasant Point. Immigrants joined as well, determined to do their part for their new country. The Klick brothers, originally from Mecklenburg, Germany joined Company H. George Dilboy, originally from a Greek settlement in Turkey, enlisted into the New Hampshire National Guard. Since so many of the companies originated in small towns, men served with friends that they had known since boyhood. Consequently, morale was often high in these outfits, as men trusted each other implicitly. The downside was that casualties could cause more personal grief than they might normally. Bad news from the battlefield could cause an entire town or county to go into mourning.

In a way, the story of the 103rd Infantry Regiment in World War I is the story of America’s own relationship with the Great War. It captured and gripped whole communities for years after the war, before an entirely new and larger conflict forced it into the background. For the men who served in World War I, it was the formative experience of their lives. They left their small towns and big cities, many for the first time, and saw a new side of the world. They were exposed to new cultures, sights, and surroundings. And for those in combat, they saw the heights and depths of which humanity was capable. It is the story of America at war.

Notes

1. James Hanson, "Memo to Commanding Officer, 103rd Infantry, 1st Ind." (Memorandum, Portland, ME, 18 October 1927, Maine Army National Guard (MEARNG) Archives).
2. Colby McIntyre, *The Old Man of the 103rd: The Biography of Frank M. Hume* (Houlton, ME: The Aroostook Print Shop, 1940), 72.
3. Hanson, "Memo to Commanding Officer," 1.

Chapter I

The Old Second: Pre-War to September 1917

The struggles, challenges, and victories of the soldiers of 1917-1918 are very much the same as those in today's Army, especially the Reserve Component (the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve). Leaders of the time were asked the same questions as those of today: how do we mobilize the Reserve Component quickly? How do we maintain operational readiness in a reserve force? How do we recruit the necessary manpower and conduct talent management? How much training is adequate before Reserve Component units can be sent to the front? How do we train for large-scale combat operations against a near-peer competitor? How do we adapt our doctrine and tactics to the enemy? How do changing technologies impact the battlefield? And most of all, how do leaders develop the decision-making and problem-solving skills to bring about victory on that battlefield? Leaders at all echelons wrestled with these questions in 1917.

But to fully understand the historical context, one has to trace the development of the National Guard. To do so, this story begins with the identity of an organization: the 2nd Maine Infantry Regiment. In the tradition of the American militia, state companies and organizations served as images of pride to local communities. Unlike the Regular Army, militia companies were tied to specific places. Militia companies could—and have—compiled hundreds of years of service in one town. Service in the militia became a tradition for community members. This is most embodied by the military units of the Massachusetts National Guard, which can look back on an unbroken line of service to 1636.¹ This story follows the 2nd Maine from mobilization in 1917, to France, to the trenches, and then back home.

Militia Heritage

Until 1820, Maine was a part of Massachusetts, and thereby part of the Commonwealth's militia. The first Maine militia company was formed in the town of York in 1652. By 1671, the population of southern Maine had grown to such an extent that an entire regiment was formed: the York County Regiment of Militia.² Under the Massachusetts system, militia companies in a county would be formed into a regiment. In 1760, Cumberland County was created out of York and with it a new regiment of militia. As security in the region increased following the end of the last colonial war in 1763, Maine's population slowly spread northwards. As it did so, the militia traditions—and necessities of frontier life—travelled

with it. By the time of Maine's separation from Massachusetts in 1820, the state had two major population centers: Portland in Cumberland County on the southern coast and Bangor in Penobscot County in central Maine, on the Penobscot River.

Throughout 19th century, the militia companies in the state coalesced around these two centers. Each city boasted three or four companies of volunteer militia, usually composed of socially established young men and community leaders. When the Civil War flared to life in 1861, both cities raced to be the first to answer President Abraham Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers. The militia companies mustering in Portland—claiming a continuous line of descent back to the days of Massachusetts—were the first to reach the authorized strength of 1,000 men, and so were given the honor of becoming the 1st Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment. The moniker of the 2nd Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment was thus given to the companies marshalling in Bangor; but Bangor's regiment reached a higher level of readiness first and so the 2nd Maine was the first unit to leave the state, bound for Washington, D.C.³

On 14 May 1861, the 2nd Maine marched proudly through Bangor, boarded trains, and left home for what they were sure was to be a quick and painless victory. Two months later, these illusions were shattered at the Battle of First Bull Run, where "Bangor's Own" was one of the few Union regiments to remain on the field throughout the entire battle and one of the last to leave. Through 11 different engagements, the colors of the 2nd Maine flew proudly over the ever-dwindling remnants of the pre-war militia companies: units such as the Bangor Light Infantry, now Company A, was composed of young men from wealthy families of the town. Company I, the Grattan Guards, was drawn largely from the city's Irish community. And Company H—the Ex-Tigers, was made up of men from Engine Companies 4 and 6 of Bangor's fire department.⁴

By 1863, the 2nd Maine, the pride of Bangor, was no more. The majority of the regiment had signed two-year enlistments and were mustered out in their home city on 9 June 1863. Approximately 120 men remained, having signed on for three years. Refusing to fight under any flag but their own and threatening to mutiny unless they could go home with the remainder of their regiment, they were transferred under guard to the only other Maine unit in the V Corps, Army of the Potomac: the 20th Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment, commanded by Lt. Col. Joshua L. Chamberlain. A professor of rhetoric at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine before the war, Chamberlain was given orders that should the mutineers not comply, he could execute them. Chamberlain realized

that he could never show his face in Maine should he do such a thing, nor did he believe it the right thing to do. Seeing that the men had not eaten in three days, he ensured that they were fed, removed the guards, and then assembled them *en masse* to address their concerns. He stated that they were soldiers in the US Army, no matter what, that he would treat them with the respect that they deserved, and that he would do what he could to address their claim. At the same time, he appealed to their status as Mainers and requested their help for the campaign that was coming. As a result of this handling of the situation, all but six of the men of the 2nd fell in under the colors of the 20th Maine. It was an impressive action, defusing a potentially dangerous mutiny situation.⁵ It demonstrated the empathy and quick-thinking that would characterize Chamberlain's actions for the rest of his military career.

Chamberlain himself could not have foreseen the importance of his actions; less than a month later, the men of the old 2nd Maine played an important role during the fight for Little Round Top at the Battle of Gettysburg on 2 July 1863. Positioned on the extreme left flank of the US line, the 20th Maine was attacked on the front and flank by superior numbers of Confederates from several Alabama units. The additional 100 rifles of the men from the 2nd Maine swung the balance in favor of the 20th Maine in that engagement. One man of the 2nd was to play a very visible role in that engagement: Sgt. Andrew Tozier. As a sign of his trust in the men of the 2nd, Chamberlain had appointed Tozier color sergeant for the regiment, an honorable, yet extremely dangerous post in combat. In the midst of the battle, as the hordes of men clashed amidst the Pennsylvanian woods, Chamberlain recalled looking through the smoke to see “the two center companies lost nearly half their numbers, and the color guard entirely cut away, the color staff rested on the ground and supported in the hollow of his [Tozier's] shoulder, while with a musket and cartridge box he had picked up at his feet, he was defending his color.”⁶ It was this hardened veteran that launched forward with the colors at Chamberlain's famous orders of “Bayonets, Forward!” Thus was the lineage of the 2nd Maine—Maine's first combat regiment in the War of the Rebellion—continued with the 20th Maine.⁷

After the regiments and batteries of the Maine Volunteers returned home in 1865, little effort was made to continue the militia service in Maine. That is, until Maine's governor, Joshua Chamberlain insisted in reconstituting the militia in 1869. He, of all people, knew the importance of a trained and ready militia. Ten companies were raised around the state to form the Maine Volunteer Militia.⁸ By 1880, there were 20

companies, enough to form two regiments. Once again, the lines between southern and central Maine were re-established: the southern and western companies formed the 1st Regiment of Infantry, Maine Volunteer Militia (M.V.M.), the central and eastern companies the 2nd Maine Regiment of Infantry. Both regiments enthusiastically answered the call in 1898 for the Spanish-American War, although neither made it to the war. Instead, volunteers from both regiments served in the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery, US Volunteers as part of the occupation force in Cuba. The brief five-month stint in federal service from 1898 to 1899 was a shaping period for the young officers and enlisted men that rose to prominence in 1917.⁹

By 1916, the 2nd Infantry Regiment was the last remnant of Maine's infantry heritage. In 1910, the 1st Infantry had been converted to 13 individual companies of coast artillery. Both organizations were now also part of the National Guard of the State of Maine, the moniker of Volunteer Militia having transitioned in 1893. The 2nd Maine of 1916 was proudly outfitted in the olive drab wool uniforms of US Regulars, wearing collar disks of crossed rifles with "2" above and the company designation below. Men wore the broad-brimmed campaign hats now only seen on drill sergeants in the US Army.

Transforming the National Guard

The regiment looked far different than its Civil War predecessor in more than just uniform. Ever since the Militia Act of 1903—commonly referred to as the Dick Act, after the act's proponent, Senator Charles Dick of Ohio—the militia of the United States was transforming into the National Guard and growing into an organization that mirrored the Regular Army. The Dick Act provided federal funds to pay for training and equipping units, with an overall goal of creating units that met the same readiness standards as the regulars. The National Defense Act of 1916 brought this goal closer to realization by moving the National Guard under the aegis of the War Department, providing modernized equipment to the states to enhance readiness, and giving the President the authority to place units in federal service and send them overseas. This marked a radical shift in policy. Previously, the President could not activate state units; rather, the states were given a quota of volunteers. These individuals were then placed in US volunteer units which gave them federal status. Many state militia units entered federal service this way during the Mexican War, Civil War, and Spanish-American War. In contrast, under the National Defense Act of 1916, however, state units could be activated in their *entirety* and placed in federal status.

Consequently, the 2nd Maine looked like any other infantry regiment in the US Army in 1916. It was now broken down into three battalions of four rifle companies each. It had added a support company (responsible for the regiment's logistics), a headquarters company (containing the regimental commander, his staff, the battalion commanders, their sergeants major, and the band), a medical detachment, and a machine gun company. But for all that, the companies were still community organizations, just as they had been in the Civil War and before.

This type of reorganization of the National Guard was occurring in states across the nation. While there were not yet division-level formations in the National Guard, the US was divided up into regions and states grouped into corps areas. The First Corps area encompassed New England. Northern New England—demographically of a more rural and sparse population than southern New England—experienced these organizational changes. Like Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont boasted National Guard regiments of their own. The 1st New Hampshire and 1st Vermont Infantry Regiments carried their own proud histories going back to the colonial era. Companies in the 1st New Hampshire came from the towns of Franklin, Concord, Nashua, Keene, Berlin, and Newport; the bulk of the regiment came from Manchester.¹⁰

All three northern New England regiments had served together during the large, regional training exercises that were designed to bring state and regular units together to enhance readiness across the components. In 1910, they had taken part in the Pine Camp Maneuvers near present-day Fort Drum, New York. 1912 saw the regiments assemble in Connecticut alongside 20,000 other National Guard and regular troops for maneuvers designed by Lieut. George C. Marshall and run by Brig. Gen. Tasker Bliss. These large-scale maneuvers were by no means restricted to the northeast; they occurred across the country as part of an initiative to bring the National Guard and regulars together, build familiarization with new technology and doctrine, and train leaders in large-scale combat operations.¹¹ By 1916, world events were soon moving quickly to bring the 2nd Maine, 1st New Hampshire, and 1st Vermont into even closer companionship with each other and with their Regular counterparts than they could have foreseen.

The Mexican Border Expedition

As World War I raged in Europe, all was not calm on the American side of the Atlantic Ocean in the summer of 1916. Mexico had been wracked by a civil war since 1910 as rival factions vied for power. In a tangled mess

of alliances and intrigue, two sides slowly took shape in 1915: Venustiano Carranza, a constitutionalist, backed by the United States, and Emiliano Zapata, a revolutionary supported by renowned fighter Pancho Villa. In a series of battles, Carranza's forces had defeated the revolutionaries under Zapata and Villa so that by the end of 1915, most of Mexico was controlled by Carranza. In a desperate gamble to bait US involvement in the war, Villa began raiding border towns in New Mexico. This caused the US commander of Fort Bliss, TX, Brig. Gen. John J. Pershing, to mount a punitive expedition into Mexico against Villa. Raids and counter-raids across the border continued into 1916, as tensions mounted between the US and Mexico.¹²

As Pershing pushed further into Mexico with his force, the southern border States requested additional troops for security from Villa's raiders. Such was the fear of a general conflict that President Woodrow Wilson authorized the activation of 140,000 National Guardsmen from across the nation. This was the first use of the President's authority to call up the Guard for a federal crisis granted by the National Defense Act of 1916. It was the first mass mobilization of the National Guard and it tested the War Department's mobilization plans. Some speculated that it was done not only to send troops to the border, but to also provide the War Department a trial run in case the United States entered the war in Europe.¹³ It has since been referred to as, "The Great Call-up."

On 19 June 1916, orders arrived at the adjutant general's office in Augusta, Maine: the 2nd Maine Infantry Regiment was to go to the border. Rather than remove the coast artillery from their vital position defending Maine's shores, the infantry alone would be sent to the border. This caused much unhappiness in the coast artillery units, and many men requested transfers to the infantry to be part of the "big show." Across the state, the companies of the 2nd Maine assembled at their armories. In Bangor, the announcement went out via the "military call:" 11 bells sounded over the city's fire alarm system.¹⁴ From 19-28 June, the 2nd Maine gathered at the state muster ground in Augusta, named Camp Keyes, and was recruited to full strength under the command of Col. Frank M. Hume.

Hume was a unique individual. Unlike many officers, he simply just did not look the part of a military commander. Thin-necked, short, with thick glasses, perpetually smoking a Dunhill pipe, Hume seemed more postmaster than colonel. And in fact, in 1916, he was indeed the postmaster for the town of Houlton in northern Maine. Born 7 January 1867 in Bridgewater, Maine, Hume had military aspirations from a young age. As a boy, he formed his friends into a military company and equipped them

with wooden guns. The boys drilled and marched after school every day under the tutelage of “Captain Hume,” as they called their young ring-leader. His free hours were spent studying battles and tactics.¹⁵ Such was his love of all things military that he attempted to get into the US Military Academy at West Point—an attempt that failed, because of his poor eyesight. An encounter with scarlet fever as a boy had left Hume nearly blind without the aid of thick spectacles, and it seemed as though this would crush his martial ambitions before they even started. Undaunted, in 1889 he applied for and was accepted to the Riverview Military Academy in Poughkeepsie, New York.¹⁶ After completing his subsequent education at Harvard University, Hume returned to Maine, where, in 1894, he joined the National Guard of the State of Maine; presumably his eyesight was less scrutinized there than it had been at West Point.

In fact, not only did he join the National Guard, he brought along a whole new company with him. As a throwback to the militia days when one could become a company commander if one recruited the company, Hume raised and trained 54 men in the Houlton area in 1894 and submitted the whole to the state headquarters for consideration as a company. The state accepted the company that February and it became Company L of the 2nd Maine Infantry under the command of “Captain Hume,” this time no longer a play title. Hume rose through the ranks, gaining significant experience as part of the Army occupation in Cuba during the Spanish-American War in 1898, commanding a company of the 1st Maine Heavy Field Artillery Battalion. By 1910, Hume had risen to the rank of colonel and was given command of the 2nd Maine.¹⁷

What Hume lacked in soldierly looks, he made up for with individual charisma. Troops remembered him for his solicitous attitude for their well-being, his attention to detail, his discipline, and for his fondness for profane vocabulary. In fact, in his post office in Houlton he had a sign over the mantle that read, “NOTICE TO EMPLOYEES: Please do not swear. Not that we give a damn, but it sounds like hell to the customers.”¹⁸ By the time of the 1916 call-up, Hume was the best type of commander the regiment could have: well-versed in regional politics, well-liked by his men, respected by his peers, and with operational experience in Cuba.

No one knew just exactly the border mission would turn into. With the advantage of hindsight, we know it was a simple guard mission. For the men who joined in 1916, however, the possibility of war was very real. Many men joined just for the opportunity for adventure and excitement that the Mexican border mission posed. Russell Adams of Woodstock, Maine recalled that he was working in the neighboring town of Rumford

in the spring of 1916 when Company D's Lieutenant Spaulding "Jim" Bisbee—who happened to also be the town lawyer—approached him and his friend and asked if they would like "a trip to the Mexican border?" "Ay-ah," said Adams. "But Jim, how the dickens are we going to do that? It's a long way from Oxford County to Mexico." Bisbee replied that all they had to do was to join the Army.

"Hell, I always wanted to see Mexico," said Adams' friend, and the two enlisted.¹⁹ The entire University of Maine band joined up, becoming the regiment's band section. It was the only college band in the entire US Army. Among the bandsmen was a 23 year-old Lewis O. Barrows, who would serve as governor of Maine from 1937–1941. Incidentally, the band leader was Adelbert W. Sprague, the man who set the "Maine Stein Song" to music. This song would not only become the University of Maine's official song, but also the regimental march of the 103rd Infantry Regiment.²⁰

The recruitment and mobilization processes were remarkably quick. The rifle companies were required to reach their minimum peacetime strength of 65 enlisted men and three officers as per the *Table of Organization for the Organized Militia, 1914*. Each company reached or exceeded that number within ten days of receiving the mobilization order. Recruits as well as service members were examined at their local armories to ensure medical fitness. State staff were placed on immediate orders to facilitate the mobilization process.²¹

On 29 June, the men of the 2nd Maine boarded trains for Laredo, Texas. For two days they traveled in uncomfortable day coaches with three men to a seat. When they reached Kansas City, they were switched to sleeper cars, which were far more comfortable and allowed the men to get some rest. The 1,043 Maine men arrived in the border town of Laredo on a sweltering 4 July—two years later to the day, most of these men would arrive at Belleau Wood, France, to relieve the Marines there in some of the worst combat of World War I. But this was all in the unknown future to the Maine men, who quickly set up an orderly camp outside the dusty Texas town and began settling in.²²

On 17 July, the Mainers received light khaki uniforms to replace their heavy woolen ones. This was a great relief and boosted morale considerably, as the Mainers were unaccustomed to the oppressive Texas heat. The three battalions of the regiment prepared to take over patrolling duties from other units in the area that were leaving. The 2nd Maine shared their duties in Laredo with National Guardsmen from the 2nd Missouri and the 1st New Hampshire Infantry, as well as several

outfits of Regular Army troops. Conditions at the Laredo camp were generally good: the Army supplied decent food and required the local municipality to put in modern plumbing and medical facilities. However, the ever-present dust got into everything, as Sgt. Arthur Thayer of the Machine Gun Company said: “A man eats dust, drinks dust, and sleeps on dust here.”²³ When not on duty, troops could go into town to take in a movie or go shopping for souvenirs to send home. The regimental band made quite an impression, holding frequent concerts in the town square, for soldiers and civilians alike.²⁴

It was the band that unintentionally started one of those running jokes that is common in armies of all nations. One night on the border, several members of the band arrived back to their camp very late after spending some time in the town, possibly flaunting the regulation against alcohol consumption. Feeling the need for some music, they got their instruments and proceeded to strike up a lively tune called “The Houn’ Dog Rag,” which they had learned from the neighboring 2nd Missouri Infantry.²⁵ This was at three in the morning. They then went to bed, well content with themselves. The next morning, Colonel Hume summoned them into his tent, where he thanked them sarcastically for their serenade and said that as they liked it so much, he was ordering them to be up at 0300 every morning to play “The Houn’ Dog Rag” for the duration of their time in camp.

What began as Hume’s punishment for the band became the band’s punishment for Hume. From that moment on, the tune became a running joke in the entire regiment, and when men saw Hume both during and after the border mission they would inevitably whistle or hum the tune.²⁶ The joke ran across regimental lines; when the 1st New Hampshire Infantry arrived at Camp Bartlett, Massachusetts in the summer of 1917, the 2nd Maine, which had been in their brigade on the border, welcomed them into camp with the familiar strains of “The Houn’ Dog Rag.”²⁷ As the 103rd Infantry was on its way to France, the 103rd Infantry Band, still made up of the men from the University of Maine Band, caught sight of Hume’s ship. Crowding to the railing of their own ship, they blared “The Houn’ Dog Rag” over the waves for his benefit. The joke outlasted World War I itself, when the 103rd Infantry Band disrupted the great Yankee Division welcome home parade in Boston in 1919 by swinging effortlessly from “Stars and Stripes Forever” into “The Houn’ Dog Rag” as they passed Hume in the reviewing stand.²⁸ Stories such as this demonstrate the *esprit de corps* of the National Guard units that went off to war in 1917.

Aside from the jokes, the 2nd Maine was on the border to establish security, and the soldiers grew restless at being kept in camp and not used.

At the end of July, the regiment was broken up by companies and sent out to secure the towns of San Ignacio and Zapata, as well as various crossings along the Rio Grande. Here, the Maine men learned how to march long distances with full packs and equipment, how to set up and maintain outposts, how to communicate over long distances in poor terrain, dig trenches, conduct armed patrols, and how to sustain themselves as soldiers. It was a valuable learning experience for the men, especially the officers. The duty was arduous; the weather varied from hot and dusty to near gale-force winds that whipped sand into soldier's faces. The 2nd Maine was patrolling a 100-mile front along the Rio Grande, from 67 miles below Laredo to around 33 miles above that city.²⁹

Company B, of which Russell Adams was now a part, was checking train cars crossing from Mexico into Brownsville, searching for weapons. "The papers down in Maine were playing it up big, like we were in a war," remembered Adams, "but really it was a picnic."³⁰ Company E from Skowhegan was stationed at Perrone's Ranch, about 40 miles up the Rio Grande from Laredo. Captain Roy Marston commanding Company E took over responsibility for this post which included not only his soldiers, but also cavalry, signal, and medical detachments from the Regular Army. This type of cross-organizational command in an operational environment was better training than any maneuvers could provide. The soldiers immediately took up outpost duty, but they soon found that logistics was their enemy more than the Mexicans. The water was undrinkable, and supplies had to be hauled in over 22 miles of bad roads.³¹

Life went on even as the men were experiencing the new and exciting life of full-time soldiers. It was a gubernatorial electoral year in Maine, and the *Daily Star* noted on 13 September 1916 that "members of the Second Battalion of the Second Maine Infantry made a two days' overland march of 60 miles to execute the franchise." The overwhelming majority voted for Governor Carl Milliken, who won the election.³² The men were, by and large, shocked at the poverty that they saw in Texas, especially amongst Hispanic communities. Guardsmen from Maine and New Hampshire often shared their own rations with these communities, while their medical officers rendered what aid they could.³³

By September, the 2nd Maine was assembled in Laredo again. In a short time they were relieved by the 2nd Florida Infantry and were on their way home. The city newspaper wrote, "Laredo regrets to lose the Maine boys and their excellent college band. Since their coming here they have made an excellent reputation as gentlemen as well as soldiers and leave Laredo with a clean record, not a single one of their men having been ar-

rested for any violation of the civil law while here.”³⁴ The city of Laredo was sad to see them go. Not only had the band provided amusement for the locals, but the soldiers had sunk plenty of money into the local community.

On the way home, the regiment gained an unexpected enlistee: a dog from Arkansas. The citizens of Hoxie, Arkansas wrote to the Secretary of War on 15 October, stating the town dog, “Old Blue,” had been missing since the 2nd Maine passed through *en route* back home. The town suspected that “Old Blue” had wandered onto the train and they entreated with the Secretary that he relay to the Maine National Guard that they “give him all the comforts a faithful old dog should have.”³⁵ As it later turned out, they need not have worried.

Another tag-along was Augustus Williams, a 16 year-old from Torreon, Mexico. Born of a French mother and an American rancher father, he had been orphaned when he was 11 because of the violence on the border. He met the 2nd Maine in Laredo and the men of the regiment took the orphan on as a mascot. When the regiment returned to Maine, the young Williams accompanied them, sponsored by the officers of Company E. He was enrolled at the Good Will Orphanage School in Hinckley, Maine where he received vocational instruction that allowed him to take a position at the Kennebec Lumber Company in Augusta in 1917.³⁶

Quincy Kilby of Eastport’s Company I penned a poem after the expedition on the border that captured, humorously, how many of the Guardsmen felt about their service. A portion of this poem runs as follows:

Tell my brothers and companions, when they meet and
gather round,

Some evening on the Battery, beside the circus ground,

That we didn’t fight a battle here, we only drilled and cussed,

Though every time we ate a meal we had to bite the dust.

And some were quiet and polite, but some were rough and rude,

And sometimes ungrammatically criticized the food,

And one man lost his wrist watch—an inconceivable mishap—

Though he was not from Eastport, sturdy Eastport on the map.³⁷

The 2nd Maine was mustered out in Augusta on 28 October 1916. For the core of the regiment, the border service had provided invaluable experience in how to move the regiment over long distances, maintain logistical networks, and work with troops outside their organization. However, rather than being the notable once-in-a-lifetime event that most of the men

on the border thought that it would be, the experience proved to be a mere footnote for things to come.

The US Enters the World War

Events around the globe were reaching a crisis point in the waning days of 1916. Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare pushed the United States ever closer to the brink of entering the three year-old conflict. The shocking Zimmermann Telegram—a secret communiqué from Germany to Mexico, trying to get them to enter the war against the US—was released to the American public on 1 March 1917. Discussions raged in the United States, in Congress, and in the Cabinet. And on 6 April 1917, Congress approved President Woodrow Wilson's declaration of war on Germany.

Six days later, a telegram from the War Department arrived at Camp Keyes in Augusta: the 2nd Maine Regiment was ordered into active service. "I am, in consequence," read the letter from Secretary of War Newton Baker, "instructed by the President to call into the service of the United States forthwith, through you, the following units of the National Guard of the State of Maine."³⁸ This was no call for volunteers; President Wilson and Congress had exercised their right to mobilize the National Guard in a state of war, an authority afforded them by the National Defense Act of 1916.³⁹

Accordingly, Maine's Adjutant General George McL. Presson issued Special Orders No. 58 on 13 April: "In accordance with the proclamation of the President of the United States dated the 12th day of April, 1917, calling forth under the constitution and laws of the United States the National Guard of Maine necessary for a more perfect protection of postal, commercial and military channels and instrumentalities of the United States in the State of Maine, the Second Regiment Maine Infantry, National Guard will assemble at the armories at the home stations of the several organizations preparatory to mobilization and muster into the service of the United States."⁴⁰

Word spread across the state. In the officer corps of the 2nd Maine, the call-up had not been unexpected. As early as 6 February, the adjutant general's office had released a memorandum to commanders: "Although no call has yet been made for the National Guard, yet it is possible that such may come within a short time and it is incumbent upon every loyal citizen of this State between the ages of 18 and 45 years to consider his duty to the State and Nation." The memo then goes on to urge commanders to bring their units up to wartime strength as soon as possible while adding that medical examiners must take great care to ensure that the new recruits

meet all War Department requirements. Commanders were also directed to immediately ensure that their soldiers were properly equipped with the correct uniforms, and if not, to requisition the state at once.⁴¹

Lieut. Frank Burbank, temporarily commanding Company C in Livermore Falls, had been recruiting men since 18 February to get the company to full wartime strength of 150 officers and men, and had been told by Colonel Hume to be ready for service at a moment's notice.⁴² He did not have long to wait. On 19 April, the town's newspaper, the *Advertiser*, announced, "Friday forenoon the militia call was sounded and Company C assembled at the Armory...Cot beds are to arrive for the men today, so that they will not have to sleep on the floors any longer." Capt. Spaulding Bisbee of Company B received the message at 0700 and "at 8 o'clock the signal was given by the sound of the fire alarm, to which the men speedily responded."⁴³ Capt. Roy Marston, commanding Company E in Skowhegan, received a telephone call after midnight on 7 April notifying him to get his company ready and "at five o'clock that morning all the whistles in town sounded the agreed upon signal calling the men to the armory. In 15 minutes every Skowhegan soldier was at the armory and by noon the men from the farms and nearby towns had arrived."⁴⁴ Similarly, Capt. Daniel Gould of Bangor called his Company G out on 7 April and began recruiting it to wartime strength.⁴⁵ Hume, writing to Capt. Frank Drake of Headquarters Company on 3 March had summed up the situation well, while asking Drake to appeal to the leading citizens in his community to help him with his recruitment drive: "Whatever may be their opinion of volunteer and universal service, the fact must be faced that all we now have to rely upon is the National Guard and our small Regular Army."⁴⁶

This scene was recreated across the state in towns and cities as young men flocked to their armories. Cpl. Russell Adams, of Company B, said that his decision to go was prompted by loyalty to his community: "Those war rumors started to fly thicker than the potatoes in Aroostook County... Company B was made up of Rumford Boys, and I was one of them. If the 2nd Maine went, I was going. Then that Kaiser started to sink our ships; darn fool, that's what he was. We were going to have to show him a thing or two."⁴⁷ All the companies in the state had been recruiting since the reception of the 6 February memo, under Hume's guidance. Albert Klick of Waterville was one of the group to enlist early, on 10 February, into Company H.⁴⁸ Early recruitment helped the 2nd Maine reach its enlistment goals in noteworthy time.

By 17 April, Company B was leading the state in enlistments with over 130 men in the ranks. They celebrated this achievement with a public

drill at their armory, followed by a dance—the proceeds of which were “to be used for the comfort of the lads of the company when they shall be called into the active service of their country.”⁴⁹ So many men from the Rumford area were joining up that a good many were sent to the town of Norway’s Company D to fill its ranks.⁵⁰ However, they encountered some problems. One was the removal of men with dependent families. Then came the stringent medical inspections that removed seasoned veterans from the ranks for conditions as trivial as an improperly set broken toe. Said a bitter officer in Waterville’s Company H, “the work of 15 years was wiped out in a day.”⁵¹

As the companies were mustering and recruiting, Col. Frank Hume established his regimental headquarters at Camp Keyes in Augusta, Maine on 16 April, soon joined by the Supply and Machine Gun Companies.⁵² Hume himself was feeling the pinch of restrictive medical examinations as he had been rejected by Army doctors in mid-April for his defective sight. However, Governor Carl Milliken travelled to Washington to plead on his behalf to Secretary of War Baker. After some discussion, it was agreed that Hume should be given a waiver.⁵³

Although the men of the regiment knew that they would be slated for guard duty around the state, rumors of what would come after that flew thick and fast. The *Lewiston Daily Sun* noted on 17 April that the going rumor in Company K of Farmington was that they would be headed for Panama, although the newspaper noted that “nobody seems to be able to give any authority for the rumor or to state how it started.”⁵⁴

By early May, each company was making preparations to move to their locations where they would assume guard duty. The *Lewiston Daily Sun* recorded on 30 April that Waterville’s Company H had received their orders to head off to the town of Bath for their first assignment. “The boys will take with them,” the paper announced, “‘Old Blue,’ the dog which accompanied them from the border.”⁵⁵ The citizens of Hoxie, Arkansas could rest easy knowing that their beloved dog was being well-taken care of by his new friends.

Guard Duty

The companies departed their hometowns to great fanfare. “Some 12 to 1,500 patriotic citizens of Livermore Falls and vicinity were at the Maine Central Railway station, Monday morning, to witness the departure of Company C, 2nd Infantry, NGSM [National Guard of the State of Maine],” wrote the *Advertiser* on 3 May. “The militia boys were escorted from the Armory to the railroad station by the Livermore Falls Band, play-

ing patriotic selections.”⁵⁶ A similar scene played out in Waterville where, “At the station the platform was thronged with people who were present to see the boys off. Many of these were members of the families of Company H, who were possessed of sufficient fortitude to be present at their departure and there were many tear dimmed eyes to be seen, although emotions were held well in check.”⁵⁷ Similarly, the Houlton newspaper wrote that “A spirit of sadness prevailed in the hearts of hundreds of our citizens who thronged the Bangor & Aroostook station and grounds, Monday afternoon, when the members of our crack militia company left for Brownville Jct., where they will spend the summer and later probably go, if the war continues, to the battlefields of France.”⁵⁸ A Skowhegan newspaper noted, “Never has a finer looking body of soldiers left Skowhegan in the memory of the present generation.”⁵⁹ It was the first step of many that would take these New Englanders, with occupations ranging from doctors to farmers to vagrants, from being citizens to soldiers.

Temporary battalion headquarters were established around the state in central locations where they could support their various companies which were standing guard over railroads, bridges, and other areas that the state was worried would be vulnerable to saboteurs. Orders from the Eastern Department headquarters in New York City dated 26 April had appointed the various companies of the regiment to their stations. The regiment now covered vital infrastructure—mainly railroad bridges, as determined by meetings with railway authorities—from Kittery all the way up to Vanceboro, a distance of over 250 miles.⁶⁰ The 1st Battalion under Major John A. Hadley set up in Biddeford, the 2nd Battalion under Maj. Walter D. Mayo in Portland, and the 3rd Battalion, under Maj. William E. Southard, in Brownville.⁶¹ Not unlike the Mexican Border deployment the year prior, this stationing of troops across a wide front presented many challenges to the leadership of the 2nd Maine, namely in the realm of transportation and supply. It was experience that continued to hone the problem-solving abilities of the leaders.

The fears of German saboteurs partially stemmed from wartime paranoia, but also had a basis in reality. On 2 February 1915, a German army officer acting on orders from the military attaché of the Germany Embassy in Washington, D.C. attempted to blow up the railroad bridge between Vanceboro, Maine and St. Croix, New Brunswick. Fortunately for the US, he was a bad saboteur and an even worse spy. The blast was relatively minor, the railroad was back in operation in a few days, and the culprit was detained.

However, the psychological damage had been done; suddenly the far-off European war was not so distant after all.⁶² Local and national press did little

to calm these fears, and the entrance of the US into the war in 1917 only fanned the editorial flames. As far off as Oregon came the announcement on 22 March 1917, “U-BOATS LURK OFF MAINE! Naval Officer Says Attack’ on Ports Is Not Unlikely.”⁶³ That same newspaper went on to describe the Maryland National Guard being called up to guard bridges around Washington, D.C. and the Oregon National Guard sending out recruiting parties. The 1st New Hampshire and 1st Vermont were also ordered out on guard duty around their states, as was most of the Massachusetts National Guard. Maine was not alone in preparing for war. The legacy of the Vanceboro Bridge bombing of 1915 continued in 1917, as Maine National Guard soldiers stood guard over their own state’s infrastructure.

This service was one of boredom for most of the soldiers. Housed in Portland, Company B probably had it the best—guarding the hubs of the Maine Central and Grand Trunk Rail Roads. Quartered at first in an old freight warehouse, they were soon moved to the Naval Reserve Barracks on Portland Pier. From here, life was mainly comfortable for the enlisted men—who served shifts of a week by squad at each of the different guard posts—and very comfortable for the officers, who made the most of life in Maine’s most metropolitan city.⁶⁴ Capt. Spaulding “Jim” Bisbee, a lawyer from Rumford and the Company B commander, greatly enjoyed his time in Portland, where he began courting his childhood friend Ethel Hinds, “the most wonderful girl I ever knew and to me, divine.” On 29 June, the two became engaged to be married, “an event which was to make life worth living and me the happiest of men.”⁶⁵

However, the deployment was not without danger. The 2nd Maine took its first casualty on 20 May when 19 year-old Pvt. Peter Klain of Norway’s Company D was killed was after being accidentally struck by a train while guarding the Boston & Maine railroad bridge in Biddeford. Klain’s loss was felt keenly in his community and around the state. The *Advertiser Democrat* wrote on 25 May that, “He was a favorite in the company and the life of any party.”⁶⁶ Only a few classes shy of graduating from Norway High School, Klain had taken a furlough to join the National Guard on 5 April. He seemed to have a bright future in front of him, had been the captain of his school basketball team, and was a noted vocalist. Of particular note was Klain’s family heritage: they were Jewish. Maine’s Jewish population quietly enlisted in large numbers in proportion to its small size. As an example, Morris and Rose Klain sent seven of their children to serve in the US Army in World War I, four boys and three girls. Peter—mercifully—was the only one killed, although the eldest son Jacob was wounded while with the 4th Division in France.⁶⁷ Peter Klain’s accidental death was

sadly not the only one in the region; on 25 May, two Guardsmen from Company L, 6th Massachusetts Infantry were struck and killed by a Boston & Maine Express Train in Newmarket, New Hampshire.⁶⁸

Guard duty was hazardous for others as well, not just the Guardsmen. On the night of 22 May, Cpl. Phillippe Simard of Company D spotted an individual crawling under a fence and onto a railroad bridge in Biddeford. Simard ordered the man to halt several times, but was ignored. Simard fired, intending—as he later said—to hit the man in the leg. The bullet instead entered the man’s lungs and he fell mortally wounded. Simard fired three shots in the air which brought out the remainder of the guard who rushed the wounded man to the hospital. The man soon died. His name was Hassan Suleman, an immigrant from Albania who was employed at the mills in York. It is likely that he did not speak English. Simard was placed under arrest until an investigation could take place. This inquiry eventually cleared Simard and he was returned to his company.⁶⁹ Challenges of all kinds faced leaders at the company level, even before they entered the war front.

As the companies conducted their tours of guard duty, Maine continued recruiting the whole regiment to wartime strength. At the time of the declaration of war, most companies averaged around 65 men; they were now authorized 150 men each.⁷⁰ With the declaration of war, recruiting stations were set up in each armory, staffed with recruiting parties to be on duty daily from 0800 to 2200, including Sundays. Each party consisted of one officer and two enlisted men, who were trained in the techniques of recruiting and their duties in enrolling applicants. On 4 June, the *Lewiston Daily Sun* announced, “Efforts to recruit the Second Maine Infantry, National Guard, to war strength, will be made tomorrow in every city, town and plantation in Maine. Governor Carl E. Milliken today arranged to have veterans of the Civil or Spanish-American war appear at each [draft] registration place and impress upon the young men, as they register, the advisability of enlisting.”⁷¹ Hume sent out a memo to recruiting centers to have posted: “Unless you are a cripple, you are almost certain to be a soldier before this war with Germany is over, for you are of a military age (between 18 and 45); and those in possession with all the facts tell us that sooner or later every available man will have to do his bit or Maine will be a second Belgium.”⁷² Hume was not above appealing to the hyperbole of the time in order to gain more recruits.

In a similar vein of fervent patriotism, recruiting posters went up, proclaiming,

You’ve Got it to Do! Why not start now???? The Second Maine Infantry, ‘Our Regiment,’ needs 700 more to raise it

to WAR STRENGTH. The time it takes to do this will be A MEASURE OF MAINE'S PATRIOTISM. The Regiment wants unmarried men, without dependents, 18 to 45 years of age. Every man between 21 and 30 (inclusive) who enlists now will be CREDITED TO THE DRAFT."⁷³

On 19 June, a broadside poster in Bangor excitedly announced, "THE KILTIES ARE COMING! Officers and Bagpipe Band of the 236th Canadian Battalion in Bangor. Joint Recruiting Mass Meeting in City Hall at 7.30 P.M for the Kilties, Second Maine Inf., US Army, US Navy followed by dancing to pipe music! FREE. Canadians! Americans! This is Your Chance. Take It."⁷⁴ These recruiting efforts emphasized the importance of being able to serve alongside friends and neighbors in a state unit versus the unknown of being drafted. The efforts were successful, as by 25 June the companies were all recruited to their wartime strength.⁷⁵

On 19 May, 25 selected individuals from the regiment were sent to Plattsburg Barracks, New York to attend officer candidate school so that the regiment would have a complement of officers. Some men, such as Colby College graduate 1st Sgt. George N. Bourque of Company H, passed the training and commissioned as a second lieutenant, returning to the regiment. He was only one of three, however, who returned as lieutenants. Several men failed or declined to accept commissions and were sent back. Most men passed, but learned that since they had to be discharged from the Maine National Guard to attend the course that they could then be assigned wherever the Army wished. Consequently, 15 new officers were sent to other outfits now forming around the country. Most saw combat overseas, and many were wounded. Joseph R. Sanford, formerly of Company E, joined the newly formed Air Service, and was killed in action over Lys on 12 April 1918—one year to the date that the Maine National Guard had been called up.⁷⁶ As the National Guardsmen would discover throughout the war, sending men to non-commissioned or commissioned officers training was hazardous to a unit's readiness levels; the Army recognized talented individuals and snatched them up for other units. Once the Army went into action, all divisions would come to experience the frustration of losing combat-tested leaders to the transfer system that moved them to newer, greener units.

The Training Begins

Through May and June, around 600 of the new recruits to the regiment were sent to Camp Keyes where they were organized into four training companies under the supervision of Maj. William Southard, commander of the 3rd Battalion. Southard was one of the old officers



Maj. William E. Southard. Photo courtesy of the Maine National Guard Archives.

of the 2nd Maine, who had been with the unit since the turn of the century. A civil engineer by trade, he looked the part of a tough and grizzled major at the age of 41. To help him with his task, he had been given a crop of newly-commissioned second lieutenants: Irvin Doane, Erwin Newcomb, Hector Carpenter, Donald McGrew, Timothy Bonney, William Ireland, and Henry McKenney. As of April, they had all been enlisted men, but with the power of a college degree and officer's training camp, they were newly-minted infantry leaders. None would know it at the time, but these young men would rise far and fast in the wartime Army. Southard may have grumbled at having to babysit new lieutenants as well as train new

recruits, but he dutifully began the process of turning these civilians into soldiers. The companies trained all day long in military customs and courtesies, tactics, drill, and physical exercise. Every effort was made to maximize the available time since no one knew when the regiment would be sent somewhere else.

Around the same time, a reporter from the *Lewiston Evening Journal* visited Camp Keyes to sit down and have a talk with Colonel Hume. Hume presented a very different view of the war than the positive and uplifting presentation of events that Americans were reading in the newspapers—that the struggle would last for several more years and require an immense amount of blood and treasure from the United States. “This first contingent of 500,000 seems like a mighty army,” said Hume. “But it is hardly more than the first drop in a very large bucket. I believe the government would

have called for a million more had it been prepared to equip them; and it is bound to have at least two million in training before another spring.” This was an eerily accurate prediction, as the spring of 1918 saw millions of drafted men in training camps across the US with hundreds of thousands more across the ocean in Europe.

At the time in 1917, it was the belief that America’s prime contribution would be a naval force and a contingent of aviators. The interviewer asked Hume what he thought of the “huge aviation fleet” that the US was preparing for France. “Well,” said Hume, “aviation fleets are a first-class thing with which to injure the morale of the enemy—but they do not win wars. They do not materially affect the fighting men at the front. The enemy digs himself in, waits until the aviators have gone, and then often comes out and thrashes the life out of the forces opposing him. This world’s greatest struggle will be won or lost upon the land and not in the air.” In this, Hume proved again to be prescient not only for the Great War, but for future conflicts.⁷⁷

As day broke on 5 July, a casual onlooker would have observed a marked change to the town of Augusta. As used to the companies of recruits as the town was, something new was happening. Train after train pulled into the station all day long, discharging hundreds of armed men: the companies of the 2nd Maine had completed their tour of guard duty and had begun to assemble at Camp Keyes. Just who were the men who made up this 2,002-man organization? Over 50 percent were traditional National Guardsmen who had been with the regiment since the Mexican Border and before. Men signed on eagerly to serve again with “the Old Second.” This provided a core cadre of well-trained and experienced soldiers, NCOs, and officers. They would be the backbone of the regiment.

One unique individual was Brig. Gen. Albert Greenlaw, who, from 1913 to 1915 had served as The Adjutant General of the Maine National Guard.⁷⁸ In this capacity, he had represented the Military Department of Maine at the funeral of Maj. Gen. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain the year prior. Greenlaw resigned as adjutant general to accept appointment as captain and commander of the Support Company, serving in that capacity in the Mexican Border expedition. He retained this position as the 2nd entered service for the war, as well as being appointed the regimental supply officer.⁷⁹

Hundreds were college students from the Maine universities.⁸⁰ Colby, Bates, and Bowdoin—the Maine Ivies, as they are sometimes called—sent dozens of officers into the regiment, as well as some enlisted men. The

University of Maine contributed the band, again, as well as many more men in the line companies. In addition, no less than 23 Harvard graduates passed through the regiment during its train-up and wartime service.

A notable member of Augusta's Company M was George Sterling, from Peaks Island, Maine. He enlisted into Company M after graduating high school, serving on the Mexican Border. When he returned home he took a job as a wireless radio operator on the steamship *Philadelphia* due to his interest in radio communications. On 6 April, his ship received a coded order to raise the Navy's colors and run without lights—the US was on war footing with the Central Powers. On arriving home, Sterling requested a transfer to the Signal Corps, but his commanding officer denied that request. Once in France, however, Sterling learned the French wireless procedures and was eventually transferred to be an instructor of wireless at the US Army 1st Corps School at Gondrecourt. From there, he was transferred to Gen. John J. Pershing's headquarters at Chaumont where he helped establish the new radio intelligence service, intercepting German radio transmissions. After the war, Sterling's career led him through the newly-developing world of wireless communications, including in the Radio Intelligence Division in World War II. By 1948, Sterling was heading up the Federal Communications Commission.⁸¹

Some men were recent high school graduates, such as Ralph T. Moan from East Machias who joined Company K. One whole squad in Company E was made up of recent graduates from Skowhegan High School.⁸² One young man in this squad, Harry St. Ledger, had briefly courted a young lady back in Skowhegan named Margaret Chase. As Margaret Chase Smith, she would be the first woman to serve in both the US House of Representatives and Senate.⁸³ The squad was given a leave of absence in June to return to their high school to receive their diplomas: "it was indeed a touching sight to see the youthful patriots in khaki stand together at the time of the awarding of diplomas."⁸⁴ Little more than boys, they were off to war together.

The regiment contained hundreds of foreign-born soldiers. Some, like Michael McQuade from Rumford who enlisted into Company B, and John Murphy of Bangor's Company G, were former soldiers in the British Army.⁸⁵ Frank Marinelli, Mike Molino, Ignazio Polleschi, Dominick Samarco, and Fortunato Verro were all of Italian birth and had been living in western Maine working on the railroads and in the mills when the call for recruits went out. All joined up in Company B. Lucien L. Arsenault was one of eight Arsenaults—many of them born in Canada—from the neighboring towns of Rumford and Mexico who enlisted in the 2nd Maine in 1917. Nearly every company contained at least one set of brothers.

From the Passamaquoddy town at Pleasant Point near Easport, Maine came Samuel Dana, Charles Lola, Peter Lewey, John Newell, David Sopiell, George Stevens, Henry Sockbeson, Peter Stanley, and Moses Neptune. Not yet American citizens they came to do their part—including the tribal governor's own son, Moses Neptune. In a time when to be German, or to even have a German sounding name, was a liability, Albert and Eric Klick—both born in Mecklenburg, Germany—decided to show their loyalty by enlisting into Waterville's Company H. For all their varied backgrounds, the majority of the aforementioned men had one thing in common: by the close of 1918 their names would all be on the casualty list.

On 6 July, the assembled companies of the 2nd Maine received a special visitor to their bivouacs at Camp Keyes: Maj. Gen. Clarence R. Edwards. General Edwards was the commander of the Northeastern Department, which was composed of the various National Guards of the New England states. Neither a New Englander nor a Guardsman, Edwards seemed to be at first blush an odd choice for this command. But the tall, trim Ohioan was a perfect fit for the region. From Cleveland, but of New England stock, Edwards had risen through the ranks of the Regular Army, serving in the Spanish-American War, the Philippine Islands, and his last assignment as commander of the Panama Canal Zone. He was edgy, cantankerous, and known for his biting tongue. This last facet won him few friends and earned him quite a few enemies—notably Gen. John Pershing, who would become commander of the American Expeditionary Force.

While many of Edwards' peers in the Regular Army disliked him, his National Guardsmen would come to love him. Edwards was a proponent of the idea that the National Guard should be sent into action as soon as possible. As early as 4 May he told a dinner party in Boston that "it may be necessary, in spite of the situation, to send over speedily some troops, possibly some militia. No people could stop a gap more heroically than those who would be thus sent."⁸⁶ Viewing the men of the 2nd Maine, Edwards seemed pleased with their progress, although he noted that the time spent on guard duty had removed valuable training time. This, he intimated, would soon be remedied.⁸⁷

Two weeks after his visit to Augusta, Edwards received orders to create the 26th Division of the US Army out of what was then the Northeastern Department of the National Guard.⁸⁸ Around this time, the announcement went out that the "Maine Boys Will Train at Camp Greene," in Charlotte, North Carolina.⁸⁹ However, Edwards was not inclined to waste time training on the American side of the Atlantic; he wanted to get to where the action was. Accordingly, the news soon came out that

the boys of the 2nd Maine were not headed to North Carolina after all, but to Westfield, Massachusetts.

Now assembled as a full regiment in Augusta, the 2nd Maine began to meld into a functional unit. They established a training field at Camp Keyes, complete with dummies for bayonet practice and mock trenches. In the record-setting heat of July 1917—temperatures were logged in excess of 100 degrees Fahrenheit—the 2nd Maine set about its training regimen. This consisted of drill all morning, an hour of calisthenics at noon, and then field training until 1700. With the camp fully electrified, lights-out at 2230 was adhered to with strict regularity, enforced by the first sergeant of each company.⁹⁰ Capt. Arthur Ashworth's Machine Gun Company set up a machine gun range in the southwest corner of Camp Keyes where they were able to practice their gunnery, while a rifle range was set up outside the camp. From a training perspective, most of the work being done was what we today would call individual or team training. There was not enough time to conduct large-scale company, battalion, or regimental field problems.

As this work was going on, the regiment was still training up its rookies. One officer, watching them attempt to drill, declared in despair, "I've been thinking of taking a picture of this particular squad and sending it to Col. [Theodore] Roosevelt, just to comfort him for not being sent to France."⁹¹ Not all was amusing, however; on 2 August, Pvt. Fred Bellefleur of Company H was discovered dead in his tent by Capt. William H. Murray. Pvt. Bellefleur had been struck by lightning during the night and was killed instantly.⁹² On 6 August, Pvt. Owen W. Kelley of Company A died of blood poisoning. Many men were in the hospital for broken limbs or other minor ailments.⁹³

All was not just training for these young soldiers. Sunday parades and the occasional fair or circus livened up the monotony of camp life for the soldiers. So too did baseball games on Sundays with as many as three games going on at once.⁹⁴ The town of Augusta itself greatly benefited from the presence of the 2nd Maine, as all the Doughboys spent excess cash after pay day around the town—\$65,000 on the first payday alone. Families and friends visited frequently. Maj. William Southard rented a house on the edge of Camp Keyes and moved his whole family down from Bangor.⁹⁵ Reporters were also frequent visitors to the camp, eager to know what the young military men were doing and thinking. One reporter broached the topic of women's suffrage and got the reply from one young man, "We're for the women voting every time and as often as they like."⁹⁶ This would have put them in the minority of Maine men, since the majority would vote down women's suffrage in Maine that September.

On 5 August, the 2nd Maine Infantry was activated into federal service and was no longer a state entity. Standing in formation by battalion on the gently rolling parade field at Camp Keyes, the men listened to the President's proclamation calling them into federal status. The men were now soldiers in the US Army. Whether that thought resonated with them is unknown, but it was shortly to change their entire composition. The regiment trained at Camp Keyes for two more weeks, the new recruits learning to adapt to Army life. By 16 August, the regiment had orders to have everything packed in readiness for a move.⁹⁷ The period of individual and team training was over; it was time to move on to more advanced and complex exercises.

Camp Bartlett

On Sunday, 19 August, the 2nd Maine held its final review in its home state. Visited by the governor as well as thousands of family and friends, the regiment assembled for their last parade. "As the boys of the 2nd Maine "with 'eyes right' passed before the chief executive of Maine, a mighty thunderhead was seen rising in the west, an all too concrete reminder of the clouds of war that have settled over the world."⁹⁸ The next day, the men loaded aboard trains and departed the Pine Tree State, many for the last time. The Livermore Falls *Advertiser* provided a moving description of this parting:

Soldiers of Camp Keyes left for 'destination unknown' Sunday. In a downpour of rain that in mid-afternoon had been forecast by a bank of leaden clouds rising from the western horizon—conditions that seemed gloomily in keeping with the spirit of the occasion—the stalwart boys of 2nd Maine Regiment, USA., departed from Augusta, and received the farewells that for many days past, parents, brothers, sisters, and sweethearts had been steeling themselves to utter with the same brave cheerfulness shown by the boys themselves...the streets of Augusta seemed strangely forlorn Sunday evening, with no young men garbed in olive drab to lend the atmosphere of youthful life which the citizens had come to feel was an inherent part of the city's existence.⁹⁹

It took 106 train cars to move the regiment with its baggage and allotment of animals, divided up into seven trains.¹⁰⁰ As the trains passed south of Portland, Colonel Hume walked the length of the cars to inspect his troops. It was with Headquarters Company that he found the 2nd's pal from the Mexican Border, Augustus Williams—fully dressed in a Doughboy uniform. The

youth had not wanted to be separated from the regiment and had snuck on board the train, probably with the help of the men from Headquarters Company. Colonel Hume firmly, but kindly, removed the lad from the train at the next stop, directing the conductor and the local police chief to ensure he got back to his job in Augusta. “I feel sorry to think the colonel wouldn’t allow me to go on,” said Williams to a reporter, “but he wouldn’t and what could I do?” According to the report, Williams soon shrugged off his misfortune and took a nap.¹⁰¹ Undeterred by his inability to accompany his regiment off to France, Williams enlisted in the Naval Reserve and spent the war in Portland and Boston. The inducting official recorded his hometown as “Mexico, Maine,” never thinking to ask if the youth was from the actual country rather than the small town in western Maine.¹⁰²

The trains wended their way across Maine and Massachusetts, and pulled into the station at Westfield, Massachusetts, the site of the newly minted Camp Bartlett. Awaiting them were troops from the Massachusetts National Guard. As a Springfield newspaper described, “The big event of the day, overshadowing all else, was the coming of the Second Maine. The Maine boys are about the hardest bunch physically that has ever hit Massachusetts. They are larger framed than the Bay State boys, they have the Down East expression, and are rangy in gait and action.”¹⁰³

The training area was about two miles north of the town of Westfield on a large plain, flanked by the pleasant hills of the Berkshires. The camp was divided into sectors for each unit that would be arriving. The men of the 2nd Maine went to work with a will and had most of their tents raised on 20 August. They also dug a trench to connect the water main to their encampment so that they could have clean water piped in. Companies went into bivouac and established field kitchens.

Novel to the onlookers who turned out to gawk at the thousands of new soldiers were the large numbers of mascots within the 2nd Maine. “The Second Maine was a veritable Zoo in the line of mascots,” wrote a journalist. Company K had a baby bear—purchased off a lumberjack when the company was on guard duty in northern Maine—while Company D boasted two goats from their expedition to Laredo the previous year. One company had a monkey. And of course, there were the dogs: “Every command has at least one dog, and some more. For ugly looking species of dogdom, the Second Maine has the palm.”¹⁰⁴ Nights were filled with singing; songs such as “The Maine Stein Song” quickly marked the regiment as hailing from the Pine Tree State. Not everyone enjoyed their new encampment, however. Pvt. Ralph Spaulding of Company H did not find much to admire at Camp Bartlett, writing to his sister on 24 August: “This

is a hard looking place here we landed right in the woods and had to clear our camping ground. When you send me my food I would like to have you send me some postage.”¹⁰⁵

The 1st New Hampshire, with headquarters in Manchester, had assembled in their state capital at Concord on the state’s encampment site for their muster-in period. In an odd coincidence, it was also named Camp Keyes although this was due to the popular convention of naming encampment areas after the sitting governor, who at the time was Henry Keyes (pronounced *Kize*). Here the regiment recruited to full strength before entraining for Camp Bartlett. They arrived at Camp Bartlett two days after the 2nd Maine: “New Hampshire came in heavy marching order,” reported a Maine newspaper on 24 August. “They had blankets, overcoats, five days’ travel rations, extra clothing, shoes, rifle, intrenching [sic] tools, sweaters, everything they owned, including shelter tents, poles and pins on their backs. They upheld their reputation for hiking in coming up from the station, and so thick was the dust under their feet it was impossible to see more than three files down the rank when the first three companies had passed.” Word had already gotten out that the 1st New Hampshire was to be broken up to fill other units, and the troops coming into camp appeared gloomy and dispirited. However, this changed when suddenly the familiar strains of the “Houn’ Dawg Rag,” floated to their ears, as the 2nd Maine Band plied their instruments to welcome their colleagues from the border into their new home. “No finer thing has ever taken place in the annals of New England military history,” boasted a Maine newspaper, “than the welcome which was accorded to the legions of the Granite State by the officers and men from Maine.”¹⁰⁶ Maine soldiers lined the road to cheer on the tired newcomers. Detachments from each company of the 2nd Maine fetched washing tubs and water for the tired and dusty Granite State men, as others readied supper for them. As the men of the 1st New Hampshire ate, the men of the 2nd Maine assembled their tents so that by the time night fell, the companies of the 1st New Hampshire were fully melded with their counterparts of the 2nd Maine. What could have been a painful mess was mitigated by the hospitality of the Mainers.¹⁰⁷

Reorganization

It was at Camp Bartlett that the painful breakup of the old militia outfits began. The 2nd Maine was retained in its entirety to form the foundation of a new regiment established along the new tables of organization and equipment approved by the War Department. Under this new plan, each company was authorized 250 men broken up into four platoons, so regiments were now massive: just about 3,800 officers and men, over three

times the size of pre-war regiments. They also became more lethal. Each infantry regiment was equipped with 192 Chauchat automatic rifles, with 16 allocated per company. The regimental machine gun company consisted of 16 Hotchkiss heavy machine guns. For additional firepower, the regimental headquarters company was augmented with six three-inch Stokes mortars and three mobile 37mm field guns.¹⁰⁸ Thus formed into three battalions, the US regiment of World War I was an impressive fighting force that could provide its own machine gun cover as well as direct and indirect light artillery fire when needed.

During operations, each battalion would usually have a company from one of the division's three machine gun battalions attached to it as well as a platoon of engineers from the 101st Engineer Regiment. However, few officers had experience in moving and maneuvering such large bodies of troops. Each company was about the size of a pre-war battalion, and battalions the size of a peace-time regiment. Captains and majors were not used to coordinating the movements of so many men. Asked by Edwards what he thought of the new force structure, Hume replied that he thought that the division was too large and that companies should not exceed 200 men, "but in view of my slight experience I do not feel competent to suggest any definite organization."¹⁰⁹ This became rapidly apparent as the regiments began their training and it would become a serious issue when they entered combat.

The first state regiment to lose its colors, so to speak, was the 1st New Hampshire. Out of the nearly 2,000 Granite State men, about 1,500 were added to the ranks of the 2nd Maine. Then came the absorption of the 1st Vermont into the various units taking shape around Camp Bartlett; approximately 400 men from this unit were added to the 2nd Maine. Next came 43 men from Troop B of the Rhode Island Cavalry and a smattering of men from detachments of the 6th and 8th Massachusetts Infantry Regiments. Finally came the casing of the colors of the 2nd Maine on 22 August, followed by the unfurling of a new set of colors with a new identity: the 103rd US Infantry Regiment. The New Englanders were now no longer defined by their state organizations; they were in the massive US Army now.¹¹⁰

These changes were taking place across New England. The 101st and 104th Infantry Regiments took shape out of Massachusetts infantry regiments while the Connecticut National Guard provided the bulk of the men for the 102nd Infantry Regiment. These four infantry regiments formed the foundation of the 26th Division, the very first National Guard division formed out of the old militia units.

The 26th Division was what is called a “square” division, consisting of four regiments of infantry (the 101st, 102nd, 103rd, 104th Infantry Regiments) in two brigades. The 101st and 102nd Infantry formed the 51st Brigade while the 103rd and 104th, both at Camp Bartlett, made up the 52nd Brigade. The infantry was supported by three regiments of field artillery (101st, 102nd, and 103rd Field Artillery Regiments) in one brigade (51st Artillery Brigade). The artillery brigade also contained the 101st Trench Mortar Battery, formerly Battery C, 1st Maine Heavy Field Artillery Regiment from Lewiston, Maine. The division also contained the 101st, 102nd, and 103rd Machine Gun Battalions, formed out of the New England cavalry regiments which traded their horses for machine guns. The 103rd Machine Gun Battalion would be assigned to the 52nd Brigade. The 101st Engineers, the 101st Field Signal Battalion, the 101st Ammunition Train, the 101st Supply Train, and the 101st Sanitary Train completed the support units for the division.¹¹¹

One might wonder why these units all seemed to have a similar convention when it came to their names. And as with all things military, it was not an accident. When it was decided to bring the National Guard into Federal service by division, the War Department reserved the divisional numbering scheme of 1-25 for the Regular Army and 26-75 for the National Guard. Similarly, regiments numbered 1-100 were Regular outfits, while 101-299 were for National Guard units.¹¹²

Naturally, this shake-up took some time getting used to. For the most part, the Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island men melded well together. It helped that they came from similar backgrounds with a common cultural history. Lieutenant Don “Mac” McGrew, commanding the 37mm gun battery in Headquarters Company, wrote of this time that, “A regiment, to be a regiment, must have a soul—and intersectional feeling was very strong in New England. Among hundreds of other things, we officers were striving to make the men of the 103rd forget that they came from the 2nd Maine, the 8th Mass, or the 1st New Hampshire. We were also trying to forget it ourselves,” he added, ruefully.¹¹³

It was a time of unending excitement with too much to do. An exhausted Capt. Percy Hasty, commander of Company A, remarked, “I’ll take the trenches, I want a little peace mixed in with my soldiering now and again.” They were also dealing with new second lieutenants, mostly from Massachusetts, who had come in from officers training camps. “Three of those new ‘seconds’ came from ‘Hawv’d,’” bemoaned McGrew, who recorded that his company commander was reportedly beside himself with having to train new second lieutenants right before shipping out.¹¹⁴ No one had

much time to get used to the new officers or the new format of the regiment as events were moving along at a fast pace. Colonel Hume began putting together his regimental staff and battalion command teams.

In addition to the general staff required at regimental headquarters, a regiment was required to have a chaplain. Dr. Paul D. Moody, originally from the 1st Vermont Infantry Regiment, was appointed as the regimental chaplain. Hume and some other officers were determined to get a measure of the man who would provide spiritual support to their troops in combat, and one night after Dr. Moody's arrival, they deposited the remains of a just-found deceased cat in the chaplain's bed. The amused officers went to bed, expecting to hear some profanity from the man of God in the morning. When they awoke, they found that the door to each offending officer's room had been decorated with a black crepe bow, the symbol of mourning. From that moment on, Dr. Moody was heartily welcomed in the regiment as one of their own.¹¹⁵ In fact, Colonel Hume thought so much of him that when the regiment arrived in France, one of the scant few vehicles available in the regiment was given to the chaplain so that he could visit the men with ease.¹¹⁶ In turn, Dr. Moody levied the greatest praise to Colonel Hume as one could: "His men, to Hume, were men, not merely rifles."¹¹⁷

On 26 August, the 103rd Infantry held its first review as a new regiment and its last review on US soil until 1919. Governors Milliken and Keyes, from Maine and New Hampshire, and Major General Edwards attended the review, along with thousands of friends and relatives from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts. Word had gone out that this might be the regiment's last Sunday in camp so loved ones gathered to see their soldiers for what boded to be the last time.¹¹⁸ Hume received one letter from a concerned parent: William Neptune, tribal governor of the Passamaquoddy and father of Pvt. Moses Neptune. He had heard, he said, that the regiment was possibly bound for France. He asked that the nine young men be excused from military service:

They are each of them good loyal men that would do everything in defence of their native land but should not be required to go into a foreign country and leave their people. White men have rights as citizens and would be cared for while away from home, but if my people who are now in Westfield suffered hardships in foreign lands their people could not render them assistance that the well to do white people can for their boys and men.

No record of Hume's response remains, but on the date the letter was sent—28 September—it was already too late. They were bound for France.¹¹⁹

Movement

As the regiments were melding together, going through last minute medical examinations, and drawing their uniforms and equipment, Major General Edwards was hard at work trying to get his division into France. The War Department's prescribed course of training for National Guard divisions had most of them headed south to large Army training camps before the eventual Atlantic crossing. The large divisions—28,000 men per division, twice the size of those authorized for the British and French armies—needed time to conduct large-scale training exercises. This was especially true of the National Guard divisions since they were composed of amalgamated state units.

But that was not what Edwards envisaged for his men. In what would be one of the first in a long series of actions that put Edwards at odds with the War Department and leaders within the American Expeditionary Force, Edwards sent one of his staff officers—Capt. A.L. Pendleton—to Hoboken, New Jersey to look for transport ships. Edwards had already angered many in the War Department when he pulled hundreds of men from the New England National Guard's Coast Artillery companies to fill vacancies within his artillery, engineer, and support units. Edwards reply was in keeping with his character; that he was deeply sorry and would refrain from doing so in the next war.¹²⁰ Now, Edwards went one step further. In New York, Hoboken, and even Montreal, Canada, Pendleton found transports reserved for other units that were unready to ship. The 26th Division, Pendleton intimated, was quite ready, and could go at a moment's notice.¹²¹

On the other side of the Atlantic, another officer of the 26th Division was already planning for their arrival. Capt. Roy L. Marston, formerly commanding Company E, 103rd Infantry, had been assigned to the Headquarters, 26th Division on 18 August and oversaw the advance party that was preparing the way for the Yankees. In this capacity, he became one of the first National Guard officers to arrive in France in August of 1917.¹²² A veteran of the Mexican Border where he had commanded Company E, Marston was not merely a National Guardsman: he was the son of a state senator and noted lumberman. After graduating from Bowdoin College in 1899, he received a post-graduate degree in forestry from Yale in 1902 and served on the faculty of the school for four years. From there his career took him from West Point—where he headed up the Academy's Forest Reservation until 1910 and taught courses of instruction to the cadets—to working as a consulting forester from 1905-1910 in the American southwest, Canada, Mexico, Korea,

and China. In 1911 he became the wood pulp inspector for the United States Tariff Board and then served on the Maine State Legislature from 1912–1913. All the while, he was also the treasurer and general manager of 225,000 acres of forest for A. and P. Coburn.¹²³ This Skowhegan-born woodsman, businessman, and noted foreign traveler was now getting ready to welcome the Yankee Division to France.¹²⁴ One of the strengths of the National Guard was its ability to call upon leaders of such noted logistical and administrative skill when war came.

Embarking for France

In quick succession, units of the 26th Division began to secretly leave their camps at night, bound for their different ports of embarkation. On 24 September, the 103rd Infantry received orders to strike its camp at Westfield and begin the journey to New York City. “Of course this information was to be kept under your hat,” remembered Russell Adams, “but everybody knew about it.”¹²⁵ Lieutenant McGrew agreed. “Clouds of secrecy had been floating about headquarters, so do not think that over five hundred thousand people knew that we were going to France,” he remarked sarcastically.¹²⁶ More equipment was issued out to the troops in a last-minute effort to get them some of the supplies they would need. “We are packing up and getting to go again,” wrote Ralph Spaulding to his sister on 24 September. “This time I guess we will go to France for they have given us trench shoes and heavy clothes but don’t worry we will get there all right and by the time we get drilled ready to fight I think the war will be over.” He added that he was sending home money from every paycheck and that “if anything happens to me keep it for yourself.”¹²⁷ Ralph Moan recalled that his 3rd Battalion arrived “into an out-of-the-way station at 2 A.M. At 4 A.M. we took the side-wheeler ferry boat ‘Grand Republic’ for Hoboken, New Jersey. We had to sign cards whom to notify in case of death.”¹²⁸

On 25 September, the battalions began to load onto their transports—many of them repurposed civilian liners. The men marched up the long gangways, casting last glances at the city around them. The 1st Battalion and the Machine Gun Company boarded the *Celtic*, the 2nd Battalion, Headquarters Company, Support Company, and Medical Detachment the *Saxonia*, and the 3rd Battalion the *Lapland*. As the *Celtic* sailed out of New York harbor on 27 September, Capt. Spaulding Bisbee stood on her deck and muttered a prayer that he and his men would come back to their homeland alive: “As we slowly left our pier and headed for the open sea many sights were impressed on our minds. The Goddess of Liberty smiled on us and we officers on the sun deck proudly gave her a salute.” The

Celtic overtook the *Lapland*, and the two were met by the USS. *Texas* and a destroyer as escorts.¹²⁹

This little convoy assembled at Halifax, Nova Scotia on 29 September and, after adding several other transports, it set out across the ocean at sundown. Captain Bisbee recalled, “There were ten ships, including a gunboat that was to accompany us. We were in single file and we were about in the center so that we could see them all.”¹³⁰ The remarkable sight must have stirred the souls of the men, but the whole affair was returned rapidly to reality when the Band, aboard the *Celtic*, struck up the “The Houn’ Dawg Rag,” and cheer after cheer erupted from the doughboys. They were headed “Over there.”¹³¹

The following chart illustrates the company breakdown of the 2nd Maine Infantry Regiment in 1917 with battalion and company commanders at the time they sailed for France.¹³²

Unit	Origin	Commander
2nd Maine Regiment of Infantry	Augusta	Col. Frank Hume
Headquarters Company	Augusta	Capt. Frank Drake
1st Battalion	Augusta	Maj. John E. Hadley
Company A	Dexter	Capt. Percy A. Hasty
Company B	Rumford	Capt. Spaulding Bisbee
Company C	Livermore Falls	Capt. Roland G. Findlay
Company D	Norway	Capt. James W. Hanson
2nd Battalion	Augusta	Maj. Walter J. Mayo
Company E	Skowhegan	Capt. Roy L. Marston
Company F	Dover	Capt. Charles H. Norton
Company G	Bangor	Capt. Daniel I. Gould
Company H	Waterville	Capt. William H. Murray
3rd Battalion	Augusta	Maj. William E. Southard
Company I	Eastport	Capt. Wilford S. Alexander
Company K	Farmington	Capt. Albert E. Andrews
Company L	Houlton	Capt. Elson A. Hosford

Figure 1.2. 2nd Maine Infantry Regiment: Company and Battalion Commanders, 1917. Courtesy of the Maine State Archives.

Unit	Origin	Commander
Company M	Augusta	Capt. Thomas Enright
Support Company	Augusta	Capt. Albert Greenlaw
Machine Gun Company	Bangor	Capt. Arthur Ashworth

Notes

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16. McIntyre, 5.
17. McIntyre, 6-8.
18. McIntyre, 25.
19. Berry, *Make the Kaiser Dance*, 189.
20. Harris and Sadler, *The Great Call-Up*, 246.

21. *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Maine for the Year Ending December 31, 1916* (Augusta: Published by the Authority of the State Legislature, 1927), 157.

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23. Wayne E. Reilly, "Bangor Cheered when Johnny Came Marching Home" *Bangor Daily News* (Bangor, ME), October 23, 2016, <http://bangordailynews.com/2016/10/23/living/blogs-and-columns-living/bangor-cheered-when-johnny-came-marching-home/>

24. Harris and Sadler, *The Great Call-Up*, 254.

25. The history of the "Houn' Dog Rag," or "Hound Dawg Song," is itself one of mystery and amusement. Various accounts trace it back to the 1800's, perhaps in the Civil War era. Although multiple people claimed to have written it or set it to music, there is no definitive record as to exactly where it came from. Refer to the following sources for more information: <http://ozarkshistory.blogspot.com/2010/04/original-hound-dawg-manpart-2.html>, http://ccheadliner.com/nixa/opinion/mozarks-moments-they-gotta-quit-kickin-my-dawg-around/article_be9f5349-6bd6-5d1a-8fff-14e0f249d14a.html?mode=jqm, "Ideology and Folksong Re-creation in the Home-recorded Repertoire of W. D. Collins", 216-217.

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Chapter II

Somewhere in France: October 1917-January 1918

For the first time in US history, the nation was moving masses of men, equipment, and materiel across an ocean to play a role in a major foreign military conflict. There was no established blueprint for what this would look like. During the War of 1898, the War Department had been badly stymied trying to effectively move ten thousand men from Florida to Cuba. Now, it had to ship dozens of massive divisions to France, not to mention the legions of support troops that would be needed to build the logistics footprint for the American Expeditionary Force. The troops arriving in the fall 1917 were true trailblazers, establishing lessons learned for the millions that would follow.

For the individual soldiers of the American Expeditionary Force headed to Europe, World War I was a series of first steps. Leaving their homes, communities, and states was the first. Many men had never left their county, let alone state. The next was the Atlantic crossing. While many of the men in the 103rd Infantry were accustomed to smaller boats—being from the New England coast—most had never been on board ships as large as those that now carried them over the cold, rolling ocean. The men remembered the trip as uneventful for the most part, although Ralph Moan did describe nights of seasickness while his company was on guard duty to look out for German submarines from the deck.¹ One man from Bangor's Company G recalled that the food on board their transport, the *Saxonia*, was so bad that the men called her the *Starvonnia*: “Nothing but boiled pork and boiled rabbit, sometimes with the fur on it.”²

New terrors emerged: seasickness kept men in their bunks for days at a time; being swept or tossed overboard in a storm; and of course, the omnipresent threat of German submarines. “One should not worry about the safety of American troops going over,” wrote Sgt. George Dole of the 103rd Band, “because they are well convoyed and when they reach the submarine zone they are met by enough American and English craft to sink and chase away 40 fleets of German submarines...It was a wonderful sight to see such a fleet gliding over the deep and expansive body of water.”³ Pvt. Frank Ronco in Company H related that, “We passed a ship in the Irish sea which was sunk 40 minutes later...we passed a floating mine which was only about 10 feet away from our ship. If we had struck that we might have hurt it a little.”⁴ Russell Adams thought that the *Celtic*—the

troop ship carrying his 1st Battalion—could outrun any U-boat; fortunately, this theory was never put to the test.⁵

Sgt. Casimir Bisson of the High School Squad wrote home daily, noting, “It is quite hard writing as the ship is rocking quite bad. We have a life boat drill every day.”⁶ The last day at sea, the ships hit a storm, as described by Sergeant Dole: “Now when they tell about storms at sea, I’ll know what they mean. Wow!! We were hoping for a big storm at this stage of the journey and we sure did get one! It was a corker! The last entire night at sea we struck the biggest part of it. The wind was blowing a sixty-mile-an-hour gale and the waves were tremendous.” Far from being concerned for the safety of the vessel, Sergeant Dole and his comrades were entranced at the adventure of it all: “Tubley Blakney and I stayed on deck until 3 a. m. watching the terrible waves and listening to the roaring wind—when I say roaring I do not mean whistling because the way it tore up that ocean was a fright.”⁷ The young men of the regiment would carry this mindset with them throughout the war.

England

The first port of call was Liverpool, England. The first ship debarked on 9 October, while the two others unloaded the following day. The tired soldiers offloaded into their first foreign country and were immediately bundled into trains and carried off to temporary camps. In the confusion, units were separated, baggage was lost or left behind, and headquarters elements lost all command and control. In short, chaos reigned. Headquarters and the 1st and 2nd Battalions headed for the small town of Borden, in Kent, where they were put into Oxney Camp. The 3rd Battalion was sent straight to Southampton on the southern coast, the point of crossing the English Channel. There they were established in a camp on the heights outside the city limits.⁸ As the battalions slowly got their bearings in their new homes, new problems arose: supply, victualling, and mud. The men were living in tents, and the autumn British rains flooded them daily. “Our camp is a sea of mud,” remarked Company D’s commander, Capt. James Hanson, in a letter home.⁹ Pvt. Warren C. Merrill in the Medical Detachment wrote on 18 October, “Last night when we went to bed with our clothes wet, feet and legs muddy, on wet blankets, there was a general condemnation of England, the war, and English weather in particular.”¹⁰

There seemed to have been little preparation made for the influx of 28,000 Americans—likely due to Edwards’ decision to ship the division out early—and so there were daily ration shortages. Men took it upon themselves to go exploring for food in the little towns nearby. Private Mer-

rill commented to his mother in a letter, “Why, the other day I was so hungry that I ate a raw onion and called it good...I thought college made me appreciate your food, but the army has made me worship it.”¹¹ Ralph Moan took his buddy Foster Tuell and went out looking for food on October 12 and 13, tired of “feeling mighty lank.”¹² Men pawned off small trinkets in order to pay for food, a trend that would continue in France.¹³

Some officers were able to take leave to go sight-seeing. Capt. James Hanson wrote home to his wife Zara of his trip into London on 12 October. The officers saw Parliament and Westminster Abbey: “Bisbee, Findlay, Metcalf, Hadley, Mayo, Ashworth, and I are at Hotel Savoy and if I get back, honey, we are coming right back here for a trip through England.”¹⁴ Captain Bisbee remarked that London itself was simply overrun by soldiers from all across the great span of the British Empire, but that “we were among the first American officers to be in London and were quite an attraction.”¹⁵

The stay in England was short, yet informative. “I am seeing things every day which I would never have seen if Uncle Sam were not paying the bills,” wrote Pvt. Frank Ronco of Company H.¹⁶ The men interacted with British “Tommies,” Canadians, Australians, and New Zealanders, many of whom had been wounded and were convalescing at a nearby base hospital. Sgt. Algernon Holden of Company L remarked, “We find the Australians very friendly indeed and a fine lot of fellows.”¹⁷ Many of the Yankees were mistaken for Australians themselves by the British, because of the broad campaign hats the Americans wore, which were similar to the distinctive hats of the Australians.¹⁸ Sgt. True Ellis of Company E was able to overlook the bad British weather in favor of the beauty of the British countryside and the professionalism of her armed forces: “England can boast her army. Her men are well trained. It is a sight worth seeing to see them drill. I think they have it on the Sammies [name given to US soldiers by the French, as the soldiers of “Uncle Sam”] a little altho [sic] I hate to own up to it.”¹⁹ Lieut. Donald McGrew noted the creativity of his soldiers to evade the guard shack and “locate by army navigation certain emporiums where they could get ‘a full six pence worth,’ and an argument. The arguments usually occurred over such subjects as topography, hygiene, sexology, Chauvanism [sic], Pluto, or hieroglyphics [sic], and the adversary was either a member of some other platoon or company, and always ended the same way. They went outside and the winner, of course, was right.” He was ready to quit England and get to the war.²⁰

For the National Guardsmen, these interactions must have been a stark reminder of what lay in front of them as they heard veterans of the Somme tell them what it was like “over there.”²¹ Sergeant Dole wrote, “I have talk-

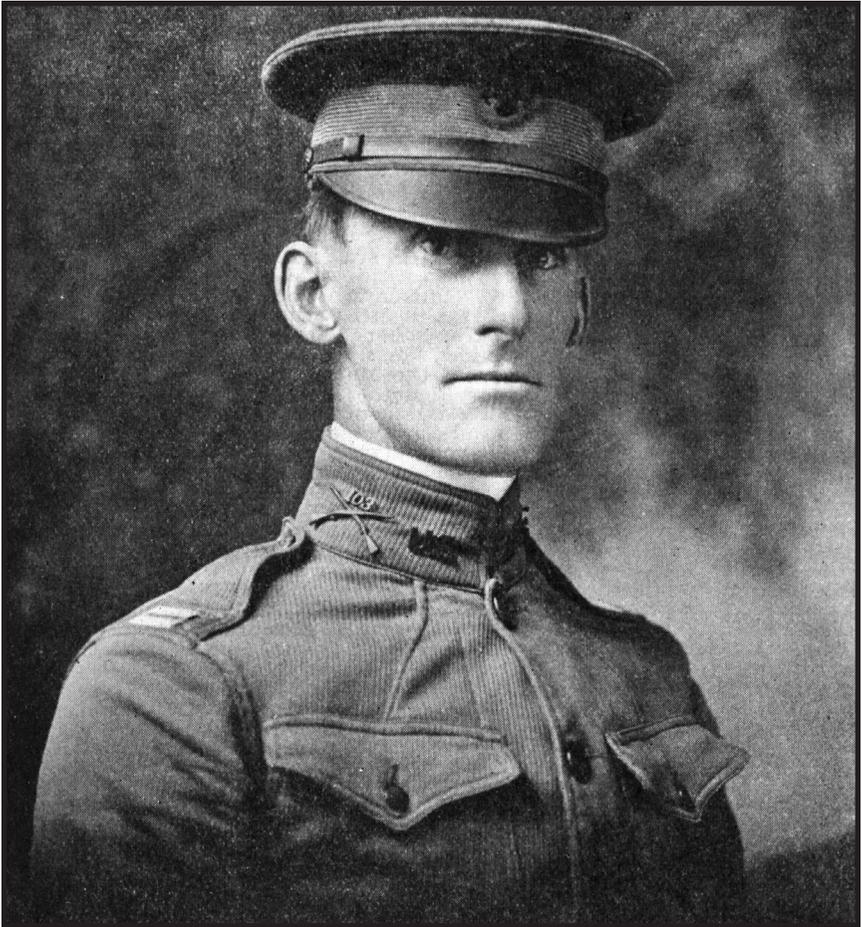


Figure 2.1. Capt. James W. Hanson. Photo courtesy of the Maine National Guard Archives.

ed with many soldiers who have been in trenches and they say we should be thankful that we are bandmen. In the beginning of the war, bandmen were used as stretcher bearers but so many were killed that the bands became disarranged and now they never go beyond the base and many never leave England.”²² Even those routine movements were not without peril, however. One of the Guardsmen met a tragic death shortly before leaving for France—Cpl. Earl Withee from Company E was hit by a train on 18 October and died shortly thereafter.²³

France at Last

But the 103rd’s time in England was short; on 16 October, the 3rd Battalion broke camp at Southampton and marched onto some small cattle

boats used for cross-channel trips and made the crossing during the night. The trip was rough, the weather cold, and all soldiers were glad when the bulk of the French port of Le Havre rose out of the gloom in front of them. On the night of 17 October, the 3rd Battalion was loaded up onto French troop trains. This was their first experience with these trains, which were essentially box cars, all labeled with, “Chevaux 8, Hommes 40.” In English, this meant that the car could carry eight horses or 40 people. Later in the war, the men would refer to them simply as “forty and eights.” The men were quick to realize that well more than forty men could be—and were—packed into these cars. These trains were not popular with the men; many had to stand the entire time, there was little ventilation, and food was often an afterthought. “I told the boys who’d done the bellyaching aboard the *Celtic* to grumble all they wanted about that train ride,” stated Russell Adams, “it was awful!”²⁴ But this was their first time and everything was still novel and new—and therefore exciting.²⁵

The 2nd and 1st Battalions, which made their channel crossings on the 19th and 20th, respectively, were also forced to endure many of the hardships experienced by the 3rd. “It reeked of cattle, wallowed like a cow on ice, and was commanded by a bovine skipper who could roar like a bull,” recalled Donald McGrew, remarking that the men passed the unpleasant time laying under greatcoats and making cow noises to pass the time.²⁶ “The Channel was choppy as the devil,” recalled Russell Adams.²⁷ Company B happened to meet some German prisoners, working on the docks. Bisbee recalled, “When told that we were American troops they refused to believe it but said that we were British dressed in American uniforms. Evidently they had been told by their officers that the United States would never send troops to France.”²⁸

By 22 October, the regiment was all in France and scattered between small villages in the Vosges Department, about 45 kilometers from the front lines and 250 kilometers southeast of Paris. The majority of the regiment was billeted at the town of Liffol-le-Grand, while the 2nd Battalion and the Machine Gun Company were a three kilometer march away in the small village of Villouxel. These little towns numbered no more than 1,500 inhabitants each and showed visible reminders of the closeness of war. The stone buildings and sprawling wooden barns, old Roman roads, and low, rolling hills were made all the more remarkable by the absence of young men.

“At last we have arrived in France,” wrote Captain Bisbee on 23 October. “It doesn’t even seem possible to me even that we are over here, actually in the country that has borne the brunt of all this awful war.”²⁹

Three years of war had left only old men, women, and children in the French countryside.³⁰ “All the way thru France we saw women plowing and digging in the fields, usually dressed in black and with their pale faces a sad looking lot,” noted Lieut. Reginald Foss in Company G in a letter home.³¹ Similarly, Pvt. Linwood Jewett in Company E wrote, “It sure is a sight to see the women climbing ladders and working in the fields, on electric cars both as conductor and motorman, also I have seen women meat cutters since I got into France.”³² Lieut. Donald McGrew, agreed, saying, “Right then and there was born a feeling of respect for the courage of the French peasant woman which is shared today, I know, by every member of the A.E.F.”³³ McGrew happened to meet one woman from Quebec, who was an ambulance driver in a village the regiment passed through. She had been there since 1914, she said; a French doctor remarked that she’d been wounded multiple times driving the wounded off the battlefield. McGrew shared his cigarettes with her before the train moved on, leaving him mulling the nature of the war.³⁴ The men noted the oddities between French culture and their own. Leon Emery, from Farmington, remarked, “The people have no stoves, but use fireplaces to do their cooking in. There are no doors in the interior of the houses.”³⁵

Where the Men Came From

These snug little towns were a stark contrast to the neat New England communities the men had left nearly a month ago. For the men from Maine, their thoughts surely must have flown back to their familiar homes. It is worth a momentary digression to see where the men of the 103rd hailed from. When one thinks of Maine, one imagines rocky coastlines sporting towering lighthouses. Yet in the 103rd Infantry, only one company could relate to this image: Company I, from Eastport. This small fishing town boasts of being the eastern most city in the United States, jutting out into the cold Atlantic and sharing a border with Canada. This northernmost region of US coastline is often referred to, confusingly, as Down East. The phrase comes from sailing terminology, where prevailing winds in that part of the world blow from the southwest, meaning that ships need to sail downwind in order to go east. The residents have had a reputation of being cold, terse, and taciturn, going by the sobriquet of “Downeasters.”

Yet Eastport is still fairly south in Maine’s geography; it takes a trek of another 115 miles northwards to reach the town of Houlton, isolated on the border with New Brunswick, Canada. This was—and still is—the entrance to Aroostook County, which is potato country. Long and gently rolling fields of fertile soil yield crops of potatoes to the farmers that brave the harsh, interminable winters of northern Maine. Houlton was the home

of Company L, and the regiment's commander, Colonel Hume. Heading south from Houlton, the first city of any size is Bangor, long an industrial and mercantile center. Bangor, Brewer, Orono, and Old Town lie along the Penobscot River, the foundation of the region's wealth. The University of Maine's campus was in Orono, prompting many college lads to join up in Bangor's Company G, Machine Gun Company, and the Regimental Band. Just north of Bangor is Dover-Foxcroft, the Piscataquis County seat and the home of Company F. As is a common theme with New England towns, the town made its living off of the river, using the rushing Piscataquis River to power sawmills that churned out lumber. About ten miles south is the lakeside town of Dexter, home of Company A.

Further south still is Waterville, another mill town, and from where Company H hailed. Just below Waterville, on the banks of the Kennebec River, is Augusta, Maine's capital city. Its tall hills on the river banks provided a scenic view for the government employees, mill workers, and farmers that made up its population. This was the headquarters of the 103rd Infantry and the Maine National Guard, as well as the area from where Company M drew its men.

Between Bangor and Augusta is the old mill town of Skowhegan (Company E), which begins a trek into the paper mill country in western Maine. The ground rises steeply leading up to the White Mountains in New Hampshire. The towns of Farmington (Company K), Livermore Falls (Company C), Rumford (Company B), and Norway (Company D) all lie in nearly a straight line heading towards the New Hampshire border. These towns, nestled into tall hillsides, were also along critical rail routes that facilitated the passage of goods and people across Maine into New Hampshire and Canada.

Settling In

In October of 1917, the men of the 103rd would have been missing the hearths and fires of their New England homes as they crammed into stables, lofts, and farmhouse outbuildings. Officers—being more financially secure—were able to lodge with village families in houses.³⁶ “Since I left Augusta things have not seemed like Maine unless I got a box from home,” grumbled Pvt. Linwood Jewett on 29 October.³⁷ In yet another reminder of the perils of being some of the first Americans to arrive in France, the Yankee Division had no billets prepared for them. Nor was their adequate transportation on hand. Officers had to beg for, borrow, or steal motor trucks and wagons from other American, French, or British units. Worse still, winter clothing had not yet arrived and many of the division's

supplies were still in England or stateside. As winter approached—what would be one of the harshest in local memory—the Yankee Division entered a period of extensive training short much of its needed equipment.³⁸

It was a fairly problematic time for the 103rd Infantry, as well. Equipment was issued in fits and starts, as division supply officers navigated the complicated supply chain in France. Some equipment—such as the mortars and 37mm guns in Headquarters Company—did not arrive until the following spring. To make matters worse, rations continued to be a sore issue. “While here everyone got hard up and about everything we had was pawned at the different stores for tobacco and chocolate,” remembered Ralph Moan.³⁹ Recalling this period in a letter to his family on 9 July 1918, Cpl. Rex W. Parsons of Company K remarked,

Did I ever write you about the strenuous time we had when we first arrived? Of course nobody had any money and we could buy no tobacco nor cigarettes. It got so that we would almost commit murder for a cigarette butt. We smoked tea, dried clover leaves and almost everything imaginable. One day we were lined up in the Company Street for some formation or other. Lieutenant White of my old platoon came out in front of us smoking a nice, big, fat, tailor-made cigarette and for some reason he dropped it. Instantly everyone made a leap for it, but just as their fingers got almost on it, it rolled into a nice puddle. Perhaps they were not a sore bunch!⁴⁰

Variety in diet was also lacking, as Sgt. John Eckels Jr in Company M wrote: “My loathing for stew in any way, shape, or form, camouflage it as you will, is deep, fervent, and everlasting; corned beef hash comes next and there are a few other items not far behind.”⁴¹ Men augmented their diets with food sent from home. The men who did not get such care packages lamented grievously, as in the case of Pvt. Ralph Spaulding in Company H, who wrote to his sister Alice, “I wish I was back to eat some of your cooking. There are a lot of boys getting some from home and it looks awfully good. I wish it was me.”⁴² Training without the proper equipment and on short rations was demoralizing for soldiers soon to be headed into a combat zone. Poor food also meant that they were conducting their training and working details with less energy than normal. As the weather grew poorer, this all contributed to sap morale.

And of course, the absence from loved ones was beginning to take its toll. Letters flew back and forth across the ocean, keeping the tenuous string of connection going. Captain Bisbee remarked that he was finally

getting letters from Ethel, which made him feel “so much better.”⁴³ Sgt. Lester L. Witham of Company D wrote home to his parents on 30 November, “There isn’t a day goes by but what I dream the old home over, starting at the gate along under the old pines, in the back door, and all through the house, and linger at everything I used to like best. It seems almost like a few minutes home each day and mother’s dear face is before it all, making the picture of the dearest place on Earth.”⁴⁴ These ties to home helped relieve the monotony of everyday Army life and could often discourage the more destructive acts that soldiers could resort to when bored, such as drunkenness or absence from camp.

Capt. James Hanson proved to be a prolific letter writer. Not a day passed where he did not have a letter winging its way home to his wife or daughter. And as his battalion’s censor, he answered the age-old question of “who censors the censor” with a resounding “no one.” Outgoing letters were to be read by the company or battalion’s appointed censor, an officer, in order to make sure that the soldiers were not writing about mission-critical things that could compromise the military in any way. Through Hanson’s uncensored letters, we get a glimpse of the man who would go on not only to be the Adjutant General of the Maine National Guard but also the chief of the Maine State Police. Captain Hanson wrote frequently to his wife of how “lonesome” he felt: “After eight years, I am more in love with my wife than ever,” he penned on 4 November. “Nothing is just right when you are not here.”⁴⁵ Later in the month he wrote, “If anything happened to you I want to go over the top the minute I hear of it and I don’t want to come back.” This tough leader displayed a remarkable soft side in his letters to his “Darling Baby Wife.”⁴⁶

In addition to the challenges of the substandard environment, soldiers were constantly being removed from training to take part in work details. Because the 26th Division was one of the only American outfits in France at this time, it was tasked with manning railheads to offload supplies and to build not only its own barracks and mess halls but also those of other units that were scheduled to soon arrive in France.⁴⁷ Ralph Moan remembered that his Company K was detailed to help the 101st Engineer Regiment build American Base Hospital #18 in December.⁴⁸ Private Spaulding was also on detached service in December, doing unglamorous supply duty. He did note on 17 December that “We have had quite a Snow storm here today,” and he asked his sister to send him some warm mittens and leather moccasins.⁴⁹ On 13 December, Pvt. George Dubey wrote back to his lieutenant from working at Base Camp Number 1, where he was sorting parcels arriving for the A.E.F.: “It certainly is an awful mess, packages

weighing from one pound to 20 pounds for every organization in France piled sky-high in a large warehouse and negro workmen taking more off the ship, faster than we can sort it out, it is certainly a hell of a job.” Dubey marveled at the chaos, noting that he was there on detached service along with “sailors, marines, infantry, artillery, signal corps, hospital corps, engineers, and half a dozen others.”⁵⁰

By January, the 103rd was finally living in billets of their own construction. Cpl. Leon Emery of Company K took a moment on 8 January 1918 to write home to his family:

Somewhere in France. This Tuesday evening...I am sitting in a new Y.M.C.A. building which has just been completed. I am going to tell you about us fellows over here...We have many interesting things happen every day. I have marched and drilled on one Roman road which Caesar marched his armies over. I have been places where I have met English, Scotch, Canadians, Australians, Russians, African, Chinese, and French soldiers. This will make an impression on a fellow all right, that he is up against something if he tries to talk much with them... There is not a fellow here but who says he will appreciate his dear old home after this war is over. Oh, I tell you this is making real men of us fellows.⁵¹

Training for the Western Front

Despite the difficulties, the 103rd Infantry pressed on with its training regimen, conducted under the watchful eye of French Colonel Bertrand, commanding the battalion of the 162nd French Infantry Regiment tasked with mentoring the new Doughboys. This was the type of training the 103rd should have conducted in North Carolina. Each platoon was organized into sections and squads by their function—now known as task organization—such as automatic riflemen, bombers, and riflemen. They received training in bayonet drill and grenades. Brooks Savage of Company E remarked later, “I must admit that at first most of us felt rather funny with a live hand grenade in our hands, which we had about five seconds to throw and then take cover. Of course there were times later when we felt much funnier.”⁵² The regiment received its shipment of Chauchat automatic rifles, which gave each platoon the ability to provide their own automatic fire. “It was all so new to the officers and men,” marveled Captain Bisbee. “Formations were different and we had new impliments [sic] of war to us. Our hand bombers, auto-riflemen and V.B. [grenade launchers] men had to be trained and used in all of our maneuvering.”⁵³

Training in gas discipline also came, as the men were issued the fairly dreadful-looking gas masks.⁵⁴ Band member William Cobb wrote home on 23 December, “Gas masks were issued this week. We have to wear our steel helmets and carry one mask with us at all formations.”⁵⁵ Routine marches of 14 miles a day toughened the men to Army life as they marched back and forth from their barracks to the training areas in the long fields outside Liffol-le-Grand. “We have had a lot of rain hear [sic] and it have wash all about the snow away and it is still raining and it have been raining for the last two weeks and no sine [sic] of it clearing up yet,” wrote Ralph Spaulding on 15 January. “We had a long hike. We started in the morning and came back in the night and it rain all the time we was out and had our meals served to us on the road and had a good time in it and there is not much going on hear [sic] but drill every day and go on hikes.”⁵⁶ As the training began to be more strenuous and as proper wartime equipment was issued, the soldiers realized that front line service could not be too far off.

But even the weather and hard training could do little to damper the buoyant spirits of the young New Englanders. Pfc. Harry Dysart wrote home to his brother in Skowhegan, “Oh, you wait till we get at those Germans; we will get them and come home next summer with the victory won. I’ll bet you a chocolate ice cream with walnut sauce, made in Sawyer’s ice cream parlors. Will you take my bet? I’ll take all the bets like that you can find around Skowhegan.”⁵⁷ These were, after all, still brash young men.

The French emphasized trench warfare, teaching their American students how to make raids, infiltrations, and diversions in a giant network of trenches that the Yankees constructed near Noncourt, about 12 kilometers from Liffol-le-Grand.⁵⁸ To the French, they thought that they were imparting the best training that they could of how to survive on the Western Front. Survival was key, recalled Corporal Adams: “What these Poilu were really trying to teach us was how to stay alive. And they did a wonderful job, you can rely on that.”⁵⁹ American leadership, however, had different thoughts.

American military planners took their cue from Gen. John J. Pershing, commander of the AEF, who stated early on that, “the ultimate success of the army depends upon their proper use in open warfare...Aggressive offensive based on self-reliant infantry.”⁶⁰ Pershing was indicative of most American officers, who believed that the French were too timid in their execution of the war, and who put this down to a reliance on trench warfare. In order to break open the stalemate, the Americans believed that they needed to bring about a return to open warfare of movement and maneuver. Thus, American planners relied on and were committed to pre-war doctrine of warfare in the open.⁶¹

Gen. Charles Cole, commander of the 103rd Infantry's parent organization, the 52nd Infantry Brigade, made this clear to his officers in January: "The war will be won in the open; the Boche is in the trenches now and has been for four years. We have got to be able to drive him out and that is why this French instruction is valuable; but remember we are going to get him out into the open and then all the old and fixed principles of our school of warfare will come into play."⁶² Thus, the Americans also trained in "open warfare," long lines of infantry sweeping forward to the assault in open order. To the French military trainers, watching grimly, this must have looked far too similar to their own tactics in 1914 and 1915, which resulted in the shocking casualties for which the Great War became known.

But the 103rd Infantry "played the game," as it was called, in the trenches at Noncourt. In the snow, wind, rain, and mud, the men dug systems of entrenchments, such as they would be using on the front. "The mud is something different from New England," wrote Paul H. Grout from West Townshend, Vermont in Company I. "A slippery yellow clay which hangs to your shoes and more and more keeps collecting."⁶³ Captain Hanson agreed, writing "This is the worst country for mud I have ever seen."⁶⁴ Yet they dug in with a will. The first trenchline was the front line of observation. This was connected by means of a communication trench to the main line of resistance, which was a larger trench complete with dugouts and firesteps from which soldiers could fire over the lip of the trench. Another trench ran back from the line of resistance to the support line, where reinforcements could be held out of the range of enemy artillery. Using these trenches, the men of the 103rd Infantry learned how to navigate the meandering warrens in the daytime and at night, conducting rehearsals of how to relieve units on the front line, supply them, and communicate with them. Company commanders and platoon leaders got a crash course in the difficulty of command and control, using field telephones, signal rockets, buzzers, and runners to relay messages from their command posts to the front lines.⁶⁵

The days were long, and the marches back from the training ground to Liffol were often disheartening to the wet and cold soldiers of the 103rd Infantry. But the band maintained one singular tradition that lifted the spirits of the soldiers and even the civilians in Liffol-le-Grand. The regiment held "Retreat," at the end of every day, a final formation whereupon the soldiers were released to their quarters. The Band closed every "Retreat" with a rendition of "The Houn' Dawg Rag." "At the first blare of the trombones a yell went up," recalled Donald McGrew. "Soldiers who had shivered all day began to execute intricate clog steps...little French boys

wearing black aprons and wooden shoes either commenced an excited war dance or seized a pig-tailed companion and attempted to imitate *les soldat Americaine*...At the conclusion, another yell went up, and the men scattered for their billets to procure their mess kits.” This little tradition raised the spirits of men and left them “laughing and jostling one another,” where before they had been dispirited.⁶⁶ This close-out ceremony indicated the strong esprit de corps that was growing within the regiment.

Beginning at the end of November, selected officers and noncommissioned officers of the regiment were pulled from their units and sent to the US Army First Corps School at Gondrecourt. Some were trained in different skills—such as marksmanship, gunnery, bayonet drill, gas operations, engineering, forward observation, and map reading—and sent back to their units as instructors. Others received instruction on all the latest tactics and techniques then in use on the front lines by British and French officers. Capt. James Hanson enjoyed this break from the duties of company command: “This school is fine and goes into all branches. I was put into the engineer school, pioneer section, and I like it.”⁶⁷ This was demanding training, and was incredibly important for the development of the National Guard officers and non-commissioned officers. “This is a mixed force,” recalled Captain Hanson. “As many regular officers as N.G. and Reserve. They take exactly the same drill and instructions as anyone.”⁶⁸ As a sign of things to come, several officers and non-commissioned officers were retained at Gondrecourt to train other AEF units now arriving in France. This caused no small amount of distress to those chosen to remain in Gondrecourt as they had anticipated seeing the war through alongside the men they came over with. It would not be the last time this would happen.⁶⁹

Thanksgiving came with a break in the strenuous schedules of the company. Captain Bisbee ensured that Company B had “secured a turkey and all the ‘fixings’ for our own dinner...it did me good to see the boys enjoy themselves.”⁷⁰ Captain Hanson “went up to camp for dinner. Had a good one. Turkey, cranberry sauce, asparagus, corn, sweet potato, plum pudding, cake, and coffee. A great feed.”⁷¹ Lieut. John W. Healy in Company E wrote, “This is Thanksgiving Day, and we are having a Holiday for which we are very glad...We have had a nice turkey dinner. This is more than we expected, and it is certainly fine of the Government to go to all this trouble to provide for such a dinner for the soldiers.”⁷² Healy was now commanding the company since Captain Marston had been promoted and moved on. Healy’s friend Lieutenant Sherman Shumway had also left Company E to take command of Company F. Shumway was a bit of a wag and while he was away at one of the AEF schools he found that his pay

was not reaching him. So he sat down and wrote Healy to send along his pay, but in a somewhat unorthodox manner:

I'm up here interned in mud,
And working hard each day.
I'm getting done from 'Major Mud,'
But Lord how I need pay.
I would a trip to Paris take,
To have a little fun,
But John to you I'm forced to state,
That broke it can't be done.
I'm writing now with stormy brain,
To a friend whose tried and true,
To relieve me John from this terrible strain,
Send my pay check P.D.Q.
Now John remember me to all the bunch,
And help me without fail.
I'll soon be with you, I have a hunch,
But in the meantime, send my mail.⁷³

Christmas followed, and then the New Year dawned with festivities held by each company. Ralph Moan recalled that he had formed a singing quartet with a few of his friends (Cpl. Leo Brown, Cpl. Foster Tuell, and Pvt. John Royce) and that they were highly engaged during the holiday season, putting on performances for the Doughboys around Neufchateau and Liffol-le-Grand.⁷⁴ Now that the mail had caught up with them, the men happily received packages of food and sweets from home. "All the morning truck load after truck load came from the railroad," recalled Lieut. Fred Tuttle in Company E. "Christmas packages, huge bags stuffed with mail were dumped at each company headquarters. The men cheered loudly as each new load came in. It snowed last night so today is a real white Christmas."⁷⁵ Regimental leadership pulled some strings and put together a Christmas dinner of "turkey, peach pudding, nuts, potatoes, gravy and all the other little things that go with a feed."⁷⁶ Colonel Hume and Captain Greenlaw set up a Christmas tree and hosted a party for the children of Liffol-le-Grand, including one "little fellow whose father had been killed at Verdun."⁷⁷

The members of the Band wrote home to the president of the University of Maine on 29 December 1917, thanking the University for the Christmas packages they had received, noting,

They surely brought back fond memories of our dear Alma Mater and believe us, we will never forget Maine. We can assure you that every article in the packages will be used, in fact the contents were exactly what a soldier needs over in this country. We are now up against a different proposition than we were a year ago at this time. Some of us were thinking about our final examinations, while others of us were thinking about the much coveted 'sheepskin' which we expected in June, but now, we all have more things to think about and soon we will have a great many more. Whatever the Band does in its line of duties on the front, it surely will bring credit to the University of Maine and you can depend upon this small handful of men to put the University of Maine on the map of Europe, as we spread its glorious name from Maine to Mexico last year.⁷⁸

George Thompson of Bangor wrote home of that Christmas celebration and that the troops were "a happy and jolly crowd. Some had on funny looking masks, others paper hats of all descriptions, others with horns and whistles. You'd never think they were fighting men to see them act."⁷⁹ Harry "Mickey" St. Ledger in Company E wrote home to his mother about all the food they had been able to rustle up, confessing that now that he was in France his aversion to apple pie had vanished. "I will expect you will tell all about your Xmas at home and the kind of time that the kids had. Would like to have seen Carlty over his present, but will wait another Christmas, at least I guess by the way things look now."⁸⁰ Some Doughboys dared to hope that this might be their only service in France. Ralph Spaulding said that it was "very quite [sic, quiet] and expect to get out of hear soon because the war is very well over and I am some glad it is."⁸¹

Russell Adams and Company B were enjoying their stay in Liffolle-Grand. They made friends with the locals; "Some of the boys helped with t'haying, while others unloaded coal and firewood. Oh we had some bad numbers—you always do—but by and large we were on the square—just a lot of farmboys a long way from home."⁸² On New Year's Day, Adams invited the local farmer that had taken them under their wing to the 103rd's festivities, where Moan and his friends were singing. There was also prize-fighting, which seemed to impress upon this old French farmer the toughness of the Yankee lads. Adams found out later that the man had lost his own son earlier in the war.⁸³ This kind of relationship was indica-

tive of the good feeling between the boys of the 103rd and the residents of Liffol-le-Grand. Later in 1918, when Major William Southard was in the hospital after being wounded in July of 1918, he ran into another officer who was then billeted there. The officer asked Southard what the 103rd had done there, because, “All we hear is the 103rd, the 103rd, the 103rd. One would think the 103rd was the only outfit in the American Army!”⁸⁴

It was now 1918. It was the year of the great German spring offensives, trying to make one last attempt to break the Entente before the Americans got there in greater numbers. It was the year of Belleau Wood, of St. Mihiel, and of the Meuse-Argonne—America’s bloodiest battle. But to the men of the 103rd Infantry in January, it was just another year. While the men knew that tough work lay ahead, they could not have foreseen the impact that they would have in the last year of the Great War. With typical bravado, Sgt. Walter Lessard wrote home on 2 January that, “There is plenty of news around here but we are not to give it out, as that would be giving out military information and that won’t do. I tell you, this is a great game if you don’t weaken, so I don’t propose to weaken.”⁸⁵

Heading to the First Front

The training program in the Noncourt trenches increased in intensity in January. The focus went from training the individual companies, to battalions, to then regiments in force-on-force exercises. The focus was on coordination between echelons and other arms. Platoon commanders were instructed that while they were waiting for collective training to begin, they should focus on bayonet drills and anti-gas techniques.⁸⁶ By the end of January, the men knew that things were heading towards something serious. Ralph Moan recorded in his diary on 21 January that Company K was five weeks behind in their regimen of training, due to their time on detached service building the base hospital: “We took up gas drill, grenade drill, V.V. drill, rifle shooting, pistol shooting, bayonette [sic] practice. In less time than was allotted we were as good a company as any in the regiment.”⁸⁷ Company K was not alone in being behind on training, as Captain Bisbee grumbled to his diary: “We were inspected by a colonel from Gen. Perishing’s headquarters. I am afraid that he didn’t find things as well as he wished but we had been hampered so very much by details that we had not completed our schedule of drill. It was not our fault for we had followed instructions from headquarters.”⁸⁸ On 2 February, the entire brigade was reviewed by General Cole.⁸⁹

Groups of new officers were sworn in to replace those who had been detailed to further assignments both within and without the division. Band

Leader Herbert Cobb of Headquarters Company wrote home excitedly on 8 February: “Dear Folks, I had a real birthday present today. The Capt. called about 12 of us into his office and told us that we were to be commissioned rightaway.” Of key note to him was that his pay was now “about \$150 a month.” Life of an officer was hard, he noted, but “its only up to a man himself how far he goes.”⁹⁰ Herbert and his brother William were both students at the University of Maine when the war broke out. Although they were due to graduate in 1918 and 1919 respectively, they eagerly joined up with the contingent of University of Maine band members. Herbert’s twin brother Sumner was drafted in 1918 but did not see service overseas. Herbert had been appointed the band leader in the 103rd and was now justifiably pleased at his promotion to lieutenant as it would mean he would be leading troops in combat.⁹¹

Officers came and went to the different schools and camps. Captain Bisbee was sent off to Gondrecourt at the end of January for the Company Commander’s Course. While there, he spotted the 1st U.S Division headed for the front: “They were in fine spirits and it really is the very beginning of the American Army’s ‘going in’ to stay. God knows how many of them, or those who follow them, will come back. It looks now as though our Division, the 26th, will follow them in.”⁹² He had no idea how right he was.

This burst in activity was brought about by the energetic and proactive Maj. Gen. Clarence Edwards. At the end of January he reported to French Gen. Philippe Petain, Commander in Chief of the French Armies—and, sadly, later the leader of the Nazi-collaborating Vichy French in World War II. Petain said that he would like to move two battalions of the 26th Division up to the front lines at the Chemin des Dames. Edwards went one better: he volunteered his whole division. Petain agreed, enthusiastic to see Americans take over a sector of the front to offer relief to the weary French. Pershing agreed, seeing as the 26th needed to move to a training front shortly anyhow. The 26th Division was assigned to the 11th French Corps, under Gen. Louis de Maud’Huy.⁹³

On 2 February, the advance party of the 103rd Infantry composed of soldiers of the 1st Battalion under the command of Company C’s Lieut. Paul Halbersleben left for the Chemin des Dames. Nicknamed “Big Paul” because of his size—he had played center for the 1915 University of Nebraska conference championship football team—Halbersleben had joined up in 1917 and attended officers training camp at Fort Snelling, Minnesota. From there, he was assigned to the 103rd Infantry.⁹⁴ The 24 year-old lieutenant—who would be wounded in a few months at the Aisne-Marne and would become president of the Illinois Mining Institute after the war—had

quite a task in front of him: prepare the way for the 3,000 men of the 103rd Infantry to move through a war zone and take up occupation of a front line area, within shooting distance of the dreaded “Boche”—a derogatory word used by the French for the Germans, roughly translating to “dog.” His route would take him through the bombed-out city of Soissons into the undulating farmland and chalky hills of the Chemin des Dames Front. It was time for the 103rd Infantry to meet the enemy.

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Chapter III

“From now on, all we see is HELL:”¹ February–March 1918

In every organization, there comes a time where ideas and training must be tested. For the American Expeditionary Force, this time of nascent development—albeit development under fire—began under French tutelage on training fronts. US divisions began taking over front-line sectors, companies and battalions at a time. These first brushes with war left a profound impact on the men who lived through them. For many troops, their baptism of fire came during their training fronts. They were also periods of organizational development and maturity. Tactics and techniques that did not work under fire were discarded and new procedures implemented. While it was not yet full offensive warfare, it provided leaders the baseline of experience to build upon.

The area where the 103rd Infantry first went into action took its name from the two daughters of French King Louis XV in the 18th century, Adelaide and Victoire, who were known as the “Ladies of France.” The two young women enjoyed visiting the Chateau de Boves in the Aisne region, the home of their father’s former mistress, who later in the king’s reign became a countess. The route from Paris took them along a 30-kilometer carriage road, spanning a long ridgeline between the Aisne and Ailette Rivers. In order to make the young ladies’ journey more pleasant, the countess had the road surfaced with hard cobblestones. It thus took on the name of “the road of the ladies,” or “the ladies’ path;” in French, the “Chemin des Dames.”²

The Chemin des Dames held significant strategic importance. On either side, the ground falls away rapidly into wooded hillsides and valleys dotted with small towns that lie between the farmlands. From the ridge, one has perfect visibility for miles with excellent fields of fire. The small towns are typical of the region: sturdy houses built of limestone and chalk abutting the roads, while farmhouses with attached barns lie at the outskirts. Pvt. George Burke from Headquarters Company wrote home, “As I have told you before all of the houses over here are built of stone and you can imagine what it must be like now with every house completely ruined by heavy guns shell fire.”³ The stone came from quarries that delved into the ridges, some of them centuries-old. Many of these quarries were perforated with miles of caverns and underground warrens. When war came in 1914, they were ready-made for sheltering troops from artillery and observation.

The Chemin des Dames had been the scene of hard fighting throughout the war. The Germans took control of the ridgeline in 1914 and consolidated the position through 1915. From 16-25 April 1917—as the 2nd Maine was beginning its guard duty back in the Pine Tree State—the French began a massive offensive designed to retake the strategic ridgeline, preceded by a six-day, 5,300-gun bombardment. Despite extensive artillery preparation, the French took 40,000 casualties on the first day alone. The Germans, holed up in natural defensive positions provided by the quarry, mowed down oncoming French troops with accurate machine-gun fire. By the end of the offensive, the French had retaken the majority of the ridge, but at a cost of 271,000 casualties to the Germans' 163,000. This was the breaking point for thousands of French soldiers; the offensive had been poorly planned and badly resourced. Many of the French wounded died in the open due to lack of proper medical evacuation planning. Whole divisions mutinied. General Petain was brought in to restore order, which he did through a mixture of extreme disciplinary actions and positive changes. Mutineers were arrested in the thousands with about 28 of them executed. However, he also instituted more generous leave times, a better rotation of front-line units, and improved the quality of the rations. By the time the 26th Division arrived in 1918, the Chemin des Dames was a “quiet” sector, where the French and Germans abided by an informal “live and let live” policy. As long as each side agreed to not bother the other, there would be little more than harassing artillery fire throughout the days and nights. In fact, the men of the 103rd Infantry had been told that the Chemin des Dames was nicknamed, “The Old Maid’s Home” because it was such a quiet area.⁴

Moving to the Front

The Yankees had to get there, first. On 6 February, the 3rd Battalion of the 103rd Infantry packed up their equipment and formed up in “heavy marching order.” This consisted of packs loaded with a “slicker, overcoat, reserve and travelling rations, two blankets, 110 rounds of ammunition, shelter half, canteen mess kit, 4 pair of socks, all necessary toilet articles, such as razor, towels, soap, etc., pair of extra shoes, two extra undershirts, extra outside shirt, tent pole, 5 tent pins, tent rope, 2 gas masks, 1 helmet and haversack.”⁵ The battalion then marched to Liffol-le-Grand, where they boarded the “Forty and eights” headed for Soissons. They had been preceded by the 1st and 2nd Battalions.

As the men of the 3rd Battalion climbed into the train cars, the 1st Battalion was marching into Nanteuil la Fosse, a tiny farming and quarrying community—“The town was utterly destroyed. The whole country around

had been wasted by the Germans in their retreat. Apple trees cut down or 'girded' and nothing left."⁶ They would have then climbed the sloping ridgeline beyond the town and arrived at the St. Blaise Quarry, what would become the support position for the regiment.⁷ Lieut. Guy Swett got his men from Company D into the quarry by 2330, noting "The quarry is underground made in rooms. Hold a reg[iment]. Covers 10 acres underground. Got elect[ric] lights and telephones all through[.] it is the Reserve."⁸ Lieut. Frank Burbank noted that the men of his Company C were all exhausted, but only one was missing because of straggling.⁹ The 2nd Battalion marched into the small town of Crouy just outside Soissons that same day, taking up billets in bombed-out cellars and dugouts; the town had been virtually destroyed and was a pile of rubble. On 8 February, the 3rd Battalion arrived in Soissons, passing through "many French villages which were either partially or completely destroyed by the Germans."¹⁰

Pvt. Howard P. Crosby from Fairfield, Maine, wrote of his experiences travelling to the front with the 103rd's Machine Gun Company: "Everywhere was ruins and desolation. You may rest assured that these sights made a profound and lasting impression upon us who were experiencing such scenes for the first time."¹¹ Pvt. Ralph Spaulding in Company H agreed with this assessment, writing, "I have seen some sight all right sence [sic] I have been away from home. All of the towns around here are busted up witch [sic] the Germans did when they were fighting and it is some sight."¹² Cpl. George E. Frost of Company B echoed Crosby when he wrote home, "This is certainly a desolate land; nearly every town is nothing but ruins with soldiers living in the ruins. There is hardly a tree left standing but has had the top shot away by shell fire, the country is all cut to pieces by trenches and huge shell holes, some of these holes are large enough to put a small house into...One cannot realize the desolation and destruction here until he sees it himself and the only activity displayed here is a feverish preparation for more death and destruction – truly a most gratifying condition (not)."¹³ Spaulding Bisbee echoed these sentiments when he first viewed the front lines: "I could hardly believe that artillery could make such a ruin. It was just one mass of earth simply pounded to pieces. Where there had been houses now was simply a pile of gray dust. No grass, no trees, absolutely nothing of what had been before."¹⁴

Going into Action

On 8 February, the 1st Battalion—under the cover of darkness—moved to the front lines at Bois Dherly along the Oisne-Aisne Canal. Major Hadley established battalion headquarters at Barcelonette. Behind this position, Colonel Hume established his regimental command post (C.P.)

at Vaudesson. The 2nd Battalion replaced the 1st Battalion at the quarry that same day, while the 3rd Battalion made the march from Soissons to Vregny, the regiment's reserve position.¹⁵ Like Crouy, little to nothing remained of Vregny; but since it was suitably far enough behind the front lines the men could be quartered in barracks.

The general scheme was that each battalion would rotate in and out of the various positions: front line, support, and reserve, thus giving the men the experiences of each. The front lines were somewhat of a disappointment to the men; rather than the trenches that they had expected, they were instead a series of outposts—"petites postes" the French called them—50 to 200 yards apart. These were manned by squads and platoons. In the French fashion, the front-line battalion would place two companies on the line and two in support. Similarly, each company would place two platoons forward to man the outposts with their other two in support. This was meant to create a defense in depth, where attacking Germans would be slowed by successive defensive positions and be made vulnerable to counterattacks from support and reserve troops.¹⁶

For troops in the support position at the St. Blaise Quarry, life took on a surreal form. The New Englanders—used to living in the open fields, woods, and coastlines—became underground dwellers. What had once been beautiful farmland and squares of orderly timber was now a blasted landscape—a "moonscape" of shell holes, fragmented trees, and desolation. Occasional German airplanes floated overhead, a reminder to the US troops that it was best to stay out of sight in the daylight hours. Amazed Doughboys observed aerial combat between French and German aircraft. Few had actually seen an airplane before, let alone witnessed them in battle. The new troops often ran out of whatever shelter they were in when they heard the sound of a plane, sometimes running to the site of a downed plane to collect trophies, as Ralph Moan recalled: "We ran over as quickly as we could...the machine was all stove to pieces, yet I managed to get a small piece of wood for a souvenir."¹⁷ It often seemed that German planes could operate with impunity in the area, as Lieutenant Burbank disgustingly noted in his log on 18 February: "The Germans own the air on this sector, fly around as they like on fine days, nothing except anti-aircraft guns and machine gun fire at them. French aviation keep under cover. The Hun is to [sic] many for them."¹⁸ German air superiority meant that US soldiers were constantly under surveillance and often received more accurate artillery fire because of that. Additionally, it was psychologically demoralizing to predominantly see enemy aircraft in the skies.

Troops entering this area would have marched through Nanteuil and then moved to the quarry via a series of communications trenches. The quarry entrance – large enough for at least six men abreast to march through—was the gateway to another world—“safe as a jail, electrically lighted and very comfortable,” Captain Bisbee remarked.¹⁹ Electric lights powered by generators ran the length of long ceilings as the Doughboys marched inside, the walls narrowing around them. “This is some place we are staying in now,” wrote Pvt. Ralph Spaulding on 11 February, two days after entering the quarry. “The other night I woke up and the fellow that sleeps near me was having a fight with the rats. There is all kind of rats here.”²⁰ More than a cave, “it was an underground village consisting of a system of large chambers, corridors, and alleys.”²¹ Each company had its own area, with bunks made of woven wire or chicken wire attached to the rock walls. Ralph Moan entered this complex on 19 February:

In this hill there is a big limestone cave big enough to hold 2000 men. It was at one time much bigger and able to hold about 4000 men. Twelve hundred Frenchmen were quartered in one part of this cave shortly after the Boche were driven out, but they were simply wiped out for the Boche had the whole cave mined. That whole section blew to pieces so not a Frenchman escaped. When we first entered the cave we were strictly forbidden to touch a single thing for fear of blowing up the whole cave.²²

Capt. James W. Hanson recorded these marvels in a letter home to his wife when he first entered the quarry on 12 March: “I have moved again and tonight have my headquarters and one Co of my army in a big cave, or rather a quarry. Have A and B up on the line with me, the others are back. We have electric lights and are quite comfortable. This country is full of big quarries, some will hold a Regt or more. We are 20 feet underground and are quite safe except the area is shelled a lot.”²³ Musician Myron D. Haskell from Headquarters Company noted that the band was brought in to play a concert in the quarries: “It is kind of dark going in but inside it is nice and light and there is a lot of room in it and it is a very fine place to lose your way in.”²⁴ On 15 March, Cpl. Lee Millett in Company K wrote home to his dad from “Somewhere in France, 30 feet below the earth... Our present resting place is certainly a queer home. It is at last 30 feet below the level of the ground but in spite of the earth on our roof we can hear the big shells burst and the big guns which are in the village throw lead over to the Germans.”²⁵

For the troops on duty in the quarry, life was a monotonous, yet terrifying, grind. Their main work was to dig communication trenches to the first line, which was miles away. The work was backbreaking and occasionally punctuated by moments of panic, as Germans habitually dropped artillery shells onto the rear areas. "I shall never forget the peculiar feeling in my stomach when I heard the first heavy shell whistling over my head," wrote Moan.²⁶ When not on duty, the men returned to their subterranean compound. It itself was not immune to the horrors of war. Both Lieutenant McGrew and Chaplain Moody recounted that men of the regiment had found four dead Germans, eerily situated around a table with playing cards still laid out in front of them: "three had fallen back in their chairs. The fourth had pitched forward on the table, where the cards were still lying. One man had reached for a bottle; it was lying on the floor, but his fingers were still curved to clutch it."²⁷ They had apparently all died from the concussion of a nearby artillery shell, a warning to the Doughboys. McGrew recalled his first bombardment in the quarry: "Thirty feet of rock intervened between us and the 'points of contact' yet the concussions were plainly felt throughout the cave. One felt an odd sensation as tho the air had suddenly compressed overhead and was beating you downward."²⁸ Many men whiled away the time by carving their names, units, designs, and hometowns into the soft stone walls. These can still be seen today, much as they appeared in 1918 since the caverns are protected from the elements. Intricate designs, depictions of home life in Maine and New England, drawings, and other carvings stand as testaments to the men who wanted to leave their mark in a turbulent world.

On the front lines, life was more hazardous. The entire 26th Division was scattered over a 40-kilometer front.²⁹ The front was made up of a battalion of US troops, then a battalion of French soldiers (sometimes called *poilu*, or "hairy one," a term of endearment referencing French infantry soldiers' largely lower-class and agricultural background), then a battalion of US soldiers, and so on. This was designed to ensure that the new US troops were bolstered on their flanks by the experienced French. The French 219th Infantry Regiment served as the tutors for the 103rd Infantry, and the two regiment shared the sector together. As noted earlier, there was an informal truce on the Chemin des Dames prior to the Americans arrival. The French and Germans, heartily tired of combat, rarely fired at each other from their trenches. This all changed when the Yankees arrived, the eager Doughboys firing at anything that moved. One sharpshooter in the 103rd Infantry was averaging one German soldier a day.³⁰

The 103rd was situated along a railroad line overlooking a canal, making it difficult for either the Germans or Americans to mount any type of offensive. As such, the 103rd never took part in any of the large raids that the other regiments in the division were able to make.³¹ Still, the men of the 103rd learned many valuable lessons on the front: how to string barbed wire at night, build dugouts, conduct patrols, and move troops and supplies under the cover of darkness.³² They still displayed the tendencies of raw troops, however, such as picking up helmets, rifles, and other debris off the battlefield. The French had to teach them that this was a very bad idea as the ground was littered with unexploded shells, and sometimes the Germans would rig items with explosives.³³

In fact, this lesson had been pounded into their heads back at Non-court, as Russell Adams remembered. The French had placed a German spiked helmet—a *pickelhaube*—in the way of a patrol. The boys of Company B swarmed all over it, when a French soldier jumped out from behind a tree: “‘Boom, boom,’” he’s hollering, ‘ze helmet she go boom, boom.’” The *Poilu* then explained that the Germans often wired their equipment to explode, and “‘if you picked them up, you’d be apt to get blown back to New England.’”³⁴

Sgt. Algernon Holden from Company L learned this lesson as well, when he picked up an unexploded German artillery shell in “No Man’s Land” and brought it to a French *Poilu*. The Frenchman told Holden in no uncertain terms that it “‘was not to be trusted and started off at a quick pace for somewhere else...It’s a favorite trick of the Boche to have good ‘souvenirs’ laying around that have mines attached to them, so if you pick one up something happens. The consequences are that there are hundreds of boxes of hand grenades right adjacent to shells, bayonets, helmets, etc., laying around no one dares touch.’”³⁵ They were learning how to survive.

The First Casualties

It was not without cost. The Germans greeted the Yankees with heavy concentrations of artillery fire, as if to give them a literal baptism of fire. When Company D arrived at their frontline positions on the evening of 8 February, they were met by a heavy bombardment that continued through the night. Lieut. Guy Swett no sooner established his command post when it was the target of a direct hit: “‘Burnt up my P.C. [post of command],” he growled in his diary. “‘I lost all my stuff...They got another shell through the dugout where I sleep and I was in. All hell has broke loose.’”³⁶ Swett’s predicament did not escape the notice of his acting battalion commander. “‘He was pretty mad,’” recalled Capt. James Hanson in a letter to his wife.³⁷



Figure 3.1. Capt. Sherman N. Shumway. Photo courtesy of the Maine National Guard Archives.

But the shells began to take a physical toll. Pvt. Henry Duplissis of Company D was seriously wounded on 10 February, on the front lines.³⁸ On the night of 13 February, “Fritz sent over several hundred [shells], but did no damage,” noted Captain Hanson.³⁹ In this, he was in error because the shells fell more accurately in the 3rd Battalion area. They were the cause of the first combat death in the Yankee Division: Pvt. Ralph Spaulding, from Madison, Maine, in Company H. He was killed in action by an exploding shell outside the quarry on 13 February.⁴⁰ Spaulding was digging trenches with a working party when the shells began to drop around them. The men ran for cover, but Spaulding paused to get his hat. He was killed by a shell fragment. His companions panicked, having never seen death in

such a way before, but Capt. Sherman Shumway restored order quickly.⁴¹ Spaulding had written his last letter home two days before, asking after his “girl” and requesting his sister to send over tobacco and candy because, “I don’t know what good candy is.” He asked for his family not to worry about him “because I am getting along all right and I don’t think this will last very much longer.”⁴² “Death,” said an account of his demise from an officer in a newspaper clipping from back home, “had probably been instantaneous, as the body was badly mangled.”⁴³

The word of Spaulding’s death reached Waterville, Maine on 26 February, where that day’s edition of the *Waterville Morning Sentinel* ran the large-print headline, “Company H Man is Killed in Action.” Further down the page, the paper recounted that his brothers had received telegrams announcing his death the day prior and listed him as, “The First Maine Martyr.”⁴⁴ This was an error, as although Spaulding was the first of the 2nd Maine contingent to be killed in action, the first Maine man to make that sacrifice was Harold Andrews of the Regular Army on 30 November 1917. Another Maine newspaper put it this way: “The mailed fist of the Kaiser has been felt by Company H of Waterville.”⁴⁵ Word was quick to come from the French, with corps commander Gen. Louis de Maud’huy sending his condolences: “In the name of the officers, NCOs and soldiers of the [219th] Regiment, he addresses a brotherly salute to the first victim fallen in our ranks, of the noble nation who has sent us her children in order to sustain at our side and until the end, the cause of liberty and the defense of democracy against German imperialism.”⁴⁶ In this statement, Gen. de Maud’huy hearkened back to the very first alliance between the Americans and the French: the American Revolution. Keenly aware of the massive effort that the US was making to ship troops and materiel to France, French leaders jumped to recognize the first American losses and contributions.

Lieut. Guy Swett’s rotten luck continued on 16 February. Walking back from visiting the French company next to them with Lieut. Edwin Call of Company A, they were caught by German shrapnel and were both wounded in the face and arms. They were evacuated to a hospital in the rear.⁴⁷ Lieutenant Call had been a student at Bowdoin College in the class of 1918 and had left his studies to go to war. Pvt. Clyde Andrews of the Machine Gun Company was severely wounded the following day.⁴⁸ On 18 February, as the 1st Battalion was nearing the end of their rotation at Bois Dherly, Pvt. Henry Sweeney from Manchester, New Hampshire, in Company B, was killed by a German shell. He had enlisted in Company B “Sheridan Guard,” 1st New Hampshire on 1 May 1917, getting married

two months later. He became Manchester's first casualty, laying on top of his dugout along the railroad when the German shell mortally wounded him. A letter home from 27 January noted, "Cheer up, we will do our bit for democracy in the Spring...we are just as confident of lacing the Huns as ever."⁴⁹ Manchester named a park in his honor.⁵⁰

Sweeney's death became a topic of discussion in Company B that reflected the growing feeling in the division that German operatives were infiltrating the American lines. It was a common rumor around the sector; men believed that local French civilians, sympathetic to the Germans, were sending signals to the enemy and that German spies were everywhere. In fact, the Germans were actively tapping phone lines, as the 26th Division rapidly learned. Subsequently, the division implemented communications security protocols, giving out code words for sectors and units. For example, the 103rd Infantry was given the codename "Apache." These code-names would rotate week-to-week.⁵¹ Back in Company B, Sgt. Earl Adams from Rumford had his own theory on how Sweeney had been killed: "I was standing in our trench trying to watch out for the shelling. Then I figured there was something fishy going on, so I started to face the other way." Adams was convinced that the shells were coming from their own lines: "those shells are coming from the French." According to Adams, a German spy had snuck into their own lines disguised as a French officer and had adjusted the elevation of the French guns so that the shells would drop on US lines. The spy was caught and killed, he said, "but it didn't do poor Harold any good."⁵² The battalion log simply read "Pvt. Sweeney, Co B, killed by own shell at about 6:00."⁵³

The 2nd Battalion suffered their next soldier killed in action four days after taking over the front on 24 February. Sgt. Joseph Chaisson from Milo, Maine, Company F, was firing rifle grenades from his trench over into the German lines on the other side of the canal. A German rifle round caught him in the throat, and he died shortly thereafter.⁵⁴ He had been supervising the fire of Company F's snipers—each company was allotted two rifles with telescopic scopes for sniping—and was posthumously awarded the French *Croix de Guerre*.⁵⁵ Twenty-five year-old Lieut. Ralph Monroe Eaton—a Harvard professor in philosophy who left his position to gain his commission and was assigned to the 103rd Infantry – wrote in shocked tones of "my first view of death in the war." The sergeant "lay like a beautiful slaughtered animal...He opened pained eyes and spoke my name." After Eaton had overseen Chaisson's evacuation, he went to his dugout and wept. "From that day on, I felt in my men a consecration which I had not before," he wrote. "To me and to them, after one of us, almost the finest of us, had gone, death

was not difficult. We had entered now into a community of the living and the dead, in which the voice of the dead called upon us to have courage.”⁵⁶ Leaders had to come to terms with the losses as best they could.

The 3rd Battalion took the next casualties. Pvt. Arthur Vaudreuil of Company L was killed in a sharp bombardment that the Germans put over around the St. Blaise Quarry on 28 February. Company K was digging entrenchments in a valley, while Company L was busy on the bank of a hillside and were caught in the open by the German shells. Ralph Moan remembered that, “one private was killed, one wounded, and a Lieutenant was lucky enough to have a piece of shrapnel sail by his nose and take off a little skin without doing more damage.”⁵⁷ In this same German barrage, shells landed around the regimental command post. One struck so close to Col. Frank Hume that he lost his hearing in one ear. However, he and his staff chose not to report it for fear that it would add to the already existing concerns over Hume’s health.⁵⁸

The 1st Battalion took over a new sector of the front near the Pinon Forest on 27 February. This was a more active sector where French and American guns traded barrages with the Germans. Lieutenant Burbank of Company C noted that on 28 February, “French artillery started at 21:03 continuing till 21:15. Quite a few shells fell short about 200 yds this side of the canal just to the right, front of the station...German artillery started a barrage at 21:05 firing intermediately for about 40 minutes, shells being 77 & 105.”⁵⁹ That evening, Lieut. Harold Eadie of Tilton, New Hampshire, a junior at Dartmouth who left school to join the Army, was “seriously wounded by shrapnel.”⁶⁰ Eadie was in Company D, holding the right of the 1st Battalion’s position. “Fritz started to shell our front that night,” remarked Captain Hanson, “Eadie was hit almost the first thing. Piece of shrapnel through the left lung.”⁶¹ He died the next day around one in the afternoon at the aid station of the 101st Machine Gun Battalion. He was the first Dartmouth man to die in the Great War.⁶² Colonel Hume wrote a condolence letter to Eadie’s mother, ending with, “I assure you that we will all strive the harder that he may have not died in vain.”⁶³

As one of the first officers of the 26th Division to die in the war, the story of Eadie’s death was magnified through retelling during and after the war. By the 1920s, the story had become that he led a patrol out into No Man’s Land and got involved in a sharp fight with a small element of Germans. Leading from the front, the account in his high school’s journal noted, Eadie was struck by a piece of shrapnel that penetrated his lung, as he was “alongside a spitting machine gun, blazing away with his auto-

matic pistol.”⁶⁴ Eadie’s death was followed by two more on 2 March: Pvt. Hugh Hunt of Headquarters Company, from shell fire, and Pvt. Norman MacCrillis of Company M, from disease.

Hunt’s death infuriated Hanson, because it happened on his front and it could have been prevented. Hunt was wounded by enemy artillery fire and arrived at the 1st Battalion’s dressing station at around 1400 where he was treated and stabilized. They called for an ambulance to bring him to a field hospital but no ambulance ever appeared, even after repeated calls until darkness fell. Hunt died of shock and loss of blood around 2100, around the time that a private car from a neighboring French unit showed up in answer to the desperate pleas for assistance coming from the 1st Battalion. In a memo on 2 March, Hanson argues for better casualty evacuation processes on the front lines, resulting in increased liaison between aid stations and field hospitals.⁶⁵

In such close-knit units, these losses were particularly hard to bear. Captain Hanson, temporarily commanding the 1st Battalion, wrote on 6 March, “If I can only get out without losing any more men. Have lost Lieut Eadie and Pvt Hunt killed and some wounded.”⁶⁶ For Colonel Hume, who viewed these men as not just his soldiers but his particular charges to care for, the first casualties came as somewhat of a shock. His driver, Pfc. Leroy L. Pray, remembered that, “as the reports came in from Battalion Headquarters, tears streamed down the Old Man’s face.”⁶⁷ Although many of the Guardsmen had much prior operational experience in Cuba, on the Mexican Border, and in large-scale maneuvers, losing friends in combat was something new. And it was something that they would have to come to terms with.

Hume was in his headquarters at Vaudesson, which had once been a town, but was now only recognizable as a pile of rubble.⁶⁸ Major General Edwards decided to pay a visit to Colonel Hume one day. His driver assured him he knew the way, but as they started out, Edwards realized with dismay that his driver was taking him along the Chemin des Dames ridge-line. This road was never used, for the simple reason that the Germans had perfect view of anything silhouetted along the crest. Soon after the general and his driver started, German shells began dropping down alongside the vehicle as the driver pressed the gas down as far as he could. Remarkably, no one was hurt, and Colonel Hume was able to greet his considerably-distressed division commander outside his small dugout.⁶⁹

Hume himself was not immune from the dangers of the front, as previously noted. In a letter home to parents on 6 March, Pvt. Walter Day

of Headquarters Company wrote, “Colonel Hume is still on the job, and believe me, he is some soldier. The other night we had quite a heavy barrage, and one of the sergeants got hurt quite badly. The Colonel was out near where the shell exploded, and picked the sergeant up and started to carry him in; that is the kind of Colonel he is!”⁷⁰ Dan McGrew had been knocked over in this blast as was Hume. They had been standing in the communication trench outside the quarry near Vaudesson when the shells began to drop. Both men were unhurt in their first brush with the war.⁷¹

Hume was also not one to stay in his headquarters. Attached to the 52nd Brigade as a liaison officer was a French captain by the name of Jean B. Le Meitour. He had been in the war since its very beginning, been wounded four times, awarded the *croix de guerre* five times, and had made a name for himself at Verdun.⁷² Now he was with the new soldiers from New England and was trying to get their measure. Towards the end of February, Captain Le Meitour, General Cole, Colonel Hume, and Capt. Arthur Ashworth – now commanding the 103rd Machine Gun Battalion—were inspecting the lines of the 1st Battalion around Pinon Forest. Around 1400 they began to return to Hume’s headquarters at Vaudesson, walking through the forest itself. Colonel Hume, Captain Ashworth, and General Cole’s aide were all singing a popular French song called “La Madelon” as they walked. German shells began to land close by but the Americans continued to stroll and sing. Finally one shell gave the “strident whistle, whose meaning I know only too well,” and Captain Le Meitour gave the order for everyone to drop. The shell exploded 30 yards away, covering the men in dirt. Undaunted, the Americans got up, brushed off their uniforms, and continued to walk and sing. “This lasted,” related Le Meitour, “a quarter of an hour. Then the Boche changed his target and let us go in peace...For my part, I have been present and taken part, without wishing to, a sort of audacity entirely new to me.”⁷³

By now, Lieutenants Swett and Call were beginning to see some familiar faces in their hospital, which was well back from the front lines in Longueil d’Annel, a small town outside Compiègne. Maddy Arsenault, who had accidentally shot himself in the leg one night in the quarry, Henry Duplissis, and Oscar Valley were there, having been wounded. Valley would be killed in action on 20 July.⁷⁴ The men who were ambulatory took time to walk the grounds of the chateau they were in and visited the local towns as best as they were able. The chateau was owned by a Mrs. Julia Hunt Catlin Park DePew, an American one-time widow and one-time divorcee who had turned her estate over to the Entente for use as a 300-bed hospital during the war. While there, she met and fell in love with French

General Emile Adolphe Taufflieb. On 28 February, as the snow fell, Swett and the other American wounded were invited to a special event: the wedding of the American benefactress to the French war hero: "All the nurses and patients were there. The Gen. had his staff with him the Old Fire Place was fixed up as an altar with flowers and before it was the Stars & Stripes, the Red Cross, and the French Colors."⁷⁵ It was a different world for these men in the hospital. As March wore on, they began to see more signs of activity. German air raids targeting Paris became more common. Swett noted seeing more and more French troops surging toward the front: "A French Co. came along and stopped to rest. The men sang songs while they were marching. They are the Class of 1918. Only 20 or will be 20 yrs this year, all young boys, altho quite rugged."⁷⁶

Life on the Front

Back on the front, the war continued on. Patrolling on the front lines consisted of leaving from the advance posts and conducting missions to check on the bridges that crossed the canal to ensure that the Germans were not repairing them, as well as checking on their own defenses. The patrols still consisted of mixed French and American soldiers, who slogged through the mud as best they could. The weather was harsh, as Lieutenant Burbank noted in his log for 4 March: "Snowy and Rainy. Very nasty... Ammunition expended; 11 grenades, two were thrown from P.P. [*petites postes*] 14 at what turned out to be a wild duck. Missed the duck so no roast duck today."⁷⁷ Burbank noted that his men from Company C aided the regimental mortar section in setting up their Stokes mortars and lobbing shells across the canal on 5 March. Most time was spent in improving their defenses, as Burbank notes that his men put in "100 feet of trenches varying from 2 ½ feet to 3 feet in depth" also on 5 March.⁷⁸

Soldiers of the regiment would spend a good deal of time digging in. World War I was a war of both maneuver and defense. Trench duty was monotonous, and often terrifying. Yet the soldiers could always find something humorous in the situation. Lieutenant Eaton remembered digging in just south of the canal, in a hurry because they expected German shells at any moment. Over the clanks of the shovels, he heard one private ask his friend, "What're you doing over there, Buddie?" The other responded, "Me, I'm making the world safe for democracy," in a quip aimed at President Wilson's quote that the US was entering World War I to "Make the world safe for democracy." Eaton remembered the mirth this created, even as "the shells did begin to come, sizzling down in volleys of four and plastering the mud about."⁷⁹

This type of activity was the norm for every company that rotated in and out of front line duty. Patrols checked the status of wire entanglements and trenches. Gaps in the wire would be repaired by working parties that went out at night. The preferred procedure was to build knife rests – a six foot long sawhorse with spiked ends, all strung with barbed wire – and have them staged in forward positions. That way, when a break in the wire was identified, the soldiers could easily move the knife rest into position and then use barbed wire to tie it into the existing obstacle. This was a technique the French taught the Americans, and it saved a lot of time that might have been spent in a forward area within range of the enemy.⁸⁰

The New Englanders also got their first doses of poison gas. It engendered no small amount of confusion from the rookies who were not sure if they should put on their gas masks or not: “The gas was quite thick at first but could not seem to find out what kind of gas it was, some said it was one kind and others said another,” wrote Lieutenant Burbank on 6 March. More gas shells followed the next day, causing Company C to evacuate their 4th platoon from its location.⁸¹ Temporarily commanding the battalion, Captain Hanson received reports that his front lines were taking artillery fire. He “turned our batteries loose on Fritz in this sector and I also started all the machine guns going. We kept it up for 10 minutes. But it was an awful racket...Fritz has been quiet since.”⁸²

Patrols were fraught with peril not from just the enemy, but sometimes because of inexperienced Doughboys. Lieut. Reginald E. Foss was on a patrol with his men near Pinon meant to ensure that the enemy did not make an attempt to cross the canal. The enemy was shelling the rear areas, meaning that his patrol was quite safe, until they suddenly saw a rocket go up from their right, meaning that there were Americans calling for a barrage along their entire front. “The record for that particular sector was about one minute between the call of the infantry and the reply by the artillery,” wrote Foss in a letter after the war. “We didn’t stop to argue the situation for there was but one thing to do – get back before the shells landed – and back we got. As I say we had been an hour coming out. We went back in one minute flat. At least we cleared the four fields of barbed wire and made it to the top of the railroad embankment before the first shell landed, and if Fritz was listening he must have thought that a score of tanks were crashing through the wire.”⁸³ These frontline mishaps and communication errors were learning points for the US soldiers as they discovered that experience was the best teacher.

As the northern New Englanders were discovering the war and all it entailed, their thoughts often flew to their family members back home.

The ever faithful Captain Hanson wrote home on 23 February: “Darling Baby Wife...I have been over some of the famous ‘Hindenburg Line’ and it was a very strong position...Am so glad Honey you are going out some and not staying home too close. I want you to have [a] car in the spring and learn to drive it so you can take me riding when I get home. We can have some real times. Now my business is war and I think it and talk it all the time.”⁸⁴ For citizen-soldiers, this duality of thought was more pronounced than for regulars. They hoped to survive long enough to put off the mantle of soldier and once again resume being a citizen.

Friendship with the French

Yet while front line duty could be harsh, it also had moments where it showed the deep friendship that grew up between the Americans and the French. Two incidents that occurred near Pinon Forest when the 2nd Battalion was manning the front lines illustrate this feeling of mutual appreciation. During one particularly nasty bombardment, the field kitchen of a French platoon had been blown to bits. Company H’s kitchen, nearby, had escaped without much harm. 1st Sgt. Arthur Castonguay from Waterville heard of the French platoon’s plight and asked one of Company H’s platoons if they would be willing to give half their rations for the day to their neighbors. The platoon volunteered to a man, sharing their fare with the Poilu. In return, the French shared their ration of wine.⁸⁵

A few days later, the sector was hit with a gas bombardment in which the French company to the right of Company H suffered terribly. After Capt. Sherman Shumway made the rounds of his squads to make sure they were all right, he sent over to see how his neighbors had held up under the barrage. The word came back that the French line was decimated, with many wounded, but that French ambulances would probably not arrive till the morning. Half of Company H was manning their front line posts while the other two platoons were resting after having come off the front line earlier. Shumway summoned his noncommissioned officers, explained the situation, and asked for volunteers to assist the French soldiers. The NCOs returned to their men and a few minutes later both platoons tumbled out of their dugouts: every man had volunteered. One platoon relieved the French on the front lines while the other went to work removing and treating the wounded. Little wonder that Gen. Louis de Maud’huy, the 11th Corps commander, affectionately referred to the 26th Division as the “goddaughter of the 11th French Corps.”⁸⁶

For their part, the US officers greatly respected their French “godfathers.” Captain Hanson explained that, “Our French allies are splendid sol-

diers. They do all possible for us.” In a letter to his wife, Hanson went on to talk about how his battalion’s officers “mess with a French Batt Hqdrs and we have great times. Every meal is fun from the beginning to end for the French are naturally lively. It is the one time of day we try to forget the war. It helps a lot to relieve the constant strain one is under at the Front.”⁸⁷ From the French, the Americans received some completely new ideas in cooking, such as novel ways to prepare the humble potato: “Tonight we had for dinner French Fried potatoes, roast rabbit, spinach, soup, tea, sauce, and one or two other things I can’t remember,” wrote Hanson on 6 March. “We have hot biscuits for breakfasts and I have an apple pie at lunch.”⁸⁸ Lieutenant McGrew also waxed eloquent in appreciation for the cooking of the soldiers in the French 219th Infantry. Commanding the 37mm guns in the forward positions along the canal and in Pinon Forest, he was often at the front and so spent a considerable amount of time with the officers of the 219th. He paints a vivid picture of the camaraderie built between the officers and men of the two regiments in their dinner parties taken in dank dugouts or quarries: “Between courses we took turns in roaring songs, the Frenchmen showing partiality for our rendition of ‘Tipperary,’ and we yelling for an encore of ‘Madelon.’” This continued, he wrote, even as the Germans dropped “four shells at a time into the camp at intervals of 15 seconds.”⁸⁹

The 3rd Battalion’s Experience

On 1 March, Major Southard’s 3rd Battalion—Ralph Moan’s Company K with it—left from their position at the quarry for the second line of trenches. The cigar-chomping Bill Southard was becoming known for being a calm leader, one who “could stand unmoved in the midst of a burning ammunition factory and remark, ‘Well, things seem to be het up a bit around these parts.’”⁹⁰ It was about 0930 when they left, and it took them four hours of marching to reach their positions in the second line. Like the front line positions, the second line consisted of a series of dugouts overlooking roads that might be used by the Germans if they decided to attack. Moan’s position was dug three to five feet in under a main road, with a 37mm gun used to cover the position.⁹¹ The men spent five days in this position, dodging German artillery shells and machine gun fire. Returning from battalion headquarters one night, Lieut. Harold Newell and Moan came under fire: “a machine gun began to pop in good shape not more than 20 feet from us... we got up and went a few feet further when she popped again, so we sprawled in the mud once more.” They kept this up until they reached a nearby trench, only to find that they had crossed in front of an American machine gun position that was firing into enemy trenches half a mile away.⁹²

After midnight on 6 March, Company K left from their second line trenches bound for the front lines. Gas masks were held at the ready as the news of the German gas attacks on Companies C and I had spread around the regiment. The Doughboys arrived past one in the morning to their new homes, reinforced log dugouts, which had just recently been gassed. Moan went inside the dugout to get a few hours of sleep. He was awakened by a shell bursting directly on top of the dugout. For 36 hours the Germans had been bombarding the 103rd Infantry's positions with high explosive rounds and about 30,000 gas shells.⁹³ Moan's Company K had arrived just in the middle of it. "The Boche bombarded us in good shape, at least 70 big fellows bursting each minute," Moan recalled. "Believe me, the man who said he was not scared was a liar."⁹⁴ The men donned gas masks, but some were not quick enough, including Lieutenant Newell. Fortunately, the results were not fatal; the afflicted soldiers felt nauseous and light-headed for some time but soon returned to duty. Sgt. Hervey Jennings of Company K received the *Croix de Guerre* for continuously running rations up to his men under bombardment, until he too was evacuated because of gas poisoning.⁹⁵

The 3rd Battalion was regularly targeted by artillery and aerial bombardment, resulting in several men who were wounded. Moan was one of the litter carriers, and so made several long treks from the front back to the battalion hospital, about a mile to the rear. This took them through barbed wire and knee-high mud, all in darkness lit occasionally by the Very signal lights that were fired into the air to illuminate the area. When these went up, they would all sprawl on the ground, as experience had shown that anything that moved would be given a burst of machine gun fire.⁹⁶

On the night of 11 March, the battalion's last night on the front, a German patrol attempted to infiltrate the wire entanglements in front of the US outposts. Company K's second platoon detected them and tossed a shower of hand grenades on them, while opening up with rifles and machine guns: "They laid up twenty that night and left them hanging in the wire. One man had his head blown off and it made a ghastly sight, suspended in the barbed wire. The snipers got about twenty men, one being an officer."⁹⁷ The 3rd Battalion moved back to the quarry the next night, their front line tour over.

For Ralph Moan, it was enough. He had entered the Chemin des Dames full of youthful optimism and a carefree attitude. But the endless shelling, the mud, and the sight of mutilated bodies—friend and foe—had taken their toll. On 30 March, Moan took a brief moment to soberly inscribe his last entry in his diary, "Have decided to cut this diary out right now, for no man wishes after seeing what we have seen to recall them but

rather wishes to forget. From now on all we see is HELL.”⁹⁸ Other men in the regiment agreed. “It seems to me,” wrote Cpl. George Frost in Company B, “that if the contending nations would use a hundredth part of the resources and energy in helping one another and in building up instead of killing each other and tearing down and destroying each other that their country would be one of the most beautiful in the world.” The bleak landscape was beginning to wear on the men. Frost continued, “For my part, I would rather do some good to a man than shoot him. I would feel much more heroic if I had given clothes and goods to a starving family over here than as if I had captured single-handed 10 miles of enemy trenches.” Frost ended with a sarcastic barb aimed at Wilson’s “make the world safe for democracy” quote: “President Wilson says the world isn’t a safe place to live in while the Kaiser is in power so I guess the only thing to do is to keep on with the wholesale destruction.”⁹⁹

Relief

The 103rd Infantry came off the front lines 19 March, as the spring rain fell on the tired soldiers.¹⁰⁰ Major Mayo commanding the 2nd Battalion was assigned to division staff, so Captain Hosford took command of the battalion, while Lieut. Irvin E. Doane took command of Hosford’s Company L. Similarly, Major Hadley received orders to Headquarters, Services of Supply and so Captain Hanson took over the 1st Battalion. Lieutenant Swett would take command of Company D on his return from the hospital. Hanson himself spent much of his time on the front lines wondering if he would be the right kind of leader that his men deserved. He all at once agonized over his own abilities while yearning to be given the opportunity to succeed; now he was to have that opportunity. Writing in March, he mused, “Just how funny it must sound to the people at home to think of me over here, with Artillery, M.G.’s, Infantry under my command, holding a section of the Western Front. I have about 1 mile, not even a major, only a poor little capt. It puzzles me that they would ever trust it to me, a poor backwoodsman.”¹⁰¹ But while Hanson was worried that he was not doing enough for his men, his men knew that they had a good leader. Sgt. Jesse Stiles of Company D wrote, “They cannot beat Captain Hanson in the United States army...he is one of the kindest men, too, and thinks of his company first and himself afterwards. I have seen him a good many times after a heavy storm come wading around in water up to his knees to find out if the boys were all comfortable for the night.”¹⁰²

Leadership changes made, the regiment began a week-long series of marches and train rides through the beautiful French countryside in

springtime back to Liffol-le-Grand. This respite was not to last. By the time the 26th Division reached their old training area, the first German spring offensive—Operation Michael—began. Lieut. Guy Swett noted the increase in air activity over his hospital, noting the Germans had started a new offensive: “Troops and guns going by all day. Guess the spring time has started all right.”¹⁰³ The Germans unleashed a devastating artillery barrage that engulfed a front forty kilometers wide and fifteen kilometers deep in the Somme. This bombardment and the attack that followed it virtually destroyed the British Fifth Army. Subsequent offensives would eventually overrun the once-placid Chemin des Dames in May. In severe fighting that May and June, most of the soldiers of the French 219th Infantry Regiment would be killed, wounded or missing, including those who had become friends with their counterparts in the 103rd Infantry. The last message from the major commanding the two battalions in Pinon Forest arrived via a carrier pigeon: “We are surrounded, but fighting, and we will not surrender.”¹⁰⁴ With these new German blows, the Entente desperately needed more troops on the front lines.¹⁰⁵ On 1 April, orders came down for the next move. All leaves were cancelled. The US 1st Division was coming out of the Toul Sector—about 70 kilometers away—and the 26th Division was to replace them. The Yankee Division was on its way to its first active front.¹⁰⁶

“It must have been a brutal awakening for all these men,” wrote French Capt. Jean B. Le Meitour after the war. “They had been told repeatedly that they were on their way back to Neufchateau, that corner of France where they had even succeeded in a getting a little feeling of having a home.” But Le Meitour recounted that in this moment of distress he saw the real strength of the men. “The only comment one heard was the famous word borrowed from the troopers of the 11th Corps—‘Bah, c’est la guerre.’ [“That’s war: it can’t be helped”] They made the forced march next day singing.”¹⁰⁷

The Chemin des Dames sector served as the validation of the 103rd Infantry’s training regimen. The platoons, companies, and battalions demonstrated their ability to hold a sector, patrol it, and sustain it. They had learned the importance of communications security, rapid medical evacuation, and cooperation with allied forces. Leaders faced down their own insecurities and either rose to the occasion or failed to meet expectations. Colonel Hume recommended several officers for removal based on their performance in this sector. Soldiers faced their own validation of sorts—surviving enemy fire and realizing their own ability to be resilient in the face of what they had feared for so long. There were also signs of issues to come. Weaknesses

in communication and liaison would plague the unit throughout the war, as they would beset the entire A.E.F. But the bones of the unit were strong. It would stand in the face of enemy fire. And more than that, it would adapt to circumstances—a necessity on an ever-changing battlefield.

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Chapter IV

“Your Men Don’t Know How to Fight:”¹

The Toul Sector, April-June 1918

There is a street in Auburn, Maine that bears the unusual name of “Xivray Street.” Its meaning has been variously interpreted, with some even calling it “Fourteen-Ray Street,” thinking that perhaps the letters “XIV” were meant to be Roman numerals.² The small side street in the quiet old mill town is hidden away, most often used by students at Central Maine Community College to travel from campus to the main road of Center Street. None now alive would guess the terrible memories that the name Xivray held back in 1919, when the street was planned and named, and there are no more veterans of World War I alive today to educate them. It stands in silent memory to a forgotten battlefield where the volunteer soldiers of the 103rd Infantry outfought their skilled German adversaries.

While the 103rd Infantry had been bloodied on the Chemin des Dames, it had not been on a front where a determined enemy had been able to present the regiment with multiple dilemmas or significant threats. Aside from artillery fire, limited exposure to chemical weapons, and some small arms fire, the regiment remained untested in close combat. Nor had it—or the 26th Division—held an entire frontline sector of their own without French assistance and oversight. The Toul Sector would change of all that and would reveal the true fighting quality of these soldiers.

A New Front

Xivray is a tiny town in France, one of a pair of twin villages, the twain making up Xivray-et-Marvoisin, in the Meuse Department in Lorraine, France. The towns are so small that one barely notices them when driving through, save for one thing: the buildings have all been constructed in the 20th century. The original towns were reduced to piles of rubble during World War I, as they were on the front lines of the volatile Toul Sector. In 1914, the original German advance in this sector had driven the Allied lines back into a bulge, where the front then stabilized. The Toul Sector was on the southeastern edge of the St. Mihiel Salient, where the Germans maintained a strong presence along the Heights of the Meuse threatening the cities of Verdun, Soissons, and Toul. The salient remained into 1918, when the first American troops arrived in the area.

At the end of March, the 103rd Infantry loaded onto trains for the movement into their new sector. Lieut. Ralph Monroe Eaton described

these movements: “As he bumps along toward the unknown, one of a tangled mass of brown jammed to overflowing into a small and chilly freight car, a can of bully beef and a bit of hard bread in his pocket, the soldier is cheery and full of song, because he is on his way.” Even through the “interminable and uncomfortable voyages,” he recalled the happiness of “champagne at Epernay, and coffee from the delicate hands of French women of the Croix Rouge at Troyes.” Even in movement, the soldiers could find something to enjoy.³ The last miles were conducted on foot—a hard slog for men whose footwear was already worn from the rain and mud of the preceding months. But they marched and sang—“We belong to the ‘Hundred and Third, parlez vous’”—as they went. Lieutenant McGrew noted in times like these, listening to his men sing and joke behind him as they tramped the road in column of fours, “I wouldn’t trade the command of this layout for President Wilson’s place.”⁴

The 26th Division, still under the overall command of Maj. Gen. Fenelon F.G. Passaga’s 32nd French Army Corps, moved into the Toul Sector on 3 April 1918 to replace elements of the US 1st Division and a French division.⁵ When the 103rd Infantry entered the Toul Sector on 3 April, one battalion at a time went into the line. The 3rd Battalion was the first, on 15 April, taking up their position with the wood of Bois Brule—literally, “burnt woods”—on the left and the village of Apremont on their front. Behind the lines of trenches was the village of St. Agnant, lending its name to the position: Center of Resistance St. Agnant.⁶ This now was a front where “trench warfare” meant something, as the front was arranged in layers of supporting trench lines. The spring rains meant that keeping these arrays of defensive positions maintained would be as much as a task as defeating the Germans. And now, the Germans were just across a narrow strip of “No-Man’s Land.” Capt. James Hanson, surveying the area, noted, “Somehow this sector worries me.”⁷ It was a vastly different sector than the Chemin des Dames and would give rise to unique challenges that the men of the 103rd would need to overcome.

Opposite the 103rd Infantry’s positions rose the dominating heights of Mont Sec; a massive hill that the Germans had turned into a fortress. The Germans looked down on Allied lines and seemed to possess an omniscient power to see anything that happened there.⁸ Around Mont Sec were wooded areas where the Germans concealed their artillery batteries and moved troops out of the Allies direct line of sight.⁹ The Germans regularly employed observation balloons from Mont Sec; any Allied movements in daylight were prone to draw a quick and deadly barrage from German batteries.¹⁰ 26th Division intelligence estimated that they received an aver-

age of 1,300 German artillery rounds every day that they were in the Toul Sector.¹¹ Consequently, the Americans conducted resupply operations, defensive position construction, and patrolling missions during the hours of darkness.

Adversaries

While the Americans were new to the war, their adversaries certainly were not. Elements of the German 5th *Landwehr* Division occupied the heights of Mont Sec and the surrounding areas as they had since 1914. The 5th *Landwehr* was composed of two infantry brigades that were primarily used for defensive operations in the Verdun and Toul areas. By the time the Americans arrived in the sector, the men of the 5th *Landwehr* were well-accustomed to defensive warfare and had suffered only light casualties. The American Expeditionary Force G-2 intelligence section rated it as a fourth-class division as it showed “no initiative or capacity for offensive operation.”¹² The division was in an excellent defensive position, however, with the advantage of interior lines, concrete emplacements, high ground, and heavy supporting artillery fire. As coming events demonstrated, despite their reported inability to mount an effective attack, the Germans were more than willing to make the Yankees bleed.

The 5th *Landwehr* was very keen on harassing the Americans that appeared opposite them in the spring of 1918. They pestered them daily with artillery fire and conducted several raids with the purpose of taking prisoners. The largest of these was at the village of Seicheprey, on the right of the 103rd Infantry, which was held by the 102nd Infantry. On 20 April, a strong German force struck the 102nd while their artillery laid down a box barrage—shells falling all on each side of a unit’s perimeter—around Seicheprey, cutting lines of communications and pinning down nearby troops. The German assault was so swift that Company C of the 102nd was captured virtually intact. They flaunted photos of these prisoners to the world in a vain attempt to show that the vaunted Americans were no match for German assault troops. After two days of fierce combat the 26th Division retook Seicheprey.¹³

The engagement at Seicheprey may have been the first time the division was dealt a considerable setback, but it also demonstrated that the Yankees would stay and fight in the face of a determined attack. The savage, hand-to-hand fighting revealed that the Yankees, despite their seemingly limitless supply of spirit and determination, had had much to learn. The Seicheprey engagement had followed a similar attempt to break the lines of the 104th Infantry, at Apremont from 10-12 April. This failed and several Germans

were taken prisoner. However, the Germans still managed to take two prisoners from the 104th.¹⁴ On 27 May, the 5th *Landwehr*, in another attempt to gain prisoners, tried the lines of 101st Infantry near Flirey. This attack netted a few prisoners, but nothing more.¹⁵ All that remained was to test the 103rd Infantry, and the 5th *Landwehr* would have gained the mettle of all the American infantry regiments of the 26th Division.

Life on the New Front Lines

The 103rd had not exactly been idle. They had participated in the repulse of the raid at Apremont on 12 April, engaging flanking parties of Germans in the Bois Brule and driving them back. While in the lines around Apremont in April and May, the 103rd Infantry continued to hone its combat experience. The spring rains brought more mud, and now the regiment had to contest with a much more active enemy. Sgt. Russell Adams recalled that the company received a new lieutenant, by the name of Burke, as a replacement. He had not been on the front lines an hour before “a sniper caught him between the eyes.” Adams spotted the German in a shelled-out barn, rested his rifle on a sandbag, and fired: “I think I got that one.” The war was showing its heartlessness: “Some of us went through the whole thing while others, like Burke, only lasted a couple of hours.”¹⁶ The Americans were also making their own determinations about their enemy. “The ‘boche’ are an interesting animal,” wrote Sgt. Harry Mitchell in Company C on 24 April, “but like the pet snake, they are not to be trusted.”¹⁷

The weather in this sector continued to be dismal, as Pvt. Frank Whiteman from Tilton, New Hampshire wrote to his mother on 24 April, “It has rained here for the last three days, and believe me, it is mud, mud, mud where ever you go.”¹⁸ Concurring, Pvt. Charles Dubuque of Company I, from Nashua, wrote home to his family in April describing life in the trenches: “It rained for five days and five nights steady, and of all the water in France, we had the majority in our trenches. We were covered with mud from the top of our helmet to the bottom of our shoes, and it would run off our overcoats or slickers just like water.”¹⁹ The weather wore on the men physically and mentally. Capt. James Hanson, still in command of the 1st Battalion, began to despair of ever getting promoted. In his nearly daily letters to his wife he wondered when they were going to send him back to Company D and install a major in his place. Word was, Hanson wrote, that the field grade officer positions in the A.E.F. were reserved for regular Army officers and that National Guard officers were being passed up.²⁰ He was in error but the rumor did nothing to heal the slowly developing rift between the National Guard and Regulars.

On 26 April, Company I received intelligence that there was a possible German attack looming in their sector. The Seicheprey raid was less than a week old, and so every unit was on edge. As Private Dubuque described it, "Each man took all the ammunition that he could carry and started to dig a trench and each worked with all his power from 10:00 that night to 2:30 the next morning. When we had our trench dug, we settled down and waited for Fritz to come over and pay us a visit." Sure enough, around 2:30 in the morning, German artillery opened fire, dropping shells all around Company I for about two hours. "Believe me, there was some steel and iron flying around us," wrote Dubuque, "trees broke as if made of paper." Sgt. Fred Mitchell from Eastport, Maine was killed in this barrage. While the men of Company I wanted to get in a scrap with German infantry, US counter-battery artillery fire silenced the German guns and pummeled their trenches so that "everything was blown to pieces." The men of Company I would have to wait to come to grips with their foe and avenge the death of Sergeant Mitchell. On 1 May, the 1st Battalion relieved the 3rd Battalion at C.R. Agnant. Captain Bisbee took the 239 men of Company B into the front lines and got a good look at the St. Agnant Sector:

The 104th had a big fight there shortly before and for tactical reasons had given up the front line and support line. We had no support line and our first line was an old communicating trench. Everything was a mess, filthy and very much equipment strewn about both Bosh & American. The dug-outs were in pretty bad shape & it wasn't a very pleasant outlook for me. But "C'est la guerre."²¹

Lieutenant Swett, now back with Company D, maintained a steady stream of monotonous entries in his diary, with "rain," "patrols," and "work parties" being the most common features. Occasional barrages of both gas and high explosives kept the men on their toes. Work parties strung wire and improved the trenches and dugouts. It was best for the men to be busy, because when they came off the front lines they had only drill and delousing baths to look forward to.²² Swett's diary notes an increase in disciplinary problems as soon as Company D went from front line duty to support, specifically with drunkenness.²³ Swett himself would be out of the action for a bit as he was sent off to the I Corps School for additional training at the beginning of May.

Information security continued to develop as not only were units given codenames, but so were situations. As reported on 20 April, the same day as the Seicheprey attack, the theme was baseball. "Wagner singled" meant that the unit received a chemical weapons attack. "Base on balls" indicated

that the unit had soldiers who were seriously wounded. “Balk” meant that there were soldiers who were only lightly wounded. As time went on, units got better about adhering to communications security techniques.²⁴

Lieutenant Burbank, now commanding Company C, led his men up to the front to replace Bisbee’s Company B on 6 May. The relief—a well-drilled but dangerous exercise because it put a lot of troops in one location—took place at night. But still the Germans got wind of it and dropped a heavy barrage; luckily, no one was injured or hurt. Burbank thought the position to be very vulnerable: “Dugouts in very poor condition, not sufficient quarters for men nor gas proof.”²⁵ He noted in the following days that German artillery, airplanes, and snipers were very active in this sector.²⁶ Much of the time on the front lines was spent in just trying to make areas livable in the sea of mud. Daily working parties made long trips back to the rear to pick up wooden duck boards—wooden slats nailed together in an attempt to create a makeshift boardwalk—and carry them up to the trenches in the never-ending fight against mud. Arthur J. Winslow in Company H remarked, “One thing that I like about the One Hundred and Third Regiment is that no matter where they go the first thing that they do is clean the place up and get it as near sanitary as possible.”²⁷ Inspections from battalion, regiment, and brigade officers helped enforce the sanitary conditions that were needed to stave off diseases that the men might contract from exposure to fecal matter and dead bodies. Rats and other vermin that could carry disease were attracted to the trenches and so battling these invaders was also part of the daily task.

Patrols continued as well. Each battalion’s sector kept two companies forward and two companies in support. One patrol from each forward company would leave their trenches every night and sneak out into “No-Man’s Land,” where they would check on their own barbed wire and that of the enemy. German and American patrols frequently exchanged fire, which resulted in three wounded from Companies E and A in the darkness of the morning of 3 May.²⁸ A patrol from Company A on the night of 4 May discovered that the Germans had occupied the previously-abandoned Chauvin Trench in force. US artillery rumbled into action, pummeling the trench for 15 minutes. After the patrol had been reinforced, it returned—but found that the Germans had vanished.²⁹

Tactical Developments

While operating in this sector, the 26th Division began experimenting with new tactical developments. The existing company structure proved unwieldy for staging a combined arms raid or even for a company defense.



Figure 4.1. Maj. Elson A. Hosford. Photo courtesy of the Maine National Guard Archives.

Companies were composed of four platoons, each platoon composed of four sections. The first section was made up of riflemen, hand bombers, and grenadiers. The 2nd and 3rd sections were all riflemen. Automatic riflemen with their ammunition carriers composed the 4th section.³⁰ This makeup was designed for the company on the attack.

The concept of “platoon gangs” was introduced by a member of the division in the spring of 1918 in the Toul Sector and was circulated throughout the division. Rather than platoons of specialized infantrymen, each “gang” would be made up of 12 men of all arms (rifleman, auto rifleman, hand bomber, rifle grenadier) led by a sergeant or corporal. Four gangs would make up a platoon. Their primary mission would be for infiltration and exploitation. Each gang would have an automatic rifle team for fire and maneuver. This was sent out to each regiment in a memo en-

titled “Platoon Gangs: An Alternative Combat Formation of the Infantry Platoon, Combining Initiative, Control and Flexibility: Based on American Fighting Experience.” While 103rd Infantry records do not indicate if this technique was ever adopted, it does show that doctrinal thinking was changing down at the tactical level.³¹

One technique that was implemented was that of the “Corps d’elite.” This was a body of 50 picked men of each battalion which was to serve as a quick reaction force in the event of an enemy breakthrough or for offensive raids. They would receive special training and were to be composed of the most physically fit and mentally tough of the men in the line. They would be led by a lieutenant, with an additional lieutenant as an assistant. In the 2nd Battalion, Captain Hosford assigned 12 men each from Companies E and H to this unit, and 13 men each from Companies F and G.³² Not only was the regiment learning how to fight, it was evolving to meet the threat and the need.

Chemical Weapons Attack

Up until this point, the 103rd had not received a significant amount of gas. That was about to change. From intelligence gathered from a prisoner on 6 May, 26th Division headquarters learned that the Germans were preparing a major gas shoot. Three days later, aerial reconnaissance photography showed possible emplacements for *minenwerfer*—German light artillery. But this intelligence was not relayed to division artillery until 10 May at six in the evening, well after the attack.³³ At approximately 0115 on 10 May, the Germans launched a mixed bombardment of heavy explosive and poison gas on the 103rd’s position around St. Agnant and Cote 322. Burbank noted:

Enemy threw over gas on the right of my sector at 1:15 o'clock, two projectiles were used, followed by a barrage of Whiz-bangs, lasting 20 minutes. Sgt. John A. Drottar and Pvt. Walter G. Garvin were seriously gased [sp]. Pvt. Andrew Molnar was gased [sp] also but was not taken sick till a few hours after.³⁴

The Germans sent over a high concentration of mustard and phosgene gas canisters, catching many men unawares. Projector gas attacks were particularly feared because of the suddenness with which they could happen, as it was with this one. The only warning came from the flash of the gas projectors landing and going off.³⁵ It was an “instantaneous cloud from projectors and minnenwerfers” noted the 1st Battalion’s Combat Log. “Dugout doors blown in. Absolutely no warning. Gas bombs landed

within 5 ft. of doors.”³⁶ Men donned gas masks and tried to take cover in gas-proof dugouts amidst the crash of falling shells. The ground and surrounding vegetation were completely scorched. “It was mustard, the kind that would burn you all over,” said Russell Adams. “It toasted the hell out of a lot of those fellows.”³⁷

The first bombardment was vicious, catching men in the open, choking them with the deadly gas as high explosives detonated around them. The log of the 1st Battalion left an excellent description of German drum-fire: “The sound was that like that of a grenade dump exploding or rapid fire of a M.G.”³⁸ German shells continued to hammer the 1st Battalion for hours, reducing trenches to mere muddy holes. The bombardment lasted from 0120 to 0630, per the regiment’s gas officer. Shrapnel shells pounded the position, augmenting the 300 shells from the projector attack. Most casualties came from the first barrage, with others caused in the aftermath by some of the men knocking off masks, going out of their heads in fright. Other less extreme casualties came from men overexerting themselves evacuating comrades.³⁹

The principal casualties were in Companies C and D, but the attack was felt all along the 1st Battalion’s lines. “I have never felt better in my life,” wrote Cpl. Albert Lavorgna from Company B one month later, “altho there was one while that I thought I had a whiff of gas and was going to be ill.”⁴⁰ Lavorgna would be killed in action on 20 July. Company B sent in two platoons to serve as stretcher bearers, loading the stricken soldiers onto ambulances that went in and out of the sector all morning and afternoon. Eventually, the whole company was ordered up to take over the line—but Bisbee would request that they, in turn, be relieved, as his casualties from exposure to gas mounted.⁴¹ The regiment’s gas officer remarked that, “The one fault to be found with Co. D seems to be that they refused to quit. Probably some men continued to work after they had been slightly gassed.” Respirators were worn over seven hours, the shelters were fanned out, and the ground disinfected.⁴²

US guns fired a retaliatory barrage that morning, the 37mm field guns attached to the 1st Battalion adding to the din. According to the regiment’s history, there were over 200 casualties in the regiment attributed to gas attacks, necessitating the evacuation of many of the frontline troops. At one point, there were only six automatic riflemen covering a company front; fortunately, the enemy did not follow the gas shoot up with an assault.⁴³ Twenty-one men were killed on 10 May, the overwhelming majority from exposure to poison gas.⁴⁴ Two days later, the number of dead had risen to 25.⁴⁵ It was the regiment’s deadliest day to this point.

This attack fell on Captain Hanson like a hammer blow. Already sensitive about his ability to lead a battalion, he felt as though his inability to prevent such an assault was a direct reflection on his leadership. Writing to his wife just after midnight on 11 May, he privately shared that he expected to be relieved of command. Putting into words how so many of the men of World War I felt about chemical weapons he wrote, "The pitiful part is, there is no way to fight back against gas." Hanson would not be relieved. Far from it, in fact, for on 29 May he was promoted to major and placed in permanent command of his battalion.⁴⁶

This attack was the regiment's first experience with mass casualties, and it showed the downsides to a community-based military organization. William and James Coffey of Nashua, New Hampshire were brothers in Company D. James had been employed at the paper mill in Nashua before the war, and had written a letter back to a childhood friend on 14 April where he remarked that he had seen "the world by foot...it is a whole lot different than walking through the roll dept. and riding down the elevator to the office four or five times a day." He apologized for "all the mistakes and bad writing for I am in an awful position at the present time."⁴⁷ James was killed in action on 10 May and his brother William was wounded. While recovering in the hospital William wrote home to his parents: "Just a word to let you know that I am well and happy once more. I leave for the front again, and glad that I am going back to join the boys. Don't worry about me, it's all in the chance. I have won a wounded strip on the right arm, and a couple more won't look bad . . . But, believe me, when I get back to the front, I'll have a bone to pick with the Germans."⁴⁸

The days following the attack were full of nervous energy from the 1st Battalion's sector. But on 12 May, the battalion's combat log noted "Day very quiet...Guess both sides realized it was 'Mother's Day.'"⁴⁹ On 16 May, a Western Union Telegram arrived to the home of Mrs. Catherine Coffey at 51 Broad Street in Nashua. In plain, stark letters it read: "Deeply regret to inform you that Pvt. James E Coffey Infantry is officially reported as killed in action May tenth McCain, the Adjutant General."⁵⁰ Eleven days later, the bereaved mother received a letter from a Maj. Charles Pierce, with the Graves Registration Service, A.E.F. It was the letter telling her where her son was buried: "Grave No. 49, American Cemetery, Vignot, France. It is the province of this Service to guard his grave and to see that, so far as the conditions of war may permit, it may never be lost."⁵¹ Further mail arrived in June, this time from the office of Major General Edwards, telling Catherine that her son was cited for gallantry at "C.R. St. Agnant, during the gas attack by the enemy." The extract of the general

order for bravery misspelled her son's last name. In September, the American Graves Registration wrote again, this time letting her know that flowers and a flag were placed by her son's grave: "It is a beautiful spot and some day we hope to tell you all about it; we know it is as you would have it." The letter was signed by two female volunteers. In stark contrast to that emotion-filled missive, Catherine received her son's personal effects around the same time, accompanied by a formulaic letter instructing her to sign and date the receipt and return it at once to the office from which it came. This was the process that family members went through when they lost a son, husband, or father. For some, it was too much. Catherine Coffey passed away shortly thereafter.⁵²

The same day that James Coffey's mother received official notice of his death, the *Lewiston Daily Sun*, one of the major central Maine newspapers, ran a report on the attack of 10 May. Cpl. Harry J. Lewis, "a very popular young man in Buckfield," was amongst the dead in Company D. He had served on the Border with his brother, who had been discharged due to disability before the regiment went overseas in 1917. Also killed in this attack was Pvt. Alfred Goodwin of South Hiram; his wife received news of his death on 16 May. He had been one of the very first men of the town to enlist in 1917. Sgt. John Drottar of Chisholm was listed as "severely wounded" in the 10 May attack. He had been one of the men recruiting for Company C back in 1917. In keeping with the anti-German sentiment sweeping the nation, the paper reported, "Sergt. Drottar's father is an Austrian by birth, but a loyal American in every other way." Of more recent immigration was Pvt. Mike Zaluti, from Russia. He had been employed in a box factory in Farmington before enlisting in Company K in 1917. He, too, was severely wounded in this attack. Cpl. Leon Emory—who had written to his parents back in January in the quiet times of Liffolle-Grand—was slightly wounded. He had been attending Farmington High School before the war and left school his senior year to enlist. Cpl. Daniel B. Gould was listed as slightly wounded. The newspaper affectionately termed him the "boy giant," as he stood six feet, seven inches, at the age of 19. He had tried to enlist in 1916 for the Mexican border mission, but being under age, his father would not let him. On the day war was declared—his 18th birthday—he was working on his father's farm in New Vineyard. When he heard the news, he dropped his hoe and walked the eight miles to Farmington to enlist. He was a star guard on the football team in Farmington before the war, the paper bragged. Tragically, the report listed in the paper was in error: Corporal Gould died of his wounds on 13 May.⁵³

The news was slowly making its way back to the small towns across Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire: their boys were in it now, and the cost was coming home in the form of these casualty reports. At this stage, each casualty notification was given with a full story of the soldier's life and family. As the summer campaigns began, and the list turned into a flood of names, this simple courtesy became another casualty of war. The *Lewiston Daily Sun* provided an admonition to its readers on 16 May:

But if you can eat it and smoke it and ride it out, then when you read the casualty lists, and read the names of Maine boys, are you going to chuckle at how you got ahead of the boys over there behind their backs? Keeping yourself filled up while they are war off there getting smashed up.⁵⁴

The home front was beginning to feel the hard hand of war.

On 30 May—Decoration Day—Pvt. William G. Houghton of Company D visited “a small cemetery where some of our boys are laid to rest and had military services in memory of those who fought for the flag in previous years.”⁵⁵ The young man was pensive, and as he would later write home to his mother in Nashua, he was thinking about the costs of war. “Since last writing I have had my first experience of a gas attack and it is awful,” he wrote. “It made me think of home and you for a while but I managed to keep cool and pulled through all right.” He had been cited for his role in the 10 May gas attack, though as he said, “I don’t know as I really did it as a lot of the boys did as much and more.” Soldiers found that their training and their support for each other could carry them through the most difficult situations.

Following the gas attack, the 103rd Infantry continued to patrol and conduct small raids to keep the Germans guessing as to what their next move was to be. One of these was on 20 May, which happened to be Sergeant Louis Day’s 21st birthday. “My first patrol was on my 21st birthday—a birthday party I will never forget,” he wrote. “Instead of the usual birthday presents the Boche sent unwelcome gifts of bullets and shells. But of course, that was the kind of birthday present one must expect at the front.”⁵⁶ Day was a part of a patrol from Headquarters Company that was sent out to cut an electrified cable in the town of Apremont which provided current to the barbed wire in front of the German positions. The patrol set off into No-Man’s-Land and managed to creep inside the German lines without being detected, thanks in large part to a US gas attack that hit part of the German position. Day and another man got into the town, where they spotted a sleeping sentry. Day quietly removed the bolt from

the German's rifle while the other man covered the drowsing sentry with his pistol. They soon found the cable and went to work at cutting it, frantically working against time. After ten minutes they had managed to sever a length of wire and hurriedly left Apremont, just as a German patrol was approaching. Day returned to the 103rd's lines—thankful that his birthday party hadn't ended in disaster.⁵⁷

The day before, Spaulding Bisbee wrote home trying to put into words some of the sights and sounds of the front. "A person gets very tired in mind and body," he wrote, "and you hate the sight of dugouts and trenches and the smell that goes with it all...Front line is a constant routine...Often a barrage is called for, and then all Hell breaks loose. The ground shakes as the guns gush out their streams of shells and iron. They seem like fiery monsters pawing up the ground in their impatience to get at the enemy ."⁵⁸ The front was beginning to wear on Bisbee, and he was not alone, as this sentiment undoubtedly burrowed into the minds of many others in the 103rd and across entire A.E.F.

The Xivray Raid

As May turned into June, 103rd Infantry leadership grew more concerned that they were going to be the target for the next large-scale German raid. The regiment was relieved from duties in C.R. St. Agnant and took over responsibilities for the Rambucourt Zone on 12-13 June. This consisted of manning a six-kilometer line running from Bouconville to Xivray to Seicheprey. Terrain proved to be difficult in this sector as well. A ridge ran along the Bouconville-Xivray Road, but it dipped down into swampy areas near Xivray-et-Marvoisin where ponds had developed. In front of these twin towns, the trenches formed several awkward turns to avoid the ponds. The main front itself was entered by means of numerous shallow ravines, which conversely offered cover and concealment to attacking enemy forces. The trenches themselves had degraded to muddy holes because of the low ground and the rainy season, and most had their sides caved in from continuous artillery bombardment.⁵⁹ Halfway from Bouconville to Xivray were two small rises—Hills 242 and 246—both filled with dugouts to make them strong points. Xivray was connected to Marvoisin, far forward of the main lines, by one trench, with a communication trench running towards the rear. From Marvoisin, the trenches ran towards Seicheprey. From Xivray, the trench line ran parallel to the stream Rupt de Mad, slanting back towards the town of Bouconville.⁶⁰

The Toul Sector was divided into centers of resistance, covering the entire front. Each of these was then broken down into sub-centers, to

create a defense in depth. The 3rd Battalion took over ownership of Center I, extending from Bouconville on the left to Xivray on the right, with Rambucourt as the central fallback position. The 2nd Battalion was posted to Center H, which extended from Marvoisin on the left to the edge of Seicheprey on the right. They also shared Rambucourt as a fallback position. Taken together, Center I and Center H comprised the Rambucourt Zone.⁶¹

Taking the lessons from Apremont, Seicheprey, and Flirey to heart, the 103rd Infantry changed its troop disposition of the companies of the 3rd and 2nd Battalions around Xivray-et-Marvoisin. On 13 June, one day after arriving in the sector, the 3rd Battalion evacuated Sub-Center I, the name for the trenches in front of Xivray which were approximately a hundred yards to the front of the town in an exposed position. They moved their troops to the support trench and strong points halfway between the towns and the Rupt de Mad.⁶² This way they could avoid the disaster that had befallen the exposed and cut-off Company C of the 102nd Infantry. Company L occupied two strong-point positions on the left. One, on Hill 242, outside Bouconville and close to the German front lines. The other on Hill 246 on their extreme right, overlooking the Xivray-Bouconville Road and halfway between those two towns. Company I, the right most company fell back to the support trench, halfway between Xivray and the Rupt de Mad.

The 2nd Battalion, 29th Engineers had maintained an observation post in Xivray since April, but due to heavy German shelling of the town it was now only occupied at certain times. These engineers were responsible for obtaining information on enemy artillery positions through flash spotting and range sounding, as well as maintaining the lines of communications along the 103rd's front. Their historian noted that for several days preceding the attack on 16 June, German artillery was focused on severing the wire cables. However, the engineers were undaunted and kept the cables up and running.⁶³

German Doctrine and Preparations

The Germans were using what are now termed “infiltration tactics” on the Western Front, based on a 1 January 1918 doctrinal publication entitled *The Attack in Position Warfare*.⁶⁴ It emphasized close infantry-artillery cooperation to quickly neutralize enemy positions with a short and furious artillery barrage, closely followed by an infantry assault that would overwhelm the dazed defenders.⁶⁵ The infantry assault was to consist of three waves of attackers, the first of which would bypass enemy strongpoints to

continue to push the attack deeper into enemy lines while the following waves would reduce the strongpoints. Many ascribed this tactic to General Oskar von Hutier because of his successful employment of the tenets during the Spring Offensives of 1918. However, there is no evidence to suggest that he played a role in the development of the doctrine.⁶⁶

To carry out these infiltration attacks, the German army assembled *sturmbattallion* (storm battalions) composed of hand-picked and well-trained *Sturmtruppen* (storm troops). Each German field army was assigned one storm battalion.⁶⁷ These elite soldiers developed a reputation on the battlefield. As one German soldier wrote, “The men of the storm battalions were treated like football stars. They lived in comfortable quarters, they travelled to the ‘playing ground’ in buses, they did their jobs and disappeared again.”⁶⁸ Storm battalions worked to train up *stosstruppen* (assault troops) in each division. When a raid was planned, elements of the storm battalion would be brought to that sector and conduct training with the division’s assault troops, engineers, infantry, and artillery. The initial wave would consist of infantry to identify enemy positions as well as engineers to destroy wire obstacles. This would be followed by storm and assault troops to shock the enemy into surrendering and flow over and around defensive positions. The third wave consisted of the storm troopers heavy weapons—such as flamethrowers—and engineers to reduce remaining enemy strongholds.⁶⁹

From their position on Mont Sec, the Germans could easily observe the movement of American troops away from Xivray on 13 June through their powerful telescopes. It is probable that they determined to strike the 103rd here because of the natural tactical advantages granted to them by the geography around the twin towns; a small raid had already netted prisoners from the 101st Infantry back in early April at this exact spot.⁷⁰ German patrols investigated the American trenches in front of the town and found them vacant prior to the raid. An additional 80 troops from the *Sturmbataillon* 14—the same unit that provided storm troopers for the Seicheprey attack—were moved into the area prior to the attack. At the same time, approximately 300 *Stosstruppen* from the 36th *Landwehr* Regiment of the 5th *Landwehr* Division rehearsed three days for the attack alongside the 80 *Sturmtruppen*, 80 troops from *Pionier Kompany* 16, and additional troops of the *Kgl. Bayerisches Reserve Regiment Nr. 22* (22nd Bavarian Reserve Regiment).⁷¹ According to reports from prisoners, the rehearsals—complete with *Flammenwerfer* (flamethrowers), MP-18 light machine guns, and Model 08 heavy machine guns—were conducted out of sight of the American lines and smoke was used for

realism for the final rehearsal. The German command titled the operation *Brotausgabe* (bread ration) and scheduled the raid for the early morning hours of 16 June.⁷²

For artillery support, the Germans could count on the fire of approximately 15 batteries in the vicinity, as well as two long-range railroad guns firing massive 210mm shells.⁷³ Observation of artillery fire was obtained through excellent observation positions on Mont Sec and flyovers by airplanes. As on the Chemin de Dames, “Enemy planes do about as they wish over this sector,” noted the ever-frustrated Lieutenant Burbank.⁷⁴

On the night of 15 June, the above mentioned troops plus stretcher bearers and other support personnel moved into the area on trucks and then advanced on foot to their various points of departure. The operation was under the overall control of Major Von Mackensen, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 36th *Landwehr* Regiment who had between 450 to 590 troops under his command.⁷⁵ Once at their points of departure, the assault force split into three columns: one, containing the storm troops, most of the pioneers, and two groups of infantry, was to attack Xivray from the west. The second, consisting mostly of the 36th *Landwehr*, was to bypass the village from the west, circle around, and attack from the south. The third, also mostly 36th *Landwehr*, would assault from the east.⁷⁶

US Troop Dispositions

Beginning on 14 June, the 103rd’s front was composed of Company L on the left around Bouconville, Company I behind Xivray, Company E to the right of Marvoisin, and Company F holding the right of the line near Seicheprey. In Company L’s sector, they maintained a platoon each in positions 242 and 246, with two platoons in support in Bouconville, two kilometers to the southwest of Xivray. Rambucourt also contained a section of the Stokes mortar battery and the 37mm gun battery.⁷⁷ Company I held two platoons forward in the support trench behind Xivray, with the other two platoons in support in Rambucourt, about a kilometer and a half to the rear. Small outposts were maintained in Marvoisin as it was too far forward to risk exposing a larger force.⁷⁸ Machine guns from Company D, 103rd Machine Gun Battalion added their firepower to the front line positions of the Rambucourt Zone, with their guns interspersed throughout the infantry’s positions.⁷⁹ The infantry were supported by the field guns of the 51st Field Artillery Brigade which could deliver 75mm and 155mm shells on enemy targets. All told, approximately 350 US soldiers occupied the line running from Rambucourt to Xivray-et-Marvoisin to just outside Seicheprey, and the surrounding outposts.⁸⁰ If the forward platoons were

attacked, it would take at least 15 minutes for reinforcements to arrive, even in the best of conditions.

The Preliminary Artillery Barrage

On the night of 15 June, the outposts of Company L in Sub-Center I2 noted increased German activity in their front. The Germans were firing illumination rockets at regular intervals throughout the night.⁸¹ On the right, 1st Platoon, Company E established outposts at 2100 which were about 300 yards northeast of Marvoisin. At around 0130 on 16 June, these outposts identified a German patrol armed with at least one machine gun which was attempting to infiltrate Marvoisin. Company E sent word of this to an ambush patrol from Company G which was operating in No-Man's Land in Center H. This patrol engaged the Germans, who beat a hasty retreat, leaving behind one man wounded, in front of 1st Platoon, Company E. As the ambush patrol entered US lines at 0200, the patrol leader informed 2nd Lieut. Allen Mathis that there was a wounded German nearby. Eager to bag a prisoner, Mathis then led a patrol from his 1st Platoon, Company E into Marvoisin and captured the prisoner around 0300. This patrol then moved to Xivray with their prisoner, trying to get him to a first aid station, and then to Rambucourt.⁸² Unbeknownst to them, they had been the first in what would become a series of disruptions to the planned German assault.

Between the lines, the three columns of German assault troops were now moving into position. The plans called for the columns to move within 500 meters of the US lines and then halt until the artillery preparation began. This was to be at 0350. After 10 minutes of artillery preparations, the columns would begin their assault. By 0445, they were to have smashed the US positions in Xivray and the surrounding area, seized prisoners, and then fallen back to their own lines. Fifty men—with three supporting machine guns—were detailed to remain in Xivray and hold the town until nightfall.⁸³

At approximately 0315 on 16 June, US artillery observers—from either Battery A or C, 101st Field Artillery—reported what appeared to be a working party northwest of Xivray-et-Marvoisin. 103rd Infantry headquarters reported that there were no working parties or patrols out and so the US 75mm field guns laid down a barrage.⁸⁴ They caught the first concentrations of German troops assembling for the assault. This was the second disruption to the German plan, and the most significant. At 0320, the German artillery opened fire—early, because of the American shelling—registering on the forward American positions, striking lines of

communication, and hitting both Bouconville and Rambucourt. From the targeting of German artillery fire, it was evident that they knew where all US troops were positioned. High explosives, shrapnel, and gas targeted the American front lines, as well as battery positions, which noted that their positions were “shelled very heavily.” But this did little to cause the US artillery fire to slacken.⁸⁵

For the infantry, however, the barrage was another story. The trenches shook and echoed with the blasts. The outposts in Marvoisin and the communications trench near Xivray fared poorly as the high explosive rounds dug into the earth and tore into exposed positions. In fact, of the 28 fatalities that the 103rd Infantry’s regimental history lists from 16 June, all but seven were from shell fire. Several sources from both within the division and without attest that this was the most severe bombardment received by US troops to that date.⁸⁶ “It can be stated with authority that it was the heaviest barrage the Germans put over while the Americans occupied the Toul sector,” wrote a soldier from the 29th Engineers after the war. The German 210mm howitzers targeted Rambucourt, the massive shells caving in dugouts and destroying buildings, bringing down a rain of bricks and plaster in a shattering crash.⁸⁷ Enemy fire was most destructive around Marvoisin, causing the outposts and machine gun positions which had no dugouts to shelter in to suffer greatly.⁸⁸ Pvt. Frank E. Lowther in Company I, bearing the brunt of the storm south of Xivray, wrote that the fire was so fierce that “I thought they were going to level the small village off so it would be flat.”⁸⁹

From the outset, leaders in 246 and outside Xivray gave the orders for the men to take shelter in dugouts, with sentries posted at the doors to call them to their positions as soon as it began to lift. This undoubtedly saved many lives.⁹⁰ Almost immediately the barrage cut the communication lines from the 2nd and 3rd Battalions’ headquarters to their forward companies, necessitating all communication to be carried by runners.⁹¹ In addition to the artillery fire, at around 0330, a German plane bombed Boucq, where the 26th Division headquarters was located, as well as the towns of Royau-Meix and Juy-sous-les-Cotes, where both infantry brigades had their headquarters.⁹² The fire ranged along the whole front line; several artillery rounds struck the field kitchen of Company E, destroying it completely—much to the annoyance of the hungry Doughboys.⁹³

Company E’s two forward platoons were split between the outposts in and around Marvoisin and the main line of resistance about 200 yards south of the town. Cpl. Clarence Dunlap had, at the beginning of the bombardment, sent one man from his squad out to an advanced listening

post in Marvoisin to keep an eye on routes the Germans might use to infiltrate. As the barrage increased in intensity, Dunlap left cover and crawled out amidst the maelstrom to join his man in the listening post so that he would not be alone and fearful. Both men were wounded; Dunlap died of his wounds the following day.⁹⁴ In the same company, Cpl. Ralph Mellow was struck by shrapnel and lost consciousness as he was tending to the wounds of a comrade. Sgt. Harold McElhiney's ammunition belt was struck by a fragment of hot shrapnel, causing his hand grenades and ammunition clips to explode—killing him instantly. Sgt. Elwood Allen was hit in the head by shrapnel as well, the metal ball tearing through his steel helmet, killing him.⁹⁵ Captain Healy noted, "Throughout this action the Officers and men showed conspicuous bravery by remaining at their posts in spite of heavy casualties although no cover was available. The trench we occupied being a wide almost straight communicating trench paralleling the enemies front line."⁹⁶

The preliminary enemy barrage lasted from 20 to 30 minutes, which was longer than the ten minutes initially allotted by German planners, undoubtedly because of the swift response of American gunners. At 0355, gas rockets were spotted coming from the German lines.⁹⁷ This was to have been the signal for the German artillery to open fire, prisoners later stated, but the alertness of US observers had caused the Germans to open fire early. At 0430, US infantry in 246 called for an artillery barrage to their front, possibly called in by a forward observer from the 102nd Field Artillery, Lieut. William B. George. His Distinguished Service Cross citation states that, "During a violent bombardment, when the roads were being swept by heavy shell fire, Lieutenant George exposed himself to enemy fire for the purpose of obtaining the desired information."⁹⁸ Regardless of who called it in, this American barrage caught the attacking German infantry in the open once again, disrupting and checking their advance at the outset.⁹⁹ At the same time, the twelve Hotchkiss machine guns from Company D of the 103rd Machine Gun Battalion began laying down a machine gun barrage on their fronts.¹⁰⁰

American Machine Guns

The idea of a machine gun barrage seemed foreign to some in the American Expeditionary Force, since most thought of the machine gun as a direct fire weapon. The proponent for this tactic in the A.E.F. came from Col. John Henry Parker in the 26th Division, based on his experiences in the Spanish-American War in 1898. At Kettle and San Juan Hills, it was Parker's detachment of Gatling guns that delivered incredibly effective barrages of rapid fire that kept the Spaniards' heads down, enabling US

troops—including Theodore Roosevelt’s “Rough Riders”—to advance and take their positions.

After the war, Parker became a major proponent of the machine gun. At the outbreak of World War I, he was made colonel and given command of the 102nd Infantry Regiment. During the 26th Division’s train-up at Neufchateau, Parker drilled the machine gun battalions and companies in the different ways that their guns could be used. He advocated for the machine gun barrage—a mass of fire coming from dozens of guns on one concentrated area that would create a killing field—and also the use of the machine gun for indirect fire, lobbing rounds into the enemy trenches. He rapidly became known as John “Machine Gun” Parker.¹⁰¹ His instruction showed its worth at Xivray.

The German Troops Attack

Despite the unexpected concentrations of artillery and machine gun fire, the three German columns pressed forward to their attacks. Artillery fire on their objectives lifted at 0400, as planned. Coming out of the early morning mist, the first waves struck American outposts in Xivray and Marvoisin, and the communication trench between the towns. They were surprised by the American gunners who had stuck to their positions through the barrage and who now opened up on their attackers.¹⁰² Samuel Dana and Charles Lola had refused to evacuate their advanced post in Company I when the bombardment began, and having survived it, engaged the Germans near Xivray first with automatic rifle fire. This temporarily slowed the first column.¹⁰³ In the northwest corner of Marvoisin, there was a machine gun emplacement from Company D, 103rd Machine Gun Battalion manned by Cpl. Donald F. Peck, and Privates John Flynn, Ben Parker, Alex Robertson, and Newport Wycoff. The attacking Germans from the 36th *Landwehr* Regiment placed a machine gun on a nearby knoll and began firing on this position. Eventually, only Flynn and Wycoff remained unhurt.¹⁰⁴ Wycoff dropped, shot through the thighs, and Flynn was left, working the gun until it jammed. Wycoff urged Flynn to leave and get help. Flynn ran back through Marvoisin and found Lieut. Roger Williams from Rhode Island, commanding Company I, 103rd Infantry, in the communications trench. Flynn informed Williams that the Germans were on the edge of the town.¹⁰⁵

Over on the left, an enemy column, composed of men from the 36th *Landwehr* Regiment, moved around Xivray attempting to get between Xivray and Bouconville to cut off the US troops around Xivray. “They came on in small groups with light machine guns,” Company L report-

ed.¹⁰⁶ They were confronted by Pvt. George F. Foster of Company D, 103rd Machine Gun Battalion, the only unwounded man of his machine gun team after the German bombardment. His gun was situated between 246 and Company I's position behind Xivray. He opened on the enemy when they were within range, cutting down dozens of German soldiers and blunting their attack. Lieut. Irvine E. Doane, commanding Company L, sent a squad to help Foster. These additional soldiers rallied around his position and formed a new machine gun crew. His actions single-handedly stopped the envelopment of US lines around Bouconville—putting into action what French General Petain had said in April, that a machine gun taken out of action is not lost in vain if it is lost at the last moment.¹⁰⁷

Additional Germans tried to enter 246, but were driven off by fire from machine guns, rifles, and automatics. Eleven dead German soldiers were left hanging in the wire, including one officer. German artillery fire concentrated on Bouconville at 0410, especially the routes to and from the support positions to the main lines. This interdiction fire continued until 1000. Notwithstanding this barrage, Lieutenant Doane rushed forward to 246 to assess the situation. Realizing what was happening, he sprinted back to Bouconville—again through the bursting shells—to meet with Major Southard. Grabbing the reserve platoon under Lieut. Clinton V. Pickering, Doane led the way back to 246 where the platoon went into line between 246 and the left of Company I, sealing the line around Xivray. The ever-present Doane then went to meet with Lieutenant Williams.¹⁰⁸

Lieutenant Williams was meeting with Pvt. John Flynn, who had alerted him to the threat coming from the right.¹⁰⁹ Doane and Williams agreed to carry out a tactic that had been devised by the French in that sector and implemented for American forces by Brigadier General Cole, their brigade commander: an automatic counterattack. This necessitated that the reserve from Company L be brought over from Bouconville on the left. However, shells were still falling all around their position and all the communication lines had been cut. There was nothing for it; Doane ran back through the curtain of high explosives to get the reserve platoon, dodging blasts and feeling the overpressure wash over him.¹¹⁰

At 0555, runners from Company I reported to the regimental command post that Germans were spotted entering Xivray—this was a late report. This German column, made up of the deadly *Sturmtruppen*, struck just after 0400. Opposite them were two platoons of infantry from Company I in the communications trench between Xivray and Marvoisin, who had hunkered down under the enemy bombardment, but remained in place to stop any attackers. As the enemy barrage shifted to the right, the infan-

trymen spotted the Germans coming through a break in the wire and moving to the left. The infantrymen opened fire with their rifles at any targets that they could see.¹¹¹ A German machine gun, placed nearby, sputtered to life, spraying the trench and pinning the men down.¹¹²

Several of the men from Company I were from Nashua, New Hampshire, including Pvt. Amedee Deschaines of French-Canadian ancestry. Deschaines was an automatic rifleman in his platoon, wielding the Chauchat automatic rifle. From his position inside the trench, he could not see the enemy; nor could he support his weapon on the slippery mud that composed the lip of the trench. In frustration, Deschaines jumped above the lip of the trench, fully exposing himself to the enemy. Raising his Chauchat to his shoulder, he proceeded to engage nearby Germans with accurate and deadly fire while his comrades tossed him new magazines of ammunition every time he ran out. In total, he fired 42 magazines of ammunition, each one holding 20 rounds.¹¹³ Emboldened by his bravery, his fellow soldiers crawled out of the trench and picked off Germans with rifle fire. This sustained volume of fire, and the ferocity with which Deschaines delivered it, broke the German assault at this point and they retreated back into Xivray. "Down went the Boches like mowing hay," remembered Private Lowther, "Our men fought like lions and we came out on top."¹¹⁴ Deschaines would receive the *Croix de Guerre* for his valor on 9 November 1918, a month after he was killed in a gas attack.¹¹⁵ A park in Nashua bears his name.

American Counterattack

As each of the attacking columns was blunted in the early morning fog, the lieutenants in command of the two companies were readying their counterattack. It is telling that the officers did not wait for instructions from their battalion or regimental headquarters, as the official regimental report of the action indicates that updates came very slowly from the forward trenches. Lieutenant Williams was already making his own adjustments. He detached a squad of men with Private Flynn to go retake what he presumed was a captured machine gun. The squad followed the trench back into the town to try to flank the Germans at Flynn's original position. However, the Germans had moved the captured gun back to their own machine gun position, and the surprised Doughboys emerged from their trench to find themselves right next to the Boche machine gun nest. They immediately rushed the gun, chasing off the Germans and shooting several; thus, taking two guns.¹¹⁶

In the meantime, Lieutenant Doane arrived back at 246 with the reserve and took up position on the parapet, from which spot he could easily

see everything happening on the broad plain between Bouconville and Xivray. From here, he spotted a small party of Germans in the open, approximately 250 yards north of the Bouconville-Xivray Road. He ordered his men to open fire and called for volunteers to go with him to capture these Germans. Lieutenant Pickering, Sergeant Sullivan, and Privates Alva White, Alfred A. LePage, Wilmor Bradford, Emmet Sloan, and Anthony Simmons all volunteered.¹¹⁷

Together, they went over the top from Hill 246, almost immediately capturing a German medic, who was sent back under the care of Sergeant Sullivan. Just north of the road, the party captured a German officer. The officer, a lieutenant, was irate: “Your men don’t know how to fight,” he complained to Doane. “They had no business to be where I was; they had come through a German barrage to get there and they might have been wiped out.”¹¹⁸ The officer was sent back under the watchful eyes of Private Sloane. Proceeding further, Doane spotted a group of four Germans carrying a stretcher, trying to get to a line of old trenches. Doane had one of his men open on them with an automatic rifle, pinning them down, while Doane and Pickering sprinted to the capture them. The officers discovered that in addition to the wounded German on the stretcher, the enemy had Company I’s Pvt. Joseph E. Hamlin, who had been wounded, captured, and was being compelled to walk and crawl back to the German lines. They placed Hamlin on the stretcher and returned to 246 with their prisoners.¹¹⁹ With Doane’s aggressive actions, the German raid to capture prisoners was brought to complete and utter failure.

Lieutenant Doane understandably gained quite a reputation that day. He and his exploits at Xivray are mentioned in the 103rd’s history, the State of Maine’s Adjutant General’s Report, and three division histories. His men dubbed him “Devil Doane” for his bravery and courage in the face of enemy fire that day.¹²⁰ He was also recognized by the French government with two decorations of the *Croix de Guerre* and by the US with the Silver Star citation.¹²¹ Doane would be wounded in the July offensive, but returned to the fight by September.

Having checked the German assault, the Doughboys began mopping-up operations in and around Xivray. The fighting was in some cases hand-to-hand. Sgt. Vern C. Boutillier from Oakfield of Company L caught a team of enemy soldiers in the open and attempted to engage them with his Chauchat, which jammed. Undeterred, he drew his bayonet and charged them, scattering the group and capturing their machine gun. With this he held his position until the rest of his platoon caught up to him. Lieut. Roger Williams spotted three German soldiers in the ruined streets, one of

whom was carrying a flamethrower. Firing on them with his pistol, his bullets ignited the tank of the dreadful weapon which exploded, killing all three Germans.¹²² Pvt. Ervin Coffin of Company I was wounded in Xivray, but refused to be evacuated and “continued to fight with his platoon until the end of the action.”¹²³

At 0723, artillery observers reported to 103rd regimental headquarters that “the Boche were leaving Xivray, carrying stretchers.” The artillery immediately laid down a box barrage to catch them from returning unscathed.¹²⁴ It was this barrage that an American soldier commented to a reporter about after the fight, saying, “We would have driven them clear to the Rhine if it hadn’t been for our own barrage. But,” he added, retrospectively, “it got them.”¹²⁵ Half an hour later, the observers reported the last of the Germans withdrawing from Xivray. At the same time, the regimental headquarters began receiving reports from the line battalions and companies.¹²⁶ Because the first German barrage had knocked out telephone communications, updates to regimental headquarters had been slow.

Headquarters listed their first direct report from Xivray at 0835: “Trenches and posts knocked in—several dugouts stoven in—will put men in good ones—have breakfasted them—will maintain daytime observation posts—Boche Red Cross men are carrying back the wounded now—they are pretty busy.”¹²⁷ It took until 1230 to receive a message from the company commander in Xivray, probably Lieutenant Williams: “Have not at any time been out of Xivray except in front—we had not information of box barrage in time to use it [i.e., to use it to pursue the enemy with more than a few soldiers]—we got many Boche as they tried to come in but none entered our line—a big group came up Bouconville road and set up their machine gun, but we handled them and have captured two of their guns [Private Flynn’s actions]—my men are now searching for wounded...Boche Red Cross have carried back many wounded to Maison Blanche.”¹²⁸

Because of the time it took for reports to reach regimental headquarters, it is hard to ascertain just how long the fight lasted. All sources agree that the artillery began around 0320. Reports differ on when the German infantry attacked, but it was most probably sometime between 0400-0430. The action itself only lasted a few hours, four at most. Similarly, it is hard to estimate German casualties. As was customary at the time, Allied newspapers exaggerated German losses. The supplemental regimental report filed on 23 June stated that the 103rd had buried 47 dead German soldiers to that point, and could see six bodies in their immediate front, with many more in the tall grass in “No-Man’s Land,” but added, “We have made no effort to bury these as it would unduly expose our men.”¹²⁹ Estimates

of German losses run from the 53 killed reported above to a possible 70. Hundreds would have been wounded by American artillery and machine gun fire. The 103rd also reported taking 11 prisoners—some reports state ten, and others 13—including one officer, some of whom were wounded. The regiment captured five MG08 machine guns, one Hotchkiss machine gun (Flynn's), three flame projectors, one smoke producer, one pair of wire cutters, and "a quantity of small arms, small arms ammunition and pioneer equipment."¹³⁰ Near 246, Doane found some improvised breaching equipment that the Germans had left behind: "6 or 7 machines for blowing up wire—made of wood on outside 5" x 5" 10 to 12 feet long."¹³¹ The raiders had never even had a chance to breach the wire.

As the men from the front lines began to be relieved and come back through Bouconville, Lieutenant McGrew noted "they were not singing, neither were they bragging; but they were certainly a happy lot." They came in with their prisoners, looking tired, but elated. Many "displayed notches in their rifle stocks," others helped the wounded in on litters and or supported them as they "puffed at cigarettes and grinned reassuringly at their friends as they went by."¹³²

Reprisal Barrage

About two hours after the attack ended, the Germans resumed their furious bombardment of Xivray-et-Marvoisin, Bouconville, Rambucourt, Boucq, and the surrounding towns, adding more American casualties. Frustrated at coming away empty-handed, the Germans were intent on punishing the Americans who had so decisively defeated them. Xivray was again torn to bits with high explosive and gas shells. Sides of the trenches crumbled and collapsed under the bombardment.¹³³ Shells hammered Bouconville, where two Salvation Army girls calmly made doughnuts in a bomb-proof across from the 3rd Battalion's aid station, as they had been doing all through the morning. One 210 millimeter shell completely destroyed the flower garden that Major Southard had inherited from some French officers¹³⁴ Division headquarters at Boucq was forced to displace to Trondes some four kilometers away because of the ferocity of the shelling.¹³⁵ As the shells were dropping in Boucq, a Doughboy was standing near a mule that took a direct hit from a round, blowing it to bits. A Y.M.C.A. man rushed to help the soldier up, asking if he was hurt. "Hell no," replied the shaken soldier, "but you ought to see that mule."¹³⁶

Less comically, the Reverend Walter F. Danker, chaplain in the 104th Infantry, was killed during this bombardment. Col. George H. Shelton, commander of the 104th Infantry, was wounded in the cheek by a shell

fragment; this same shell killed his orderly just as the men had stepped out of their quarters to go to church.¹³⁷ About 48 shells per minute of all calibers up to 210mm fell on the town of Beaumont between 0630 and 0900, and then again at noon.¹³⁸ While Pvt. Howard Crosby and a lieutenant from the Machine Gun Company were “making a reconnoiter of our new positions...a high explosive landed near us, knocking me out and covering us both with dirt. While unconscious, several gas shells exploded nearby and I inhaled considerable gas. The next thing that I remember was coming to in the 101st Fld. Hospital in Toul, on the morning of the 17th.”¹³⁹

American Losses are Felt at Home

Losses within the 103rd Infantry from this action were 28 killed in action, 36 seriously wounded, 60 slightly wounded, and 47 gassed. The 103rd Machine Gun Battalion suffered two killed and 11 seriously wounded. The majority of the wounds and deaths were from the artillery fire.¹⁴⁰ Casualties continued for three days after the battle from sustained artillery bombardment.¹⁴¹ Losses were particularly heavy in Company I, where three of the Nashua, New Hampshire boys were killed, all three by shell fire. One was Pvt. Sarkis H. Semonian, a Turkish immigrant of Armenian descent.¹⁴² Another was Cpl. Fred Kearns, who had written home to his wife on 9 June:

But cheer up, Bess, me and you for a little home of our own and better days are coming sometime if an old German or ‘Square Head’ don’t get me...well, Bess, we couldn’t all have weak hearts because some of us had to pass and help out Uncle Sam...Love and kisses to you, and good luck, and God bless you. From Your Little Hubby.¹⁴³

Also killed was Pvt. Eugene Chagnon from Company I, who had written home to his sister Maude in Nashua on 4 June, “It is pretty tame in this sector, but then there is never any telling what the morrow will bring.”¹⁴⁴ Pvt. Gilbert Mitchell, also of Nashua, wrote home to his parents from the hospital, to let them know that although he was wounded, he was okay:

They tell me that I will be sent home and all that, but I am going back into the fight if there is a possible chance. I didn’t come over here to quit with the game just starting. It would seem like heaven to home, but then, I have seen so much death and suffering in the past ten months, I have become immune to any emotions connected with losing my friends and com-

rades. It is nearly a year since I bid you goodbye and made me feel a bit sad, but I try to remain cheerful, for sadness is not good for anyone here. Love to all my friends.¹⁴⁵

The first sergeant of Company H, Arthur Castonguay of Waterville, Maine—who had shared his company’s rations with the French on the Chemin des Dames—died two days after the fight of wounds received in the battle. He had been wounded early in the morning but refused to be evacuated until the rest of the wounded had been taken care of first. His friends and family erected a small monument to him in his home town.¹⁴⁶ Pvt. Charles Lola of Company I was killed at Xivray, one of the few to be struck down by enemy machine gun fire; he received the Croix de Guerre for his bravery.¹⁴⁷ His citation stated, “He defended an advanced post with admirable courage and tenacity until he was killed. By his resistance he greatly contributed to breaking the enemy advance on the western part of the village.”¹⁴⁸ Samuel J. Dana was seriously wounded at Xivray. Lola and Dana were both part of the group of Passamaquoddy Indians from Pleasant Point, Maine.¹⁴⁹ One month to the day prior, the coastal Maine newspaper *Belfast Republican Journal* had written of the “Patriotic Maine Indians: The Passamaquoddy Indians have 22 men in the United States service, most of the young tribesmen being in Company I, 103rd Infantry, now in France. A service flag with 22 stars hangs in front of St. Anne’s Church, in the Indian Reservation at Pleasant Point, Eastport.”¹⁵⁰ The “Patriotic Maine Indians” were paying a disproportionate price in blood.

Pvt. Earl Boyd of Company I wrote home to his parents in Calais, Maine, “I have been on the front that you have read so much about and which used to be known as the American sector. We lost our first comrade there, Sergeant Mitchell of Eastport [Sgt. Fred Mitchell, killed in action 27 April 1918]...Perhaps you read about the scrap at Xyvray [sic]...It was our company the Germans attacked early one morning and we drove them back. We lost some men, but nothing compared to the Germans, and we captured a lot of prisoners. That was the time Fred Sherman was killed.”¹⁵¹ Pvt. Fred Sherman had a brother in Company I, Pvt. Harry Sherman. One month later, Harry would be wounded during the Aisne-Marne Offensive, dying of his wounds on 22 July. The Calais, Maine American Legion Post would bear the name “The Sherman Brothers Post.”

One of those killed in the bombardment of Xivray was Cpl. Stanley L. Buck in Company K. A mill worker, he was his mother’s only son—and since her husband had passed, he was the only person left in her life. He took care of her at the home he had purchased for them in New Vineyard,

Maine. His death affected her deeply, as evidenced by this poem she wrote after the war:

I loved you enough to give you up –
Yet it followed after, this love of mine,
Like a convoy ship across the sea,
To keep you safe on the battle line,
Like the trusty rifle in your hand
To go with you through No-Man's Land.
For love never faileth lad, you know,
And I loved you enough to let you go.¹⁵²

Each death was surrounded by a myriad of letters from those on the front lines and those back at home. An example of this type of correspondence, and the way that people dealt with the death of a loved one, can be found in the death of Arthur Stowell. Musician Arthur John Stowell was one of the University of Maine band boys who had joined up in the 103rd Infantry Band. During the early morning fighting in Xivray, he volunteered to become a litter carrier and rushed into the town. As he was moving a wounded soldier onto the litter, he himself was severely wounded by shrapnel in his legs and back. As recorded in a letter to Stowell's parents from Pvt. Hastings of the Medical Detachment, "he volunteered to go out in no man's land to carry back a wounded man on a litter. There he received his wounds and because another man in the Infantry was more severely wounded than he, refused to be carried back until the other comrade had been evacuated to the rear. In other words, he sacrificed himself for the sake of another man, regardless of his station, command, or rank. What a noble, Christ-like deed."¹⁵³ Stowell died of his wounds later that afternoon. On 12 July, his parents in Freeport, Maine received the dreaded Western Union telegram: "Deeply regret to inform you that it is officially reported that Musician Arthur J. Stowell, Infantry died June Sixteenth from wounds received in action."¹⁵⁴

However, the family was already aware. Arthur's brother Raymond was in the Medical Detachment of the 103rd, and he sent a heartfelt letter home on 19 June. "I did not see him before he died," Raymond wrote, "but I have talked with all who did. All say he suffered hardly at all...May God comfort you as He has me and may your return letters be without bitterness or pity but just pride and love."¹⁵⁵ Although his words seem calm, Raymond was struggling with his brother's death and his own inability to

prevent it. Writing home on 27 June, Raymond tried to reassure his family that he was okay and that his brother's death had not been in vain: "He is not gone from us for his memory is always with us, a separation of a few years of his physical presence. I am conscious of his influence every minute. I act just as if he were with me and I know he approves...I went to the front where Artie met his death, which shows I am not a coward, doesn't it."¹⁵⁶

A letter on 20 June from Bandleader Harold Currier gave the family his deepest sympathies:

We have, sometimes, talked over such things as our 'chances,' and I can remember Artie's saying 'I'd rather 'pass out' in the middle of a big artillery barrage.' So had all of us. So many came over here and die of disease back of the lines; others are gassed, or so badly wounded that the of their lives as well as their bodies are crippled—all that seems worse to me than this—the finest end that a man may have, literally giving his life for others. I hope if my time comes I may go the same way.¹⁵⁷

This was followed two days later by a letter from Lieut. Donald Metcalf, commander of Headquarters Company: "Such conduct as exhibited by your son upholds the best traditions of our beloved New England, our State, of our service, of the American soldier, and is an example for all to follow. An example that will bring this great struggle to close for God and right."¹⁵⁸ A letter from Maine Senator Frederick Hale arrived in July, expressing his condolences. Senator Hale noted that, "I have read with deep feeling the account of your son's splendid heroism in refusing to allow the stretcher bearers to take him back to the American lines until a wounded comrade had been moved to a place of safety," and that "his name will be held in honor for all time by the people of his state and country."¹⁵⁹

Four days after the fight, Pvt. Frank Whittemore of Company F died of wounds received in action. Company F's commander Lieut. Huntington W. Frothingham wrote Whittemore's mother about the details of her son's death:

Company F was holding the front line during a German attack on Xivray on June 16. Preceding the attack the Germans shelled our position heavily and a shell fragment wounded your son slightly in the ankle, and as he was binding it another shell struck directly behind him. A portion of the shell entered the back of his head after smashing his steel helmet.

He was rendered unconscious immediately and stayed so until his death four days later.¹⁶⁰

As with Nashua, the fight at Xivray brought the cost of the war home in a very real way to small towns across New England. The tiny logging town of Patten, Maine, numbering only several hundred citizens, lost one killed and one wounded at Xivray, both in the same family. The town of Skowhegan mourned two killed in action and worried for news of the six men of their town listed as wounded. Waterville also learned that two of their sons had died in the bombardment at Xivray. In all, the action and following artillery barrages around Xivray from 16-20 June took the lives of 16 Mainers, and wounded or seriously wounded 63 more.¹⁶¹

German Reaction

Publicly, the Germans had little to say of the affair at Xivray. The Army Group of von Gallwitz reported of 16 June 1918 that, “Between the Meuse and the Moselle we inflicted losses on the American by an attack on both sides of Xivray and destroyed parts of their positions.”¹⁶² However, their internal after action review reveals much more. Compiled on 22 June, the report stated,

It was again proven that the American Infantry employed on the Western Theater is an adversary that battles well in close fighting and must not be undervalued. The Americans are masters in employing machine guns. They know very well to disguise their positions and do not hesitate to let our scouting patrols through their covered lines, in order to not disclose their important strongholds and defense nests. That was the reason why our many and deeply penetrating patrols did not succeed to gain a useful picture of the hostile deployment and force array.¹⁶³

The assault failed, writes the author, because of the US efficient use of machine guns. Before the assault even began in earnest, two *Sturm-
abteilungen* (assault detachments) were annihilated due to the machine gun barrage of the 103rd Machine Gun Battalion. “Machine Gun” Parker’s techniques had been vindicated on the battlefield. The report goes on to state that the Americans’ defensive techniques resembled those of the Germans—an elastic, front-line defense with an automatic counterattack—and so future attacks would need to anticipate successive lines of defense with hidden machine gun positions.¹⁶⁴ In all, the report shows that the Germans had greatly underestimated the tactical abilities of the Americans and had been defeated soundly.¹⁶⁵

After this action, the 5th *Landwehr* Division never again displayed the initiative that they had against the 26th Division in the spring of 1918. Much of it would be destroyed in the autumn American offensives, where the 103rd Infantry took an entire battalion captive in September.¹⁶⁶ One thing was notable in the German account: no mention was made of prisoners. Prior to this, the Germans had been able to take prisoners in their raids with relative ease, even if it were just one or two. But at Xivray, the 103rd had denied them this expected outcome, and earned its title as “never having had a man captured while holding a defensive sector.”¹⁶⁷

The World Reacts to the German Defeat at Xivray

American and global reactions were far more animated. It was early in the American involvement in the war, before the summer offensives would dominate the attention of the nation, and news outlets wanted to highlight all American successes. The Associated Press released the story immediately so that by 17 June headlines from Georgia to Illinois to California to Australia heralded the 103rd Infantry’s victory with headlines like, “Daring of US Soldiers is Amazing to Germans,”¹⁶⁸ “Americans Mow Down Germans,”¹⁶⁹ “Kaiser’s Shock Troops Defeated by Americans,”¹⁷⁰ “Americans Badly Maul Hun Raiders,”¹⁷¹ “Americans Show Enemy How New Foeman Will Meet Surprise Attack: Special Shock Troops Almost Annihilated,”¹⁷² and “Americans Foil Foe at Xivray.”¹⁷³ The *Eastport Sentinel* ran a succinct—but proud—headline on 27 June: “Co. I Drives Huns Back.”¹⁷⁴ Thus, it is a good example of how the American war machine was learning to use the press to its advantage—much as the Germans had done after Seicheprey.

Military commendations were quick to come for the 103rd Infantry and its supporting units at Xivray. Gen. Fenelon F.G. Passaga, commander of the French 32nd Army Corps, sent a dispatch from his office on 18 June, outlining the battle: “This brilliant action does the greatest honor to the 26th American Division, and in particular, to the 103rd Regiment, Colonel Hume commanding. It demonstrates the unquestionable superiority of the American soldier over the German soldier. It indicates clearly what can be expected from these magnificent troops when, in its turn, the Entente assumes the offensive.”¹⁷⁵ Gen. Augustin Gerard, commander of the French VIII Army also passed on his congratulations to the 103rd for their actions at Xivray.¹⁷⁶ Commendation from General John J. Pershing’s office followed two days later: “I am directed by the commander-in-chief to inform you that he has noted with sincere appreciation the excellent work of the 103d Regiment of your division, which inflicted severe losses in killed,

wounded and prisoners in repelling the strong raid attempted by the enemy on the morning of June 16, 1918, on the Xivray sector.”¹⁷⁷

Perhaps the best summary of the action came from one soldier of the 103rd who had been at Xivray. Writing home on 18 June, Samuel E. Avery of Headquarters Company said, “You have probably read (by this time) of the little affair we got into, and let me tell you Em they sure did get the worst of the argument, and then some.”¹⁷⁸ Captain Hanson was disappointed that his battalion had not been able to go into action, but the pride in his regiment was evident when he wrote to his wife about the battle: “Fritz, I expect was pretty mad...Our men fought like the devil.”¹⁷⁹

Hanson and his 1st Battalion were in reserve during this time, where the horrors of the front lines were not eternally on their minds. The soldiers were able to rest and recover slightly from the gas attack of 10 May. Far-ranging artillery would occasionally target these rear areas but in general it was a far safer part of the line. Officers engaged in more prosaic activities than making war, such as riding their horses around the French countryside or dropping a hook into a nearby stream. Spaulding Bisbee reluctantly left command of Company B to go up to regimental headquarters as the intelligence and operations officer, with Capt. Wesley Woods taking over command.¹⁸⁰ “My new job as Regimental Intelligence and Operations Officer is very interesting, and I don’t have to go into the front line trenches any more,” he assured Miss Ethel Hinds, continuing with, in the plaintive vein recognizable to any staff officer, “but I have the movements of troops, and all the information, and a hundred and one things to do and it keeps me going day and night. I have a telephone at my head all night and usually don’t get to bed before three o’clock.”¹⁸¹

Hanson took some time on 19 June to write home to his young daughter, Phyllis. He had a pet fox, noted the commander, which stayed in his room with him. And adding to that, a small black dog had followed him home from regimental headquarters the day before and so his menagerie was growing. “Last night when I came in to go to bed the dog was asleep on one end of my bed and the fox on the other.” Hanson put the dog out of his room and the mutt promptly went into Lieutenant Bonney’s room next door. The lieutenant apparently did not desire a pet, and put the dog in the hallway once more. Philosophically, the dog returned to Hanson who resigned himself to his fate and went to sleep.¹⁸²

Sgt. Verle Sweatt in Company B was enjoying this time off the front lines with the rest of the 1st Battalion. In a letter home to his mother on June 20, he noted that the regiment “had been in a bit of a scrap the first

part of the week but they sure did do an awful good job on the Boche.”¹⁸³ But like many of the men, he was quick to turn his pen to the more familiar doings of home: “Well, mother, how is the garden coming. I suppose you will have green peas soon and how I wish I might be at home to have some. Guess this is all going to end soon as the Austrians and the Germans both are getting more than they can take care of now.”¹⁸⁴

Relieved from the Front

On 25 June, the battalions of the 103rd Infantry and the rest of the 26th Division were relieved from the front line and moved back to Toul from where, the rumors said, they would then get leave in Paris.¹⁸⁵ It was not to be. Instead, the blood-soaked boughs of Belleau Wood and the machine-gun swept wheat fields of Chateau Thierry awaited them in the coming days and weeks, as the 26th was thrown in the way of the massive German offensive against Paris. The 103rd Infantry had learned how to defeat the Germans on the defense; soon they would see if they could master the art of offensive operations.

The companies of the 103rd left Xivray-et-Marvoisin the night of 25 June, glad to be out of the ruined villages. They were replaced by elements of the 82nd Division—including future Medal of Honor recipient Sgt. Alvin York’s own Company G, 328th Infantry Regiment. As the platoons of the 103rd marched out of town, they broke into joyous song upon getting far enough to the rear. One officer of the 82nd wrote after the war of watching the 103rd leave Xivray: “I so often think of that night when the singing columns swung by us as we silently marched on to the trenches... the rest that some thought they [the men of the 103rd Infantry] were going to get was a real rest—a long rest where there are no wars and suffering.”¹⁸⁶

The 103rd Infantry’s time in the Toul Sector had shown that it could adapt under fire, that it absorbed lessons learned, that its leaders performed well under pressure, and that its men would stand against some of the best troops that the Germans had to offer. The German after-action report alone stands as the highest praise the regiment could receive for its operations in the month of June. Regimental, battalion, and company commanders allowed their subordinates the freedom to make decisions in the very spur of the moment. Given this initiative, motivated leaders such as Lieutenant Doane fearlessly executed heroic missions in order to not only protect the force, but to also aggressively counterattack. With more than four months on the front, the 103rd Infantry demonstrated that they were ready for the next challenge.

And what of Xivray Street? Its naming is still a mystery. Town records do not indicate who named it back in 1919. Only six men from Au-

burn served in the 103rd Infantry, and none of them in the companies that were principally engaged at Xivray. Perhaps someone in the town knew a soldier who perished there. The unique name and the date of the street's creation specify that someone thought it important enough that Xivray should be remembered. It demonstrates how post-World War I Americans viewed the conflict as a seminal point in their history. Perhaps it would have remained that way were it not for World War II, which overtook the Great War's place in American memory. Which is all the more reason we should remember Xivray.

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Chapter V

“We Left Something There at Chateau-Thierry:”¹

July-August 1918

Through the spring of 1918, each of the German offensives had rapidly gained ground in the initial days before grinding to a halt against stiff British and French opposition. Beginning in June, they would finally run into US divisions—the 2nd, 3rd, and 28th Divisions were all thrown in along the Marne River to halt the German drives in June and July. While the 103rd Infantry had been tested on the defensive, they remained novices at offensive warfare. No one had led anything larger than half a company in a raid, with limited objectives. Offensive operations would require synchronization of movement and maneuver, with communications, artillery fire, aerial reconnaissance, and the logistics trains. All of this would have to be accomplished under enemy fire and while evacuating casualties. The large US divisions were designed specifically to withstand such a test. The coming offensive would not only be the definitive evaluation of the A.E.F. as a modern fighting force, but it would also be an assessment of American doctrine.

When the 26th Division left the Toul Sector, rumors ran rife that they were headed to more pleasant climes. The main rumor was that they were headed to Paris for some rest and relaxation, perhaps even to march in an Independence Day parade there.² The division could use a rest; after the spring fighting, they were already down to three quarters of their 28,000 assigned strength.³ The 103rd Infantry, once numbering more than 3,800 men, now had a strength of 2,401 soldiers.⁴ The Doughboys hoped that reality would match their desires. The trains that carried the 26th were even headed towards Paris. Cheering groups of French citizens lined the way, and their plaudits were matched by the exuberant Doughboys. The men of the 26th could soon see the outlines of Paris off in the distance, increasing their excitement. Soon the Eiffel Tower arose out of the vista and excitement reached a fever pitch.⁵ At Noisy-le-Sec, the main rail hub outside Paris, things changed. The long trains swayed and lurched to a halt. Soon they began again, but they were turning around. With Paris behind them, they chugged steadily back towards the front, heading towards the town of Chateau-Thierry. Gloom descended on the men; they knew they were going back into the meat grinder.⁶

En route to the front, the men noticed that this was an entirely different type of countryside than they had yet seen in their time in France. “The whole

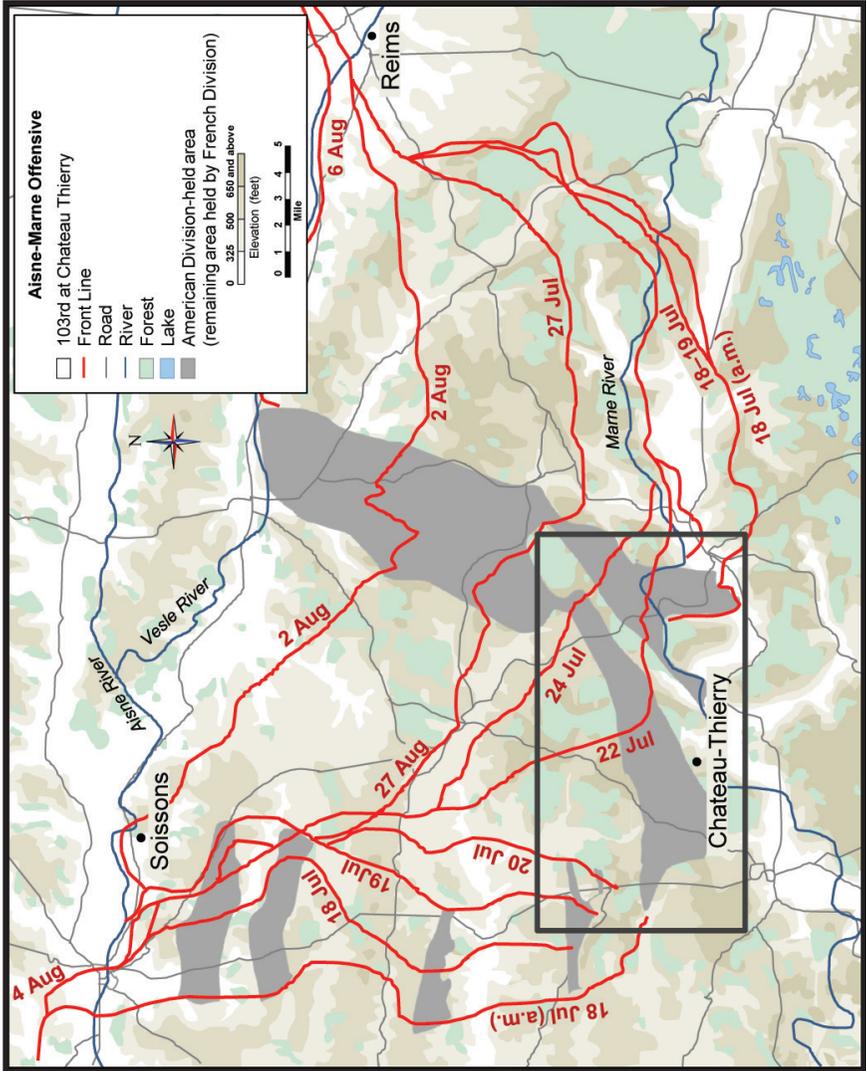


Figure 5.1. The Aisne-Marne Offensive. Graphic created by Army University Press staff.

country was beautiful and the people much better,” noted Captain Bisbee. They found whole villages deserted because of the advance of the German armies into the Marne valley. Meals were still on the tables and “in one place a little girl had left her doll safely tucked in bed.”⁷ The German offensives in May and June had broken through the defenses between Soissons and Reims and brought them to within striking distance of Paris itself. Although too far extended, the Germans were poised for one last offensive in July, aimed at crossing the Marne River and capturing Paris. Captain Bisbee wrote, introspectively, “Tomorrow is the Fourth and one year ago Company B paraded in Portland. Probably they will parade in a much different way tomorrow for we shall be going in again. This time on quite a famous sector.”⁸

Arrival in the Marne Sector

On 4 July—“a day I shall not soon forget,” remembered Captain Bisbee—the 26th Division arrived in the “*Pas Fini*” (unfinished) Sector, where the 2nd US Division had been fighting in the environs of Belleau Wood for the past month.⁹ It was here that General Cole’s brother, Maj. Edward Cole, had been killed with his Marines just a few weeks prior. Captain Bisbee met with the commander of the 6th Marine Regiment, Lt. Col. Harry Lee and received a briefing on the area before sending word to the battalions to begin moving into their new sectors.¹⁰ That evening, the 2nd Battalion, 103rd Infantry replaced elements of the 4th Marine Brigade, which, through hard fighting, had made Belleau Wood their own. As the Doughboys marched in, one Marine was heard to say, “Hey, here come the Boy Scouts.”¹¹ In another case, as a column from Headquarters Company marched passed a Marine column leaving the front, a Marine asked, “What outfit, Buddy?” “The 26th Division,” came the reply. “Atta boy! Give ‘em hell!” came the response and the columns marched on.¹²

Lieutenant Swett noted in his diary that his 1st Battalion relieved elements of the 5th Marine Regiment on 5 July: “Got up to the relief at 10 o’ clock tonight. Made a hole in the bush and laid down...just out Posts and covered the woods with A.R.s [automatic rifles]...shelling more or less most of the time.”¹³ The rest of the 1st Battalion found similar conditions: “Numerous small ‘dugouts’ were found throughout the woods offering some protection for men unless in case of direct hit.”¹⁴ Further movements to replace the exhausted 2nd Division were halted on the overcast and muggy 5 July, in anticipation of a suspected German attack. Pvt. Robert Shepardson (Company E) and Pvt. John Moulton (Company F) were both killed by enemy artillery fire on July 5 and 6, respectively. The expected German assault never materialized and relief of the

Marines by the rest of the 52nd Brigade was completed on the night of 8-9 July.¹⁵ Regimental headquarters for the 103rd Infantry set up at Montreuil, while the 1st Battalion occupied the forest of Bois de Gros Jean, the support position for Belleau Wood. The 3rd Battalion relieved the Marines in reserve in the woods northwest of Montreuil, creating a defense in depth.¹⁶

The terrain in the *Pas Fini* Sector was a mixture of rolling hills filled with wheat fields and orderly squares of forested land. The famous Belleau Wood—now an unrecognizable patch of shredded trees and pulverized hillocks—was situated on a dominating height that looked down on the small village of Belleau, less than a kilometer to its front. To the left of Belleau was Torcy, another small French farming town that occupied the heights of a ridgeline. Givry lay just to the northeast of Belleau, snug into the hillside of a dominating height crowned with trees, designated Hill 193. From the heights of this hill, one has perfect visibility of all three towns as well as the roads that crisscross the farm fields. A railroad line ran from north of Torcy, following the valley in between Torcy and Hill 193, passing Belleau, turning southwards to the village of Bouresches. Between Bouresches and Belleau, the railroad crossed a long valley. To the left, the ground sloped upwards slowly, culminating in another dominating height, called Hill 190 on the Etrepilly plateau. The Germans held outposts in each of the towns, as well as fortified positions on the heights of Hill 190 and machine guns dug in on Hill 193.

From left to right, one battalion each of the 103rd, 104th, 102nd, and 101st Infantry Regiments took up ownership of their new front.¹⁷ The front was unlike any that the Yankee Division had ever seen up to that point. Unlike at the Chemin des Dames and Toul, there were no lines of deep trenches with protective dugouts. The woods and open wheat fields, still filled with ripening grain, offered little cover. The 2nd Division had no time to prepare any trenches; they had been in combat the entire time, trying to wrest the woods and fields away from the enemy. Shell-holes and hastily dug fighting positions were the only shelter from near-constant enemy artillery fire. No protective wire could be strung up during the night, for fear of the Germans identifying the exact front line of the 2nd Battalion's companies. Troops could only be resupplied at night, meaning that men could only rely on one canteen of water and one meal a day. During the day, the men lay in the wheat, pulling it over their heads to try to stay out of sight.¹⁸ There was little sleep; if the German artillery was not firing, then the US guns were. Gas klaxon alarms sounded through the night, adding to the din and the sleeplessness.¹⁹

Occupying the Front

As the 26th Division took over, a captain from Company D, 101st Engineer Regiment went out to conduct a reconnaissance of the new positions that the division's men were holding in Belleau Wood. He was shocked at what he saw:

An awful fight had gone on in those woods, trees all shot to pieces, foliage destroyed, clothing, rifles, mess kits, ammunition, even machine guns, both American and German, strewn everywhere. And then the dead of both sides. Sometimes two opponents were almost in a death grapple.

The party of engineers made their way through Belleau Wood and then to the advance outposts and the troops in the wheat fields to the left of the woods.

On the left we saw a shallow trench extending through a wheat-field. In that trench were men lying down in the hot sun. They could hardly move without exposure to hostile fire. No one could get to them except at night. Every morning at three o'clock a detail crawled out with a cold meal of 'Willy' and hardtack and one canteen of water for the day.²⁰

These were not the conditions that the men of the 103rd Infantry had trained for. Here, now, was a new kind of war.

The dreadful presence of the dead wore on the men posted in Belleau Wood. Cpl. Roy MacMenigall of Company D, 104th Infantry wrote, "My post before the dugout was on top of a mound under which a German was buried and the grave was shallow and at night the odor was terrible. Another had been buried in the bank nearby with his head sticking out and another over across, so I had company."²¹ Lieutenant Swett, on a reconnaissance into Belleau Wood, was shocked at what he saw: "A hell of a place. Equipment galore, and dead men also...they are shelling the Hell out of us all the time."²² John Longley of Company E, 103rd Infantry recalled, "As we walked along, you'd see a guy stuck up in a tree, blown half away."²³ When the men of the 103rd went to dig in—a habit that they now went about with a will—they found to their horror and disgust that every piece of ground they put a shovel to contained poorly-buried remains of US or German troops.²⁴ Detachments from the 101st Engineers went out in the evenings to bury the dead in Belleau Wood. The bodies had lain out in the summer heat for weeks, and the stench was so strong that the engineers had to wear their gas masks as they went about their gruesome work.²⁵

On 12 July, 1st Battalion, 103rd Infantry relieved the 2nd Battalion, which went into reserve in the woods near Voi-du-Chatel. The 3rd Battalion moved into support in the woods north of Lucy-le-Bocage. The men of the 1st Battalion had been standing-to on alert in the days prior, and so now—already exhausted—lay in shell-holes or in the open, with little to no protection. Rain continued for days, “making the shelters dug by the men, sometimes untenable and always damp and uncomfortable.”²⁶ “Pray the good Lord that he lets me take my men out of here alive,” penned Lieutenant Swett in his diary that day.²⁷ The 1st Battalion manned a line of outposts across the 103rd’s front, its left adjoining the French 167th Division and the right adjoining the 104th Infantry in the northwest corner of Belleau Wood. Behind them was the 3rd Battalion, which had the advantage of the woods northwest of Lucy-le-Bocage for cover. The 2nd Battalion was held in brigade reserve.²⁸

Sgt. H. Earnest Smith, of Company A, was one of those who lay out in the open wheat field: “Each morning at daybreak we were obliged to leave our position and drop back about 30 yards into a wheat field, where we had to lie for 19 hours. Just imagine, 19 hours in a little hole in the ground—and it was a case of stay there, too, and keep your head down.” Life was not altogether without incident; German patrols probed and prodded the US front continuously. One such patrol hit Company A shortly after they took over the front. Unable to identify the soldiers approaching them, a Doughboy from Company A delivered a verbal challenge when the Germans were about 20 yards away. The Germans immediately dropped to the earth and a firefight ensued: “By this time, things were well under way, and lead and steel jackets were flying, most of them going toward Berlin,” wrote Sergeant Smith. “This lasted but very few minutes, and all that could be seen of ‘Fritz’ was his figure on the sky, going toward home on the double.” In the morning, Company A counted 11 dead Germans in front of their position.²⁹ The enemy artillery fire continued, undiminished however, killing three more doughboys in the 103rd on 13 July, from Companies A and B. One of these was Pvt. Earle McGrath, the first man from Laconia, New Hampshire to be killed in the Great War. In 1919, the town renamed their Central Street to McGrath Street in his honor.³⁰ Cpl. Stanley Bean in Company E was killed by rifle fire. Capt. Percy Hasty, commanding Company A, was slightly wounded on the head by artillery but refused to be evacuated.³¹

The German Offensive

The Germans opposite the 52nd Brigade were two regiments from the 4th Ersatz Division, as well as elements of the 28th and 87th Divisions.³² Their

artillery was particularly active. From 9-14 July, the 52nd Brigade received approximately 10,350 rounds of high explosive ammunition, resulting in 14 killed and 84 wounded.³³ Four of those killed were from the 103rd Infantry. And it wasn't just high explosives targeting the harassed Doughboys; on 10 July, the 103rd Infantry's Headquarters was hit with about fifty blue cross gas shells at approximately 1600.³⁴ Blue cross shells contained a toxic mixture of chemicals that induced nausea, vomiting, and raised blisters.

German artillery and gas attacks increased in intensity 14-15 July. On the evening of 14 July, Belleau Wood received "severe punishment: from enemy gas and high explosive concentrations." About 1,500 gas rounds fell on the 103rd Infantry in the space of four hours.³⁵ John Longley in Company E noted that the effects of gas lasted longer than the bombardment: "If you brushed up against the leaves that had been sprayed with gas, you'd get a blister about the size of a half-dollar, raised up about a quarter of an inch."³⁶ Five hundred rounds of mustard gas hit the troops of the 2nd Battalion in Belleau Woods while 1,000 fell in the adjacent areas. The 103rd reported that the proportion of "gas to high explosive shell was 2 for 1." Only two soldiers had to be evacuated due to gas, demonstrating that the regiment had come a long way in gas discipline since the debacle of 10 May.³⁷ However, four more soldiers were killed by the bombardment. The 1st Battalion began reporting their first cases of "shell shock" on 15 July, a sign that already the men were succumbing to the intense physical and mental strain of front-line service under continuous enemy fire.³⁸ Unlike previous sectors, even the men in the reserve battalion were subjected to daily harassing fire.

On 15 July, at 1230, the Germans unleashed a 10-minute barrage of high explosives and phosgene gas across the entire front of the 26th Division, searching for the US artillery batteries. They continued shelling with mustard gas through the rest of the night. At daybreak, they attempted probing attacks all across the division's front, but the attack was cut to pieces by rifle and machine gun fire.³⁹ This was but one small piece of the German's last-ditch effort to get to Paris. Their main attacks fell to the right of the 26th Division but they shelled the entire line indiscriminately.⁴⁰ From 9-14 July, 21,750 high explosive shells fell on the 26th Division, causing 27 deaths and wounding 172 men. After the war, someone did the gruesome math on these numbers. It took 126 high explosive shells to cause a casualty; conversely, it usually only took three or four gas shells to produce a casualty that had to be evacuated.⁴¹ From shelling, from gassing, from patrols, from raids, and from the dreadful environs, the soldiers were wearing down from exhaustion.

Plans for a Counterattack

The Entente was being struck by the last gasp of the German offensives. French Marshal Ferdinand Foch—in overall command—had planned for it well, setting up his troops well back from the front lines so that German artillery was not as effective as it might have been. As the Germans were battering the Entente lines from 15-17 July, Foch was planning his counterstroke that would catch the over-extended Germans off guard and reverse all the gains that they had made since the spring. The Entente would attack with multiple field armies, closing in on the Germans from two sides. Gen. Jean Degoutte commanded the 6th Army, of which the 26th Division was a part. The 6th Army would attack on 18 July from Chateau Thierry and catch the German flank. French Capt. Jean B. Le Meitour wrote later,

I have already said that Foch knew perfectly well when the Boche offensive would end, and that he had consequently been able to plan the point of departure of his counteroffensive. I know, for I have heard Gen Degoutte himself say, how much importance Foch placed upon the choice of the unit to be placed in the Bois de Belleau. He had asked for a veteran unit, a crack unit, the best of all the units which had been concentrated in the Chateau Thierry sector. The choice of the 26th American Division for the post of honor, and the Cole brigade for the Bois de Belleau, were really titles of nobility.⁴²

The 52nd Brigade was the pivot point for the 6th Army's advance; and the 103rd Infantry was to be the linchpin for the pivot.

This was the first offensive for many units in the A.E.F., including the 26th Division. US Army doctrine had not evolved to where the Allied and German offensive doctrine was at the time, but had the idea of open warfare as its driving concept. As Pershing laid out in his October 1917 directive to the A.E.F.: "The general principles governing combat remain unchanged in their essence...The rifle and the bayonet are the principal weapons of the infantry soldier. He will be trained to a high degree of skill as a marksman, both on the target range and in field firing. An aggressive spirit must be developed until the soldier feels himself, as a bayonet fighter, invincible in battle."⁴³ While the principles may have not changed, the weapons of war surely had. Machine guns, automatic rifles, mobile and accurate field artillery, and airplanes had all made open warfare nearly obsolete unless the attack were coordinated with all arms down to a pinpoint of synchronization. This is what the A.E.F. was trying to achieve. The attacks at the Second Marne would be a test of Pershing's theories for

the A.E.F. This was also the first action where the 26th Division would not be under French corps command. The First Corps, A.E.F. under Maj. Gen. Hunter Liggett would provide command direction to the 26th Division as well as the French 167th Division of Infantry.

On 16 July, Companies B and C were holding the far left of the line, with Companies A and D in support. Their positions were opposite the town of Torcy, and so Major Hanson began to be curious about what was in front of him. One patrol under Lieut. John Kramer, the battalion intelligence officer, penetrated enemy territory on 16 July and proceeded “until reaching our artillery field of fire, when it returned.” No enemy was seen.⁴⁴ The next morning, Captain Findlay, Company C commander, took a patrol over to Torcy. He found that “there is a little barb wire in front of town, and some machine guns.” Upon his return, he advised Hanson that they should “go over and take possession of the place.” But before they could make any moves, Lieutenant Kramer was summoned to brigade headquarters for “big things in the air.”⁴⁵

On the morning of 17 July, Maj. William Southard and Capt. Elson Hosford, commanders of the 3rd and 2nd Battalions, respectively, received verbal orders from Colonel Hume to prepare for an attack.⁴⁶ In the afternoon, Major Southard reported to the 52nd Brigade headquarters to receive his orders, returning to the lines around 1800. He immediately moved his 3rd Battalion from their position in the rear into a ravine a few kilometers south of the village of Torcy, which was the battalion’s objective for the coming assault. Liaisons from Company C helped move the men of the 3rd Battalion into position behind them, as well as a detachment of engineers from the 101st Engineer Battalion.⁴⁷ As Captain Andrews of Company K noted, there was hardly any time to prepare for the attack. Most men did not even have time to fill their canteens or bring up the supplies such as mattocks, sandbags, and wire cutters from the depot since they had less than 12 hours to get into position.⁴⁸

Captain Hosford finally received his orders at brigade headquarters at 2000. He was tasked with leading his 2nd Battalion, with an attached company from 1st Battalion, to seize the railroad northeast of Belleau Wood, which ran from Belleau down to Bouresches, in order to keep the advancing line intact. His return was delayed due to a motorcycle breakdown which forced him to walk the rest of the way. Upon his return, around midnight, he moved his men of the 2nd Battalion into their jumping off position on the east side of Belleau Wood.⁴⁹ The 1st Battalion never got word to move a company to support the 2nd Battalion. From the outset, the struggles of communication were hindering the synchronization of the offensive.

Last to leave General Cole's headquarters was Colonel Hume, who was on hand to assist his officers as best he could. This was to be their first offensive action, so the men were gravely concerned that they were overlooking critical parts of their plans—especially as they had barely one day to plan their attack. General Cole asked Hume to stay overnight at his headquarters, since the Germans were shelling the road between La Loge Farm and Hume's headquarters at Voix-Chatel. "Thanks, General," said Hume, "I mustn't wait. What would you think of my men, what would I think of them, if tomorrow at H hour they should postpone their attack because the shells were coming too thick?" Hume departed, whistling, and made it safely back to his headquarters.⁵⁰

The night of 17 July was marked by severe thunderstorms and heavy rain, which also delayed troops trying to get into position.⁵¹ Doughboys struggled through the woods under their heavy packs, as the rain lashed their faces and their boots struggled to gain traction on the slippery ground. The 2nd Battalion of the 103rd became entangled with the 2nd Battalion of the 104th Infantry in a ravine north of Lucy-le-Bocage, a dark and frustrating traffic jam in the driving rain. The resulting confusion caused precious hours to be lost by both of these units.⁵² In the ravine south of Torcy, men of Southard's 3rd Battalion formed little knots in the woods, awaiting H-Hour—the hour at which they were to attack.⁵³ At 0100 on 18 July, battalion commanders received definitive word that D-Day was indeed 18 July and H-Hour was 0435.⁵⁴ Major Southard—his ever-present cigar clenched between his teeth—walked his lines from left to right, verifying with each platoon leader that they understood the plan and where they were supposed to be in each phase of the attack.⁵⁵

The Attack on Torcy

The rain lifted by morning and a blanket of fog covered the landscape. The small villages of Torcy and Belleau, about 800 yards apart from each other, were hidden in the mist. Behind them, the ground dipped sharply into a wooded ravine, and then rose into two hills: Hill 193 north of Belleau and Hill 190 east of Belleau. These were key heights that would need to be captured to enable the Americans to advance. The 3rd Battalion emerged from the wooded ravine where they had been taking cover and shook out into long, even lines in the wheat fields, by companies: L and I made up the assaulting element, with L on the right and I on the left. Companies M and K followed in support.⁵⁶ Because they formed on the reverse slope of the ridge that divided them from Torcy, they were out of sight of the German defenders. At 0435 precisely, they launched their assault led by Major Southard—his cane in one hand and a bottle of cognac in the

other.⁵⁷ The men rose from the wheat, bayonets fixed, shook out into wide lines, and rapidly crossed the open area between the American lines and Torcy. Behind them, guns from the 101st Field Artillery Regiment opened a rolling barrage for them to advance. Lieut. Donald McGrew led his three 37mm pieces from Headquarters Company, focusing their fire on known German positions and silencing several machine gun nests in the town.⁵⁸ There was no preparatory barrage so as to catch the Germans by surprise.⁵⁹ Looking up, the men of the 1st and 3rd Battalions spotted 25 airplanes soaring overhead, each with a streamer on their right wing bearing the “YD” insignia of the 26th Division—the offensive had surely begun.⁶⁰

It took the 3rd Battalion 20 minutes to follow the barrage down through the wheat fields and into Torcy. Sgt. Algernon Holden saw the first shells dropping and was concerned that his men would forget their training and bunch up in this, their first assault. “I was proud and happy to see that the men went out to their positions as coolly [sic] as though it was merely another practice,” he recorded.⁶¹ As the battalion closed in on the town, the 37mm battery lifted their fire and began to suppress known enemy machine gun emplacements beyond the town, firing 187 rounds in their support to the assault.⁶² Taken by surprise, the Germans in Torcy put up barely any opposition. The Doughboys cleared house to house, silencing machine gun nests and sending Germans scampering to the rear. One soldier in Company L caught some machine gunners who were trying to escape off guard, “his rifle and bayonet came to the alert automatically and the Germans, one after the other, ran smack into the bayonet and were torn half to pieces as the bayonet caught each just below the breast bone.”⁶³

About an hour after the assault began a runner reached regimental headquarters, stating, “We are in Torcy without opposition.” A rocket signal from Torcy indicated the same.⁶⁴ Casualties in the assault were light: only one soldier killed and four wounded. Twenty-five Germans surrendered in the town and were sent to the rear under guard.⁶⁵ The men then went about digging in.⁶⁶ At 0540, Major Southard wrote to Colonel Hume, “We took our objective before the enemy woke up...the main enemy positions are along Hill 193...Hill 193 is bristling with enemy guns and the excellent observation makes our movements impossible. Must give this hill a thumping to-night.”⁶⁷ Southard reported that he had established liaison with the French 167th Division on his left but not with the 3rd Battalion, 104th Infantry that was supposed to be on his right in the town of Belleau, which controlled the roads leading into Givry and would have to be secured if actions in the center were to be successful.⁶⁸

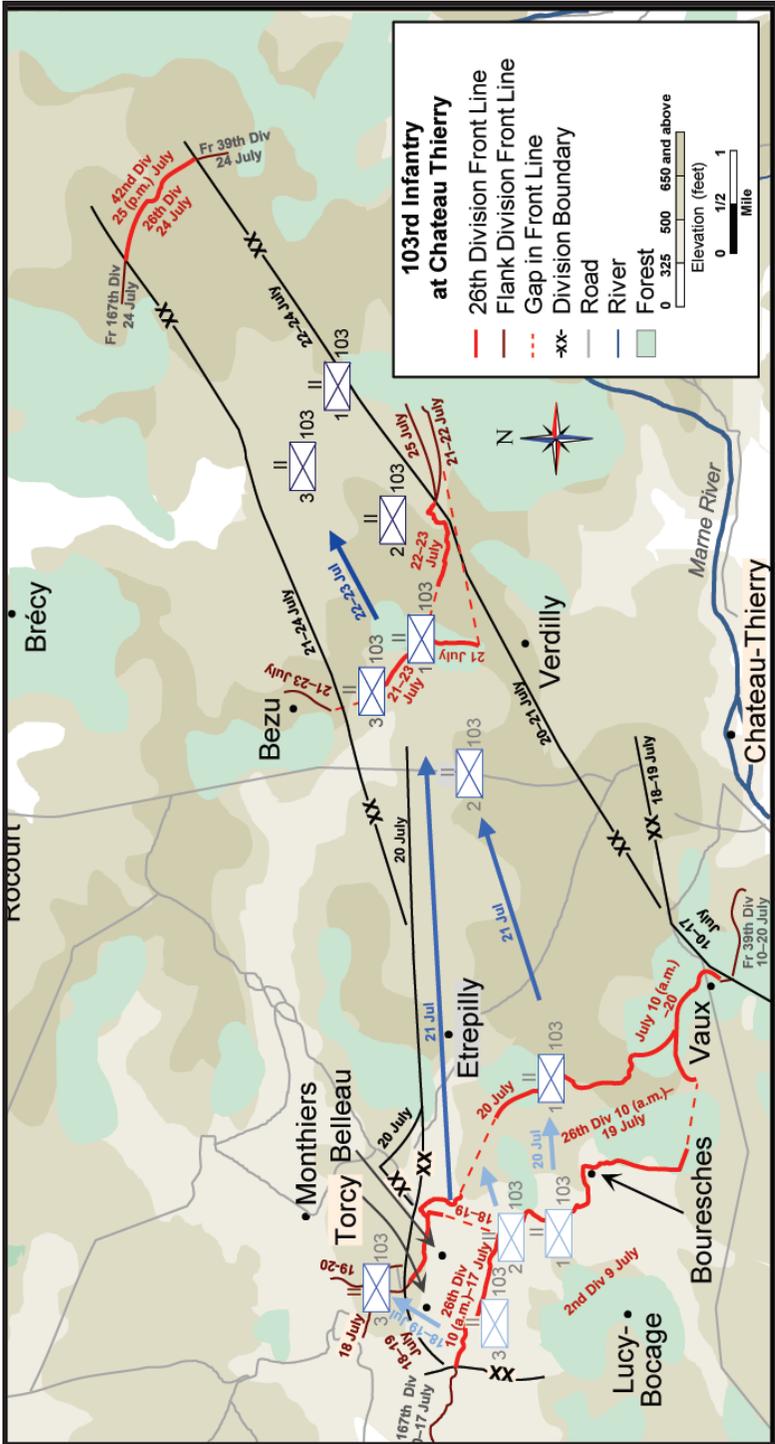


Figure 5.2. 103rd Infantry at Chateau-Thierry. Graphic created by Army University Press staff.

A platoon from Company M, led by Sgt. Harvey Butler entered Belleau, trying to establish liaison with the 104th Infantry and instead routed the enemy there, capturing 14 more prisoners.⁶⁹ Sgt. H.L. Fennell of Butler's platoon led a group of six men as a flanking party around Belleau, scooping up four surprised Germans as prisoners.⁷⁰ Both would later receive the Silver Star Citation for their leadership.⁷¹ Failing to find any soldiers from the 104th Infantry in Belleau, Butler's platoon returned to Torcy. The 3rd Battalion, 104th Infantry would arrive soon after, rushing down the slope from Belleau Wood and occupying the town before pushing into Givry.

Southard's men consolidated their position around Torcy and dug in along the railroad and creek bed to repel counterattacks. Company C rushed sandbags, ammunition, and rations forward to Torcy and escorted prisoners to the rear, where Lieutenant Hahnel and Captain Bisbee interviewed some of them who "appeared to be well satisfied with being prisoners." Bisbee asked one German officer how many Americans he thought were in France. "Five hundred thousand," replied the officer. "When I told him how many there really were, he threw up his hands, and said 'My God, we can't win now.'" Recalled Bisbee, "I hope that is the way they all feel, but the trouble is, to get that information to the German people."⁷² Bisbee managed to get a clearer picture of their enemy's disposition, as well. The prisoners were from the 347th and 360th Reserve Regiments. The 347th was part of the 28th Division and had been in the sector since June, facing the 2nd Division. The 360th had just moved into the sector with the 4th Ersatz Division. This meant the 26th Division was up against elements of two experienced and battle-hardened divisions.⁷³

The captured men did pass on the information that there were still guns in position to range the area the US now held.⁷⁴ Precisely at 0700, as if on cue, German artillery began tossing shells into Torcy. About every 20 minutes, the Germans would fire a few rounds of 210mm high explosive.⁷⁵ One struck next to the church as Company L was moving in: "The soil was fine, white, and chalky and the shell had gone deep and blown up practically the entire yard. The nearby trees were decorated with remnants of clothing and parts of skeletons and the entire picture was one of dismal destruction."⁷⁶ Germans could be seen pulling back to Hill 193 as the Americans approached, but when it became clear that the hill would not be pressed they began a harassing fire on the Doughboys. In accordance with the overall I Corps plan, the 3rd Battalion could not advance any further until the French took Hill 193. It was a sound plan, but like many plans, fell to pieces once combat operations began.

In Torcy, the 3rd Battalion established an observation post in the old church steeple, which had taken a few shells through it. Pvt. Alva White of Company L was on watch and spotted a large Dodge car coming up the road; he relayed this information urgently to the battalion intelligence officer who sent out a scout to ascertain why an automobile would be so close to the front lines. The car turned out to be Colonel Hume's, who could not handle being in the rear when his regiment was on the offensive. The bullet holes in the side of the colonel's car bore testament to the danger he had passed through to check on his men.⁷⁷

The troops around Torcy continued taking fire as they dug in, from machine guns, mortars, and artillery. The battalion report stated that this was near constant from 0700 on 18 July until 20 July, when they moved out of town.⁷⁸ One 77mm shell hit in the middle of a street where officers and NCOs from Company L were standing, knocking them all unconscious. Sergeant Holden recalled, "I came to in a few seconds and glanced at the Lieutenant. His face looked as expressionless as that of a dummy. I looked at Burke and found that he also was just coming to. They both looked so stupid that I had to laugh and I suppose that I had looked just the same."⁷⁹ The group left the town to take up positions with their platoon out on the left flank which was also under artillery fire. The Germans were firing shrapnel and "After one of these salvos I heard a thud on my left," recalled Sergeant Holden, "and at the same time an exclamation from the man lying close beside me that sounded as though he was talking to the Lord." The man had a shrapnel ball go through his left arm and, ordered back to the aid station in the church, he moved out, cursing the "Boche gunners." Seconds later, a "clang" to his right told Holden that another man had been hit, this time in the head; amazingly, the shrapnel had not pierced the helmet and the soldier groggily returned to his position.⁸⁰ Holden then went to check on Pvt. Richard MacIsaac, but found the young man lying dead: "He had been shot near the heart and the heart must have continued to pump for a few seconds for he had taken on a deep purple color all over. Probably my going back to look at him was not too smart. I went out like a light and I remember nothing of the remainder of the day." Cpl. Clifford Long was out on the extreme flank when he saw Sergeant Holden crawling past his foxhole out into No-Man's Land. He asked his sergeant where he was going: "Out and get shot and get it over with," came the response. Long pulled Holden into his hole and the exhausted sergeant fell asleep.⁸¹

The 2nd Battalion Attacks the Railroad

While the assault on Torcy had gone off like clockwork, all was not well one and a half miles away on the right side of Belleau Wood. Because

of their delays in traversing the woods, Captain Hosford's 2nd Battalion was not able to get to their point of departure until 0730. Consequently, they had missed the barrage that the US guns fired to cover their advance. The Germans responded to the initial US barrage by pummeling Belleau Wood with artillery rounds. Company E alone took twenty casualties from this barrage as they were struggling single file on a path in through woods. Some men were blown up into the trees.⁸² Cpl. Allan J. Fitzmorris, who had been severely wounded at Xivray and only just returned to his company two days prior, was wounded by shrapnel in the leg.⁸³ The battalion had its barrage repeated and it assaulted out of Belleau Woods at 0745, without Company D from the 1st Battalion, which was unable to get to the jumping off point on time.⁸⁴ Companies A and D would arrive to take up the positions in Belleau Wood previously held by the 3rd Battalion, 104th Infantry—but too late to assist Hosford.⁸⁵

A glance at the objective showed that it was vastly different than Southard's had been. Hosford's men would have to advance half a mile across open wheat fields in full view of enemy machine guns and marksmen. Once in place, the battalion would have to hold a line of resistance from the railroad east of Belleau to the railroad station north of Bouresches; a distance of two kilometers. All four companies attacked out of the woods in waves of platoons—adhering to the open warfare doctrine propagated by General Pershing. This was not an infiltration; this was a frontal assault. Company E was on the left, Company G in the middle, and Company H on the right, with Company F in support. Companies E and G had the furthest distance to cover and would have their flanks exposed if they could not make liaison with the 3rd Battalion, 104th Infantry. They were also vulnerable to enfilade and converging fire from Hills 193 and 190. Hosford had Company A of the 103rd Machine Gun Battalion and one platoon from the 101st Engineer Regiment, which followed Company E on the left. Hosford detailed one platoon from Company E under Lieut. Robert Lovett—reinforced by one machine gun platoon—to gain liaison with 3rd Battalion, 104th Infantry.⁸⁶

Resistance was strong, with heavy machine gun, sniper, and artillery fire as soon as the assault began. Bill Rogers from Company G “stepped into a bullet that went through his jaw and out his eye.”⁸⁷ Remarkably, he survived. One shrapnel shell burst just as Company E was charging out of the woods, a piece of jagged metal striking Pvt. Arno Hughey—formerly a lumberman from Jackman, Maine—in the helmet, splitting it wide open and killing him instantly. His comrades, unable to do anything for him, took the Chauchat automatic rifle he was carrying and hurried on into battle.⁸⁸

The Skowhegan High School Squad was starting to bleed. Sgt. Cassimir "Cass" Bisson was hit by shrapnel on the way out of the woods, wounded. "How badly is Cass hurt?" called out Pvt. Brooks Savage to Cpl. Alvan Bucknam. "Pretty bad, I guess," said Bucknam.⁸⁹ The squad moved out into the wheat fields, leaving Sergeant Bisson in the woods, who called out to the wounded Corporal Fitzmorris. Bisson had been hit in the left shoulder and the arm but was conscious. The two men conversed and Fitzmorris said he did not think his wound was too bad. But then the German shelling began again: "I can remember that the smoke was thick as fog, among the trees," wrote Sergeant Bisson after the war. "And the air was full of the smell of gases and burned powder. Branches, and even trees were falling all around us and big shells would throw up dirt in every direction. The concussion from them, would throw the boys over, even if they were some distance away." One of these shells wounded Fitzmorris yet again, in the abdomen and he died of his wound just as the two soldiers were being evacuated.⁹⁰

Back out in the wheat field, Company E pressed forward into a hail of machine gun bullets which were now coming from their left and front. Cpl. Harry St. Ledger, also of the High School Squad, was hit as they were crossing the wheat field. When his comrades had reached the railroad, he slowly crawled through the wheat until he reached them. Private Savage bound the wounds of the former Skowhegan football star and gave him water, but the corporal soon died.⁹¹

Sgt. Albert Klick, on the right flank of the advance in Company H, painted this picture: "As we started over I looked to my left and saw the 'flower of our nation,' the first wave of the attack, smilingly pitch forward with fixed bayonets, many of them never to come back again. The bursting shells from the enemy fire was terrific, shells bursting all around us. Many men were blown to pieces as the first wave went over. But nevertheless, although diminished in numbers, they were always unflinchingly replaced by their comrades. Following the support waves overhead both enemy and allied planes were soaring."⁹² Company H had the shortest distance to go and was soon engaged a sharp fight with three German machine guns around the railroad station.⁹³ Company G soon made their lodgment in the middle along the railroad track but found that the track curved in such a way that they received enfilade fire and many men were exposed. Captain Edes, their company commander, made no adjustment to assist the company, leaving the platoon leaders to manage the situation.^{94 95}

The 3rd Battalion of the 104th had been delayed through disorganization of its units; Captain McDade reorganized his battalion and led them in

the attack at 0730 that took Belleau and the nearby small village of Givry.⁹⁶ The Doughboys from the 104th actually overran their objective and were on the slopes of Hill 193, but were recalled as that hill was in the French zone.⁹⁷ German machine gun crews occupied the hill again. This was to have major implications for the entire 26th Division's assault. However, the right elements of the 3rd Battalion were unable to connect with the left flank of Company E, 103rd Infantry. The Germans spotted this gap and began to send infiltrating parties towards it. Lieutenant Lovett led his 4th Platoon more to the left to try to contact the 3rd Battalion. He was hit in the thigh as he was crawling through the wheat field with his men: "That is a funny place to get hit," he remarked at the time and kept going.⁹⁸

By 0800, Company H had crossed the stream called the Ru Govert and taken Bouresches railroad station, knocking out three machine gun positions and accomplishing their initial mission. Sgt. Albert Klick recalled, "There was a clump of woods infested with German machine guns which we had to clean out in order to reach our objective. They gave us considerable trouble. H Company was at the extreme right of the attack. This position was captured, and orders were to hold it."⁹⁹ The company seized two of the machine guns, while one got away. Capt. Sherman Shumway counted about 25 dead Germans in the area. In a strong position, Company H dug in.¹⁰⁰

Although the right was secure, the left was in a deteriorating situation. German machine guns on the newly reoccupied Hill 193 were able to pour flanking fire onto Company E, causing heavy casualties. Lovett's 4th Platoon struggled against the enemy force that was attempting to infiltrate the left flank; in severe fighting, the entire platoon was wiped out, killed or wounded.¹⁰¹ Lieutenant Lovett himself was shot through the head and killed instantly.¹⁰² The machine gun platoon remained cut off on the left.¹⁰³

At some point in the action, Cpl. Stanley Beane from Company E was trying to establish a machine gun position on a knoll with ten other men. Cresting the knoll, he was sighted by Germans and shot down by rifle fire. Mortally wounded, he implored his comrades to stay back: "Don't come!" he pleaded with them, "It's sure death. Don't come!" His comrades paused, but began to advance, whereupon Beane drew his pistol and threatened to shoot anyone who would expose themselves to enemy fire. He soon passed out, and Cpl. Thomas LeClair crawled forward to give him water—bullets passing through his sleeve.¹⁰⁴

Fire was also strong from the vicinity of Bouresches Wood, to the southeast, catching the 2nd Battalion in a murderous crossfire.¹⁰⁵ The men

of the battalion dug into temporary foxholes under fire along the railroad track to try to strengthen their position. As they were pinned down by the railroad, Corporal Bucknam of the High School Squad reared up to get a better look, putting himself in an exposed position, all the while keeping up a conversation with Pvt. Joseph Bolduc. As Bolduc implored him to get under cover, a bullet caught Bucknam in the left side, pitching him over onto the far side of the embankment. “Roll for the ravine, Buckie, it’s your only chance!” yelled Bolduc. Bucknam did, but when his friends tried to come out of cover to save him he urged them back: “Don’t mind me—take care of the others!” He died of his wounds shortly thereafter.¹⁰⁶ It was only the afternoon and the Skowhegan High School Squad was half gone.¹⁰⁷

Casualties elsewhere in Company E were mounting alarmingly. Sgt. Archie McKenzie—a veteran of the Regular Army—was shot in the back. Cpl. Roy Fitzmorris said of him later, “Archie died the bravest of any man I ever saw. He just showed us young fellows how to die. We were just boys and knew how to fight, but when it came to being hurt we hadn’t been taught how to stand it.”¹⁰⁸ Healy sent 2nd Lt. Cecil Sniff’s 3rd Platoon to try to assist 4th Platoon but this effort only created more casualties. Sniff pulled his men back to the stream and the protective cover of its ravine. At 1045, Healy ordered 3rd Platoon back the railroad embankment, pulling the machine gun platoon with them.¹⁰⁹ Company E would pay a high price for the failure of liaison on 18 July. Company E’s John Longley put it succinctly after the war, “Over 200 men in our group went in...and only 36 men walked out.”¹¹⁰

Bravery at the lowest levels was a common feature on that field. Mechanic Joseph Thibodeau of Company L—on duty with the 2nd Battalion as a litter carrier—rendered medical aid under fire until he was shot in the hand, preventing him from carrying litters. He then joined the front line with a rifle until he was wounded in the leg.¹¹¹ For his courage, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Dilboy’s Attack

At around 0930, elements of Company H on the extreme right moved to clear out several machine gun positions in the wheat fields on the other side of the railroad. “Upon reaching our objective we were met with strong enemy resistance and engaged in considerable hand-to-hand fighting,” remembered Sgt. Albert Klick. “Approximately about [sic] 20 yards on the enemy side of the railroad tracks was a ravine, a dried-up brook, infested with enemy machine guns and snipers.” Pfc. George Dilboy hopped onto the railroad embankment to get a better look at their foe when he began

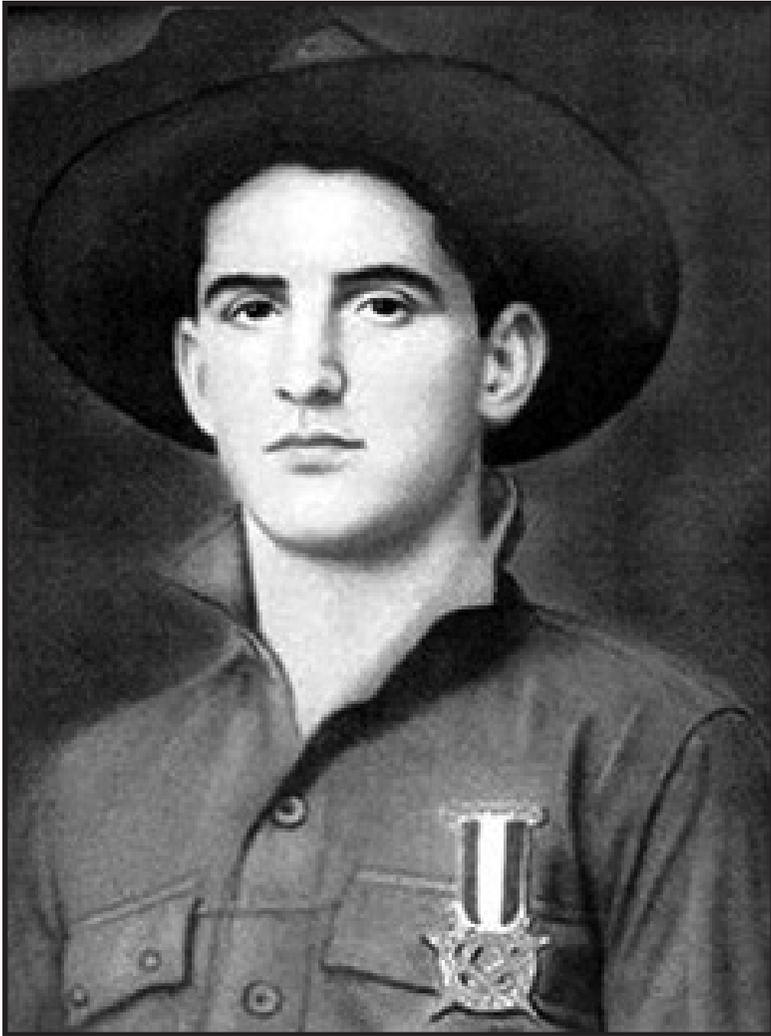


Figure 5.3. Pfc. George Dilboy. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

to receive fire from a nearby machine gun nest, cleverly concealed in the tall wheat. Rather than jump back to safety, Dilboy rushed the machine gun nest, firing his rifle. “He pitched forward about 30 feet in front of the enemy machine gun, apparently severely wounded,” Albert Klick wrote. “He attempted to rise but could not seem to accomplish this. He rose on his elbows, pushing himself forward, and suddenly came to a stop again, and I could see him firing his rifle until finally the machine gun was silenced. Then he dropped back to the ground, never to rise again.”¹¹² Dilboy had been brought down about 25 yards from the nest, shot through the legs and chest. His legs mangled, he continued to crawl forward, firing as he went.

He killed three of the German defenders and the rest fled. When Dilboy's companions from Company H found him two days later, advancing over the now-captured ground, they found their comrade: "Both legs were broken above the knees, and I recall blood on his shoulders. Lying in front of him were three enemy dead, that he had accounted for. He was dead, with his face to the enemy."¹¹³ He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, the first Medal of Honor awarded to a Greek-American.¹¹⁴

Dilboy was an immigrant to the United States from the Greek settlement of Alatsata (now in western Turkey). He had already experienced combat, returning to his homeland to fight in the First and Second Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. Like so many patriotic immigrants, he joined the National Guard when he returned to the US in 1914. He had served with the 1st New Hampshire on the Mexican border and was seen as a very capable and knowledgeable soldier. "There was nothing outstanding about him but he was always a good fellow, a good mixer, and generous hearted," recalled Sgt. Albert Klick. "In France he was always one of the first to step forward at the request for volunteers in the lines, or for exceptionally dangerous duties out in 'No-man's Land.' Always willing, always smiling. His 'happy-go-lucky' personality was one of the outstanding features of the company in which he served."¹¹⁵

Dilboy's remains were buried in France, but at the request of his father, Antonios, his body was exhumed and returned to be buried in his hometown of Alatsata. During the Greco-Turkish War of 1919-1922, Turks captured the region and desecrated Dilboy's grave—to include removing the American flag from his coffin. US President Warren G. Harding was incensed and ordered the USS *Litchfield*, a US Navy destroyer, to Turkey to recover Dilboy's remains. Harding received a formal apology from the Turks, Dilboy's remains were returned to the US aboard the *Litchfield* to be buried in Arlington National Cemetery.¹¹⁶ The uniquely American saga of an immigrant's war was finally at an end for George Dilboy.

The Attack Stalls

At around 1400, a brief lull settled over the field. Healy pulled his Company E back even farther to cover Company G's flank, and used the time to dig his men in. However, as darkness fell, infiltrating teams of Germans began to work into the gaps in the line around Company E and G. At 2000, as Hosford was realizing that his position was in critical danger of being overrun, the Germans mounted a counterattack. Company H brushed it off, and even Company E was able to repel it.¹¹⁷ But Hosford realized that he could not advance any further and that if he stayed where he was, he was in danger

of being surrounded and cut off. The two-kilometer front was too large for him to try to hold, especially with the mounting casualties. In trying to keep up communications with regimental headquarters he had already lost many men as runners—including Pvt. George Leighton, formerly a noted high school athlete in Fairfield, Maine, now lying dead outside Belleau Woods.¹¹⁸

Under the cover of darkness, Hosford began the evacuation from the railroad to their point of departure at Belleau Wood, as he was unable to bring up supplies or reinforcements and the Germans were threatening his flanks.¹¹⁹ Company E moved back first, then Company G. At 2130, Shumway ordered Company H to withdraw by platoon, by way of Bouresches.¹²⁰ By 2200, the battalion was back within the rudimentary trenches of Belleau Wood and fought off a weak enemy counterattack. Due to the strong concentrations of enemy artillery fire, it appeared that a much larger counterattack might be coming, but it never materialized.¹²¹ They were relieved by the 1st Battalion at 1300 on 19 July and the bloodied companies went into corps reserve.¹²²

At 2345, Major Southard reported that the 3rd Battalion, 104th Infantry and the French 167th Division had attempted a coordinated advance against Hill 193, but the French could not attack because they were waiting on their 164th French Division to break through on their left, and the assault was called off.¹²³ Once again, the orders to maintain strict zones of attack were slowing the Allied advance and causing more casualties.¹²⁴

18 July had shown mixed results for the 103rd Infantry. The 3rd Battalion had been one of the first units to attack in the opening of the Second Battle of the Marne, later to be touted as one of the first American units to advance and take its objective in the first general American offensive of the war.¹²⁵ Casualties were relatively light in the 3rd Battalion: five men killed in action that day. The 2nd Battalion was another story. Company E alone had incurred 22 killed in action, while Company F lost four, Company G lost 12, and Company H lost three. Hundreds more were wounded in action, reducing the companies to mere ghosts of what they had been on the morning of 18 July. Additionally, two men from Company K were killed and three more men from Company L were killed due to the heavy shelling. It was all minor compared to what was coming.

The next day, 19 July, was to have been another day of assaults, but once again the 26th Division could not advance on its axis because it had to wait for the French 167th Division to take its objective, and the 167th could do nothing until the 164th Division advanced. So, the men of the 103rd hunkered down in place all day, still under bombardment from the enemy. The 1st and 3rd Battalions were both shelled heavily.¹²⁶ Company H lost nine

more men killed to shellfire while one man in Company G was also killed. Torcy itself was reduced to rubble. A gunner from Battery B, 103rd Field Artillery Regiment wrote, "Torcy the first town through which we passed, was absolutely demolished. Everything was level with the ground. It would have taken a wonderful imagination to picture the ruins we saw as orderly rows of buildings. Our Infantry as well as the Germans had suffered heavily."¹²⁷ Two more men from Company L were killed in Torcy on 19 July. Lieutenant Doane was wounded under the left eye by a shell fragment and was evacuated, with 2nd Lt. Clinton Pickering taking command of the company.¹²⁸

Hill 190

That evening, General Cole and General Sherburne—commanding the 51st Artillery Brigade—met at the 52nd Brigade command post at La Loge farm to ensure that the following day's assaults would have proper artillery coverage. This had been noticeably lacking in the assaults of 18 July. The object of the assault was the Etrepilly Plateau which, if captured, would finally break the German hold on Hill 193 and make their entire line vulnerable. The key position was Hill 190, the peak of the plateau. To the north, the Allied armies were slowly pushing east with the pivot being the town of Belleau. Thus, if Hill 190 fell, it would allow for a general advance to the east. General Jean Degoutte, commanding the 6th Army of which the 26th Division was a part, identified the Etrepilly Plateau as "the key of the offensive."¹²⁹ General Cole identified Hanson's 1st Battalion as the force that would be given the monumental task of cracking open the entire 6th Army Offensive.

Orders came down early on the afternoon of 20 July for Hanson's 1st Battalion to attack at 1500 with Hill 190 as its objective. The battalion was already concentrated on the eastern edge of Belleau Wood, which was to be their line of departure. Mindful of the difficulties that Hosford had encountered, Hanson gave strict orders to his company commanders not to get bogged down by machine gun nests but to bypass them where they could in order to get to the top of the height as quickly as possible—hinting at infiltration tactics rather than open warfare. The 37mm battery was brought forward to suppress enemy positions. After the assault, Lieutenant McGrew found one German machine gun destroyed from a 37mm round. In another position, he found a dead German gunner with an unexploded 37mm round lodged in his head.¹³⁰

The attack got off at exactly 1500, with Company C leading the way on the left, followed by Company B in support. At 1515, Company D attacked on the right with Company A in support.¹³¹ Sherburne's artillery began a creeping barrage at the rate of 100 yards in three minutes.¹³² Behind this

shower of iron, the “poor devils” of Company C rushed out of Belleau Wood and down the open slope “with the sunshine lighting up their bayonets.”¹³³ Despite the artillery barrage, they were cut down in droves by accurate machine gun fire from German positions in the creek bed: 48 casualties in half a minute.¹³⁴ Privates Leon Wilbur and Carlisle Gould were both swept down with machine gun bullets through the legs as they rushed through the waves of wheat. They bound each other’s wounds and crawled towards the relative safety of Belleau Wood where they were brought to a field hospital.¹³⁵ Nineteen-year-old Ralph Bunten and his 21-year-old brother George were both with Company C during the attack. While Ralph made it out relatively unscathed, his brother was mortally wounded. “I lost some of the best friends that I ever had in my life in that little scrap,” reflected Ralph afterwards, “but God knows, every one of them died a soldier’s death.”¹³⁶

Just like that, it was Company B’s turn. Cpl. Russell Adams in Company B said later, “We were to be the second wave, but we hadn’t gone very far before we were the first wave—that’s how bad the men from Company C had been hit.”¹³⁷ The men of Company B began to fall as well. “Corporal Adams, Corporal Adams, I’m hit, I’m hit!” cried Pvt. Joseph Arsenault, going down next to Adams. Arsenault was one of seven men in his family serving in Company B. Four of them would be killed or wounded at Second Marne. Adams himself was shortly grazed in the leg by a machine gun bullet as he ran to shelter behind a knoll. Pvt. Michael McQuade, a loudmouthed, hard-drinking, hard-fighting Irishman from Rumford had a round ricochet off his rifle and then hit his helmet, glancing off. His canteen—filled with something stronger than water—was shot clean away, causing McQuade to curse loudly.¹³⁸ Cpl. Daniel J. Connor had a shell fragment go through his helmet and lodge in his hair without scratching him, “though I was a bit dizzy for a while,” he said afterwards.¹³⁹

Companies A and D got hung up clearing the creek bed on the left, their advance slowing to a crawl. Hanson pushed B and C forward on the right, intent on not losing momentum.¹⁴⁰ Company B—with what was left of Company C—was able to close in on the Germans in the creek bed and begin flanking the machine gun nests. Shot through the leg by an enemy machine gun, Pvt. Lucian Arsenault refused to leave his platoon. He continued forward until he was hit a second time, but he again declined forcibly to be evacuated. The third time, the wound proved fatal, and Private Arsenault went down for good. His father Leon was later presented with his Distinguished Service Cross.¹⁴¹

The companies were soon across the creek and advancing into the wheat fields on the slopes of Hill 190. They were “no longer walking in waves,



Figure 5.4. A panoramic view of Hills 190 and 193. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

but advancing in spurts.”¹⁴² They disappeared into the wheat and then re-emerged, fighting, to the shock of Lieutenant McGrew, watching through his field glasses, who did not expect anyone to be left alive in the hurricane of fire: “I saw them start up the rise... There was bayonet fighting on a knoll part way up the slope on the left flank... I recognized two unmistakable figures at the head of this dwindling force. Gigantic ‘Hunty’ Frothingham... was on the left and diminutive ‘Nemo’ Burbank was on the right.” Both officers were leading small groups of men into action.¹⁴³ Lieut. Harry H. Noel took 12 men around the right of the German position and led a charge to knock out a machine gun, where he was wounded. His men wiped out several machine-gun positions, gaining partial control of the hill. Noel found himself in command of Company B, as he was less severely wounded than the other officers around him.¹⁴⁴ 1st Lt. Timothy Bonney from Hanson’s headquarters team found himself in the middle of the action. Under fire by German machine guns, he spotted two wounded American soldiers who were unable to get to safety. Disregarding his own safety, he rushed from cover and rescued the two men, taking them to a dressing station.¹⁴⁵

Small unit actions were what won the day and personal courage was what drove those actions. Pfc. Arthur Paradis of Company B had been detailed as a battalion runner. He had already watched five other men attempt to run straight back from the ravine across the wheat field to Belleau Wood. None of them made it. But Paradis had been closely watching the situation and had figured out where the German machine gun was located. He crept up to the nest and charged it by himself, killing all the occu-



HILL 190 WHERE THE AMERICAN ARMY TURNED THE LAST GERMAN OFFENSIVE, JULY 1918
BY HILL 1903 AND TEN BRUSSELS FARM ON THE CENTER.

pants before the rest of his squad could reach him.¹⁴⁶ He later was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions.¹⁴⁷ Also in Company B, Pvt. Eldon Duff—one of the new replacements from Kansas—leapt into a machine gun nest and killed the gunner and assistant gunners with his bayonet.¹⁴⁸ Cpl. Edward McNeil from Company B found himself the only surviving member of his squad to reach Hill 190. Undeterred by this sober realization, he charged into the enemy machine guns, captured three guns and five prisoners, all at bayonet point. This action won him both the Distinguished Service Cross and *Croix de Guerre*.¹⁴⁹

The Germans began to retreat as the 1st Battalion closed in on them, since most of their machine guns were now out of ammunition. Corporal Adams captured a German officer, who was full of praise for the Yankees: “Brave men, brave men. How did you get through the fire? Good soldiers, good soldiers. If we only had our men of 1914 with us, then we have the real fight!”¹⁵⁰ Adams thought that the Germans who were there had already put up enough of a fight. Company B went into Hill 190 with 180 men and were now down to just 29 effectives.¹⁵¹ It would fight as one consolidated platoon for the rest of the campaign. Lieut. Frank Burbank was the only unwounded officer left in Company C by the end of the day and was thereby left in command. He could only count 15 men left in his command on the evening of 20 July.¹⁵² He himself had barely escaped being hit, as he was the first of his company to enter the machine gun pits on the top of the hill and personally captured an enemy machine gun with its whole crew. He then was seen firing this gun at German positions before his soldiers reached him.¹⁵³ He then reorganized his perimeter and held it through the night.¹⁵⁴ He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. His logbook

for that day read only: "July 20th 1918. attacked and took objective hill #190. Chateau Thierry. with loss 1 officer 22 men killed 122 men 3 officers wounded 1 officer and 5 men dying from wounds."¹⁵⁵

Lieut. Guy Swett went over the top with his Company D at 1515 and was caught in the maelstrom of fire, noting "135 casualties reported... Formed Co A and D and went in support of C and B. No sleep. The ground strewn with dead and wounded. A brutal sight." He himself was struck in the left knee with a machine gun bullet but refused to be evacuated.¹⁵⁶ A and D were unable to get past the railroad track in the initial advance, due to heavy fire now coming in from Hill 193 and German guns in strong-points between the railroad track and the creek bed. Notwithstanding the fire, they attempted to clean out these positions. These "unassuming boys, little given to talk went at the job with the spirit of a bulldog who growls not but who hands on to the death." Lieutenant Grindle, in command of Company A after Captain Hasty was evacuated, was himself shot in the leg. He dragged himself forward and knocked out a German machine gun before passing out from loss of blood. Lieutenant Jutras, also of Company A, was knocked unconscious by a shell, revived, and then led his men into a bayonet fight with a German gun crew. Unable to break this position, and because they were now being shelled, Companies A and D pulled back to the railroad embankment.¹⁵⁷ The men crawled into shell holes and held what ground they had taken.¹⁵⁸

Among the dead was Pvt. Herman F. Little, of Company B. From Manchester, New Hampshire, he worked before the war as a wool sorter at the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company to support his widowed mother. He had joined Company B, 1st New Hampshire in 1916 for the service on the Mexican Border. On 6 August, his mother received two pieces of mail. One was a telegram from the War Department: "Pvt. Herman F. Little wounded on July 20, 1918. Degree undetermined. Department has no further information." The other was a letter from her son dated 3 July. "We are having a hot time with the Huns," wrote Little. He told her about meeting another Manchester soldier in the trenches, William Gemmill. "I gave him a little advice on how to battle the Huns, as he is new in the game and I am an old hand." She did not learn of her son's death until 6 September. Three years later, his remains were transferred from the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery back to Manchester.¹⁵⁹

At 2010, regimental headquarters received word that Hill 190 was in US hands, but that the 1st Battalion was very shot up and needed reinforcements. At 2045, Major Hanson reported to Colonel Hume that he had two companies of the 1st Battalion and Company K of the 104th Infantry

on Hill 190: “We have taken and are consolidating the position but have had tremendous losses, have less than 200 men in the line available for duty but will hold the position to the last man.”¹⁶⁰ He established a dressing station for the wounded at the base of the hill, where men from the Band acted as orderlies and litter bearers, all under artillery fire.¹⁶¹ During the night, Companies A and D were rushed to Hill 190 from their positions along the railroad track. The Machine Gun Company of the 103rd Infantry as well as a machine gun platoon from the 102nd Infantry were sent up to defend the hill.¹⁶² The 1st Battalion resupplied, ate hot supper at 2300, and then dug in for an expected enemy counterattack.¹⁶³ They had captured 24 prisoners and taken six machine guns. Enemy killed and wounded were unknown, but Hanson estimated their losses as heavy.¹⁶⁴ Hill 190 had been taken; the German defenses at Chateau-Thierry had been cracked.

The German Line is Broken

Over in Torcy, the 3rd Battalion had been enduring heavy machine gun and rifle fire from Hill 193, as well as artillery fire. At 1630, it was reported that Major Southard was wounded in the throat by a machine gun bullet and had his ear nicked by shrapnel. He was withdrawn to an aid station, protesting—but still smoking his cigar.¹⁶⁵ Colonel Hume’s driver, L.L. Pray remembered, “I personally carried Major Southard to the hospital and when the Colonel [Hume] heard of the Major being wounded, he stood like a man stunned, tears streaming down his face.” Hume sent Pray with his own car to help evacuate casualties off the front line.¹⁶⁶ Captain Andrews of Company K replaced Southard.¹⁶⁷ The French 167th Division was now encircling Hill 193 as the 164th Division had broken through to their objective on the night of 19 July. They assaulted that evening. Sergeant Holden and the men of Company L sat on the edge of their foxholes and watched the attack:

That was one of the prettiest sights I have ever seen. Line after line of French in their sky-blue uniforms walked slowly past us. It was a fairly warm day but these lads were wearing their overcoats with the corners of the front buttoned back on their hips so as to give them free use of the legs. Many of them had cans and dippers hung onto their packs so that their approach was well heralded. The Officers strolled nonchalantly along paying no attention to their men—those men knew their jobs and there was no need of coaching them. Here, probably, was a Unit of the best Army on the earth at that time.¹⁶⁸

But the men could not be onlookers for long; orders came down for the 3rd Battalion to support the attack of the 3rd Battalion of the 104th In-

fantry. Battalion Headquarters moved into the town of Belleau, where the battalion was assembling. Two companies were pushed forward to support the 104th but found the attack stalled due to heavy machine gun fire.¹⁶⁹ The two forward companies made liaison with the 1st Battalion on Hill 190, but were pinned down by enemy fire and remained in this position overnight, while the two other companies remained in Belleau.¹⁷⁰

With Hill 190 occupied by US forces, the Germans began to evacuate Hill 193 during the night of 20 July, strongly pressed by the French. As General Degoutte had said, the Etrepilly Plateau was the key to breaking open the entire line. During the night, all the forward battalions of the 26th Division were reoriented to face east—where they would take advantage of the gains of the first three days of the offensive and push directly into German lines.

The day of 20 July would stand as the bloodiest in the 103rd Infantry's history. Company A had lost only six men killed, so they were the largest operational unit of the 1st Battalion. Seventeen men in Company B were dead. Company C sustained the highest losses, with 23 men killed in action. Company D could count 17 killed in action. Hanson estimated the wounded at 331. Officer losses in the 1st Battalion were also heavy, with one killed and nine wounded, about half the available company officers.¹⁷¹ In the 3rd Battalion, Company K lost four, Company M five, and Company L, one. However, the only remaining captain in the entire battalion was Captain Andrews, who now had command of the whole.¹⁷² Company E took one loss while the Machine Gun Company had two men killed. The majority of casualties were from machine gun fire.

During the night, Sergeant Holden went in search of anyone who had orders for his platoon. He found a runner who led him back to a barn in Belleau:

When we opened the door and went in I stopped in horror. That barn must have been at least forty by fifty feet large and the straw-covered floor was covered with wounded men. Some dozen or fifteen of the less seriously wounded were standing because there was no room for them to lie down. There was every type of wound that one could imagine in that group but not a groan or word of complaint from any of them as the one Doctor and two Medical Corps men worked as fast as possible to patch them up. What kept those Medics from going stark mad I shall never fathom.¹⁷³

Casualties were organized by company, battalion, and regiment. Field ambulances continuously moved the wounded from forward aid stations to

field hospitals closer to the rear. This link from forward to rear areas was about to be tested again in the days to come.

Advance to Epieds

At the 52nd Brigade headquarters at 0703 on 21 July, General Cole informed Colonel Hume that the French had finally seized Hill 193. With the capture of these two heights, the nut had been cracked and the Germans had lost their commanding defensive positions. The Germans had withdrawn in an orderly manner across all the 26th Division front during the night.¹⁷⁴ US I Corps headquarters assumed the Germans were in full retreat, not withdrawing to previously prepared positions, and ordered that all units move forward immediately to press the enemy's retreat.¹⁷⁵ They were in error, as would be seen in the coming days.

Even before the news from brigade about Hill 193, the 103rd was ordered to advance to maintain contact with the enemy. Hanson's 1st Battalion went "over the top" again at 0400. and moved forward, advancing mile after mile without meeting serious opposition. After about four miles, the battalion reached the Soissons-Chateau-Thierry Road at 1350. where they halted to organize a defense as the first enemy shells of the day began to crash around them, indicating that they had regained contact with the Germans.¹⁷⁶ Hanson sent out patrols from this point. The 3rd Battalion advanced out of Torcy and Belleau following the 3rd Battalion, 104th Infantry which was advancing to the left of Hanson's battalion.¹⁷⁷ Sergeant Holden remarked that the ground they passed over "was so covered with blood that it was difficult to find a place to step without stepping in human blood."¹⁷⁸ Regimental Headquarters moved up to the village of Bouresches, accompanied by the 2nd Battalion.¹⁷⁹ Movement was slowed by the accordion wire entanglements left behind by the withdrawing Germans, as well as persistent minenwerfer and artillery fire.¹⁸⁰

About every mile or so, the Germans would pause to delay the pursuing Yankees with machine gun fire. But the US artillery was leap-frogging their batteries forward, giving close fire support as the men moved up and American airplanes provided up-to-date information as to the enemy's movements.¹⁸¹ The Yankee Division had another secret weapon: a troop of French lancers on their left. If the infantry got hung up, they would report the location of the German gun to the cavalymen who would flank the gun and, "suddenly burst in one of the Boche crews at a gallop and with four feet of lance sticking out in front of the horses' noses. The Germans would immediately decide that they didn't like this part of the Country and would promptly take off in the general direction of Berlin—leaving their

guns behind them.”¹⁸² Casualties were very light for 21 July—four men of the 1st Battalion died of wounds received the day prior.

Epieds and Trugny

On the morning of 22 July, the 26th Division advanced two more miles through grain fields, before striking their first severe resistance: a line of machine gun positions clustered around and behind the villages of Epieds to the north and Trugny to the south. These two villages run along a ridgeline, directly to the north of the densely wooded Bois de Barbillon. Attempts to flank to the south would mean having to penetrate the dark forest and its hidden wire entanglements backed by machine guns. Attacking the ridgeline would mean crossing over another wide valley from Hill 215 to strike into the towns and get a lodgment on the ridge.

The leading regiments of the 26th Division crested Hill 215, rushed into this maelstrom, and were suddenly stopped by intense machine gun and artillery fire. There was an estimated one German machine gun for every seven yards of front around these villages, so any frontal assault was doomed to failure. The Germans had left detachments of eight men around each machine gun and each was well-stocked with ammunition. These Germans were to cover the withdrawal of the rest of their forces.¹⁸³ The Doughboys of the 103rd were often incensed that when they got close to German guns, the Germans would then throw up their hands and shout “Kamerad!” in surrender. By the Aisne-Marne, the Yankees had about enough of that. Sgt. H. Earnest Smith in Company A wrote to a friend back home, “By the way Bill, ‘Fritz’ doesn’t seem to be getting away so well with the old-time ‘kamarad’ stuff (excuse my slang) with the Yanks. I have seen this pulled once and since then have decided to fail to see any up stretched hands. The funny part of the ‘kamarad’ game is that their hands seldom go into the air unarmed.”¹⁸⁴ Claims that German machine gun crews continued to fire until the last second before capture was common in the AEF; as was the rumor that German soldiers used surrendering as a ruse to shoot US troops. However, the majority of evidence of letters and reports from the regiment supports that the Germans usually surrendered in good faith and that US troops did not gun down surrendering Germans.

The US troops had by now outpaced their own artillery, and units were so intermingled from the continued orders to attack that the artillery was reluctant to fire without knowing where all units were. This was not helped when First Corps ordered the 52nd and 51st Brigades to switch fronts, not knowing that both brigades were in significant combat. The order was rescinded later in the morning, but some units had begun moving and the

damage had already been done: units were intermixed, confused, and taking losses.¹⁸⁵ As an example, Company D was rushed forward to fill a gap between the 104th and 102nd Infantry Regiments. Lieutenant Swett witnessed the 104th attack, remarking “a pretty sight but a holy slaughter.”¹⁸⁶

The 3rd Battalion was on the extreme left, near Bois de la Gouttiere, still supporting the 3rd Battalion of the 104th Infantry. They were already on their reserve rations, not being able to get their field kitchens up to the front. Each company was reduced in numbers as well; Company L had one officer remaining and 87 men, and it was the largest in the entire battalion.¹⁸⁷ The 3rd Battalion was now receiving a punishment from enemy artillery and gas. Captain Andrews, commanding the 3rd Battalion, was gassed, and overall command passed to Lieut. Fletcher Clark, Jr.¹⁸⁸ Troops scattered out of the open fields and made for the wooded hills on either side of the route of advance. From the platoon to the battalion level, command and control was nearly gone.

It was here that Captain Hosford found Sergeant Holden, on the extreme left. Hosford was looking for Major Hanson, but Holden said that the last he had seen of the 1st Battalion was that they were in the woods to the right side of the fields. Holden offered the officer a runner, but Hosford declined and walked right out into the field. Astonished, Holden watched as “He drew his head down into his collar and walked straight along with bullets kicking up the earth right around his feet.” Not only did Hosford walk out into the maelstrom, but he walked back through it as well. Holden recalled that “When he arrived back where we were his face looked like a thunder cloud.” Hosford had not been an officer his entire career; as an enlisted man, he had made his name as an excellent marksman, helping the Maine rifle team win 5th place at the national trials in 1902. Seizing a rifle from a nearby Doughboy, Hosford knelt behind a large tree. “He had been watching the source of that fire all the way across the field and he knew just where that machine gun was located,” recalled Holden. Hosford fired until the gun was silenced, and then handed the rifle back to its owner and walked away as if nothing had happened.¹⁸⁹ Plans were made for a general advance at 1400. To try to reduce some of the confusion, Major Hanson took control of the left wing of the advance and Col. John “Machine Gun” Parker of the 102nd Infantry took control of the right.¹⁹⁰

By 1400 on 22 July, 1st Battalion, 103rd Infantry was assaulting Trugny and the ridgeline between the towns but counted only two of its companies on its line, as well as two companies from the 102nd Infantry. In front of this line were elements from the 102nd, 103rd, and 104th Infantry Regiments, all intermingled. This group advanced in three waves around

1415 and were joined on their left by elements of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 103rd Infantry. Company G's Lieut. Arthur Smith took shelter in a shell hole with Pvt. Daniel Geagan. Geagan rose to advance and was immediately shot down by a sniper's bullet.¹⁹¹ Half an hour later, after pushing ahead 800 meters, the advance was halted by machine gun fire from positions on the reverse slope of the ridge. Three companies from the 104th Infantry suddenly withdrew, later saying that they had orders to fall back. Two companies of Hosford's 2nd Battalion moved forward at 1445 and connected with Hanson's left.¹⁹² The 3rd Battalion of the 103rd, still in support on the left, became split during the advance, got off course, and then fell back under heavy fire.¹⁹³

Sergeant Holden advanced to the edge of the wood to get a better look at the assault companies and assess the situation when he was startled by a man running towards him: "He looked as wild as an animal and I knew that this was another case of what we termed shell-shock. This was a misnomer for shell-fire had nothing to do with it. It was a battle fatigue—or just plain nervous breakdown."¹⁹⁴ The soldier raced by, oblivious to the shells falling near him. A second soldier appeared, in the same condition as the first. Holden stepped into his path to stop him and the startled soldier stared at him before slumping down on the ground and beginning to cry. "I sat down beside him and put my arm around his shoulder," remembered Holden. "I quieted him down and assured him that no harm had been done." Soon the order came to fall back and the Holden left the young man in the care of his company.¹⁹⁵ It was obvious that the strain of prolonged combat, low rations, and little sleep was taking its toll on the US soldiers.

It was around this time that brothers Joseph and Placide Bolduc of Company E said their last goodbye, shaking hands before their company's second attempt to advance. Moments later, Placide was killed by an exploding artillery shell. Joseph wrote home to their father after the battle, "We fought like devils against big odds and still we licked them. You may rest assured, my father, that I will take up the fight where Placide left off and make the Germans pay heavily for their barbarous methods of war. Keep up good courage, dear father, those who die on the field of honor do not die in vain."¹⁹⁶ Joseph had been the first man wounded in the company in February and also had the unfortunate luck to have a ruptured appendix back in March. He was not obligated to return to the front after his operation, but such was his devotion to his brother that he made his way back to Company E in May. Following Placide's death, Joseph took over leadership of Company E's sniper section, a role formerly held by his brother.¹⁹⁷

Hanson's 1st Battalion hung on under intense machine gun fire, but were then targeted with a strong gas attack. This barrage was so heavy that the amalgamated forces withdrew.¹⁹⁸ Hosford's 2nd Battalion made initial gains. Company G was able to push into the network of machine guns and outflank several guns. Under heavy fire and unable to get support, the company fell back. Captain Edes was once again ineffective. Hume would relieve him of command the next day.¹⁹⁹ Companies no longer had cohesion; platoons and squads fought it out as best they could. Cpl. Millard Corson of Company E was sent with his squad to seize a machine gun "raising Cain on the left." No sooner had he started than he was gunned down in a frenzy of machine gun fire.²⁰⁰ The massive amounts of gas fired by the Germans induced widespread panic, causing multiple withdrawals without orders by several units.²⁰¹ Hosford slowly drew back his 2nd Battalion, unable to gain command and control due to the heavy fire and disorganized situation. All his officers on the left flank had become casualties under the flood of high explosives, gas, and machine gun fire. He withdrew to Hill 215, arriving by 2200, where he immediately went to work trying to consolidate his scattered units.²⁰²

In the 3rd Battalion, the companies were hit with a gas that made the men feel nauseous, in order to get them to take off their masks; this was then followed by the deadly phosgene. As Sergeant Holden related, "We removed our facemasks but kept the nose-clips and the mouth-pieces in place. This allowed us to breathe purified air without being blinded or absorbing too much gas." Holden led his platoon up a wooded slope to avoid the gas, which tended to collect in low-lying areas. Upon reaching relative safety, he spotted about a dozen men from 1st Platoon who were coughing and choking under the effects of the gas. Donning their masks, 3rd Platoon carried these men to safety.²⁰³ To the left of the 26th Division, the French 167th Division did not advance at all, saying it was useless to advance in the face of such heavy fire. They were correct.

Bloodied, the 26th Division halted at nightfall. General Cole reported to General Edwards, "The troops have been under a heavy shell-fire and machine-gun fire during most of the night...More than 1000 shells were fired in the vicinity of my P.C. [Post of Command] last night... The brigade is greatly reduced in strength, probably not more than 2400 effectives. The men have now been marching and fighting for four days, part of the time at night, and no time have they been able to get any sleep."²⁰⁴ The war diary of a German soldier recorded, "The Americans charged forward between Epieds and Bezu in dense crowds...and were caught by our artillery and machine gun fire."²⁰⁵ Between four days of

offensive combat, constant gassing—which required the men to spend most of the time masked—and the confusion from intermingled units, the attacks on 22 July were a failure.²⁰⁶

During the night of 22-23 July, the lines were reorganized. In the morning, the 101st Infantry attacked into the Bois de Trugny after a machine gun and artillery barrage. After initial success in which the 101st gained two kilometers, they were forced to fall back because they received heavy machine gun fire from all sides. The 104th Infantry was in support but fell back as well.²⁰⁷ The 26th Division was unable to synchronize infantry, engineers, machine guns, and artillery to gain enough local advantage to achieve a breakthrough of the German defense in depth.

Pulled off the Line

At 1650, Colonel Hume was ordered to take the 1st Battalion, 103rd Infantry, two battalions of the 104th Infantry, and elements of the 101st Engineers to try to duplicate the 101st Infantry's attack. Hume assessed his troops. Most companies were being led by lieutenants or sergeants. Battalions were down to near company strength. All the men were exhausted and hungry. Most had been under near-constant artillery fire since the very beginning of the month. Many men had gone 72 hours without more than a little food and a few gulps of water.²⁰⁸ Morale was low, as Sergeant Holden recalled, "We even began to wonder if somebody high up was deliberately trying to push us to the point of cracking up or mutinying so as to discredit the New England National Guard Division."²⁰⁹ At 1725, Hume reported to General Cole that he would not be ready to advance for another two hours. Cole trusted his commander and ordered Hume to remain in place but to be ready to advance. At 1800, Cole cancelled the attack and ordered the 103rd Infantry to consolidate around the Bois de Chante Merle, about three kilometers back from the front lines.²¹⁰

The entire 52nd Brigade was drawn off the front lines, replaced by the 56th Brigade from the 28th US "Keystone" Division, which arrived during the night of 24 July. The 56th was ordered to assault the next morning, even though the brigade's men were exhausted from long marching and had not eaten for some time. However, the Germans again abruptly pulled back during the night, so the 56th Brigade advanced through Trugny with the 52nd Brigade trailing.²¹¹ Here again the advance was slowed by lengths of wire strewn through the fields and woods. By midday, the division halted at the Foret de Fere after gaining two miles of ground. They once again ran up against a wall of machine guns and artillery fire. The division was at the end of its strength as an effective fighting force; it

could go no further and was relieved by the 42nd US “Rainbow” Division which would carry the assault through the Croix Rouge Farm.²¹²

Open Warfare

The Second Marne was the test of the American doctrine of open warfare. And it demonstrated that open warfare against entrenched German machine guns and artillery was suicide. The British and French could have told them that. All throughout the battle, Gen. Hunter Liggett’s I Corps staff had issued a stream of orders to the 26th Division, always with the orders to continuously advance. The orders often came so quickly and so frequently that the ground commanders did not have sufficient time to react. The simple fact was that although the Corps headquarters was full of good intentions, it was entirely out of touch with the situation on the ground. As the ground commanders requested more artillery support, they only received more orders to advance. Corps headquarters seemingly never realized that the Germans were withdrawing to successive prepared defensive belts, not retreating in disarray.²¹³

Characteristically, Edwards and other officers within the 26th Division were scathing in their critique of the battle in their after-action reports. Open warfare with the rifle and bayonet was not the answer, they wrote. Machine gun positions needed to be reduced by concentrated artillery fire, trench mortars, machine guns, or—as a last resort—small teams of infantry to flank each position. They advised more artillery, called for combined arms operations with tanks or armored cars, for everything that was the opposite of what General Headquarters at Chaumont and I Corps headquarters called on them to do, i.e., attack quickly, in the open, with infantry, while expecting proper communication, unit cohesion, and liaison with adjacent units. These unrealistic expectations led to the blood-bath that was the Second Battle of the Marne.²¹⁴ Yet for all that, it was a resounding victory.

Losses

German losses were considerable. The 4th Ersatz Division was down to 400 men at the end of the battle. The 201st Division suffered sixty percent losses. Both the 5th Guard and the 87th Divisions only mustered 1,000 men each by the end of the fight. They had outrun their lines of supplies and communication, and then had taken a severe beating from the Yankees.²¹⁵

The 103rd Infantry suffered heavily at the Marne. From 9-27 July, they lost 157 killed in action, 540 wounded in action (from individual company and battalion reports, this number was most likely closer to 640), 304

gassed, and 14 missing in action. Nearly 50 percent of the strength with which they began the campaign. Some of those men who were wounded would die in the days following the battle. The wounded, if they were evacuated further back than the regimental aid station, were not supposed to return to the regiment—although many of them did, disobeying their orders. The 103rd Infantry suffered by far the highest losses out of any unit in the entire 26th Division, with most casualties coming on 18 and 20 July.²¹⁶ Twenty-four men of the regiment won the Distinguished Service Cross at Second Marne.

Rest Area

Finally, for the first time since February, the 103rd Infantry with the rest of the 26th Division, was off to a few weeks of rest. On 1 August, they went into a rest camp near Ussy-sur-Marne. The men were given three days to get clean uniforms, a bath, and some sleep. Then it was a train ride to a true rest camp near Laigrie—and back to training; the war would continue.²¹⁷ But from now on, the Allies would be on the offensive. French General Degoutte was lavish in his praise for the Yankees: “I could not have done better on a similar occasion, with my best troops.”²¹⁸

The same day that the 103rd went into its rest camp, Arthur Sprague of Company K from Farmington, Maine, sat down to write to his “Dear Mother.” Sprague had been badly gassed in the fighting on 22 July around Epieds and had just gotten out of the hospital. Rather than being sent back to the Front, he was assigned to a headquarters unit far away from the fighting—although as he assured his mother, “still I’m going back if there is any chance.” Sprague struggled to put into words what he had seen:

There has been some very hard fighting going on here and my outfit was in it. You remember little Ralph Hosmer, well he was killed and a number of others, I cannot tell you how many. I tell you the 26th Division has done some hard fighting and a lot of it. You have probably heard Bernard [his brother, also in Company K] was wounded, but do not worry; it was not a bad one. He was shell-shocked also, so they will not let him go back to the lines either. I guess the war is about over and I will be some glad when it is.²¹⁹

It was a time to reflect on what they had been through. “I wish I could tell you just what we have been through and where but I can’t tell all because I can’t ever describe what happened,” wrote Capt. Spaulding Bisbee on 1 August.²²⁰ Ten days later, he was able to gather his thoughts:

I have had hard work expressing myself for I was so tired and a bit shaken up by the part we took in the big offensive north of Chateau Thierry. I saw some awful sights and some of my friends in the regiment that I thought so much of aren't with me any more, but I am feeling very, very well now, and quite busy.²²¹

Paul Grout from Company I wrote home, wryly, "Well I have been living in luxury more or less, mostly less."²²² Pvt. Floyd A. Whitney from Battleboro, Vermont in Company H had been wounded in the leg during the recent fighting. From the hospital he wrote, "Well, I think I am through going to the trenches again, because, mother, I shall never be able to walk very good again."²²³

Lieut. Ralph Eaton had walked down through the wheat fields outside Belleau Wood after the fighting was over and was shocked at what he saw: "Pitiful and eloquent spots of brown, inert like the earth, lying calmly in the lanes through the wheat, along which they failed to mount with their comrades to the hill and the woods above, they died with their faces to the front." He once again marveled at the "community of death," as he had seen on the Chemin des Dames: "And they called to us then, and still call to us."²²⁴

For one wounded man, the war had gone from bad to worse. Pvt. George Clukey from Company E, formerly an electrician in Skowhegan, Maine, had been wounded in the left leg on 18 July during the fight for the railroad. Unable to move and somehow unnoticed, he had been left on the field when the battalion pulled back. He became one of the few men from the regiment ever to be captured by the Germans during the war. He was transported to Limburg, Germany and placed in a hospital. There his leg was amputated, but as he wrote home to his family in September, "I am quite weak, but the doctor tells me I am getting along O.K." However, his health took a turn for the worse and he died of blood poisoning on 29 September. The Germans gave him a burial in Trier, sending a message through the Red Cross to his family.

New England Reacts to the Casualties

News of the battle trickled home. The newsletter for paper manufacturing had a notice for Pvt. Harry Bryant of Company B, who before the war was employed in the sulphite department of the Oxford Paper Mill. He had died of his wounds on 27 July 1918, the newsletter reported, leaving behind his parents, three brothers, and two sisters.²²⁵ A Bangor newspaper reported on 1 August that, "Mrs. W.E. Southard of

this city received a cable Sunday from her husband, Major Southard of the 3rd Battalion, 103rd Infantry in France, that he had received a slight flesh wound in his arm. The message contained no other information and concluded with the words ‘Don’t Worry.’ Mrs. Southard expects to receive a letter very soon from her husband telling just how the wound was received and its nature.”²²⁶ On 21 July, Mrs. Jennie Sadler Foster of Haverhill, Massachusetts received the news that her only son, Cpl. Leon Sadler of Company C, 103rd Infantry, had died of his wounds. Her sister’s son, Pvt. Wilbur F. Comeau, had been killed back in April in the 104th Infantry. Corporal Sadler’s 72-year-old grandfather Augustus Chamberlain wept as he held a picture of he and his grandson shaking hands before his “big boy” left for war.²²⁷

Mrs. W.F. Bunten—mother of Sgt. George Bunten of Company C, shot badly on Hill 190—received a letter on 20 August from a nurse in France: “Your dear son was brought into the hospital after that tremendous drive at Chateau Thierry in which the boys made history by their bravery. He was mortally wounded but never complained and asked me to just write home and say he was ‘slightly wounded and would be all right again soon. That he had been up front where it had been impossible to write, and would write you in a short time just as soon as he could.’ He was brave up to the last instant and fell quietly asleep on my arm... You mothers over there who have given your all toward the winning of this war, are as much heroes of the world as those dear sons who are actually on the battle field. God bless you and give you the consciousness of having done the greatest thing in the world today.”²²⁸

Capt. Spaulding Bisbee—separated from his Company B—could only write, “I felt so badly for my boys but I also was so proud of what the company had done.”²²⁹ Others were less sanguine. Capt. John Healy, commanding Company E, wrote home to his wife a few days after the regiment had been relieved off the front lines. They had been in the big offensive, he told her, and although he was safe he felt the loss of his men keenly: “People will know about them before this gets to you. Tell them every man was brave to the last and was doing his duty in every sense of the word.” Healy was pained because he had been ordered not to write the families of the men he had lost because the government wanted their notifications to be those that were received first in order to prevent rumors, but, “I know Old Skowhegan will be in mourning for a long time for our losses.” His tone—short and clipped—speaks of the loss and emptiness he must have felt: “The tide of battle has passed on and left us worn out and resting here on the battlefield.”²³⁰ Writing a

week later, Healy again captured this sentiment of community mourning: “How I loved every one of them and their places cannot be filled here. The worst of it is they can’t be replaced at home...They expect a lot of us in the line. You know one of these things is to be as hard as iron and never show sympathy. That is very hard for me but I am cultivating it to the best of my ability.”²³¹

Company E had borne the greatest losses in this engagement, and the news of the losses fell like a hammer on the mill town of Skowhegan. The mother of fallen Alvan Bucknam had written a short piece in the local newspaper back on June 27: “I used to worry when Alvan was little, for fear his coverlets would get off in the night and that he would catch cold; when he commenced to walk, I feared a fall with some little hurt or more serious injury...But now, this boy is in the trenches, or out in No Man’s land, where I know there are real dangers, by the side of which those that used to cause me terror fade into insignificance.”²³² Now Alvan was gone, buried near his friend Harry St. Ledger. Local Skowhegan poet Elizabeth Powers Merrill captured the collective grieving of the town in a special poem:

He sleeps beneath a simple wooden cross—symbol of the
world’s pain,

Crosses are rising all over the earth, from France to the hills
of Maine.

The tears of all sad mothers softly flow, for sons who in
France lie.

That very soil will bear life’s richest grain, as years on years
roll by.²³³

The grief surrounding Company E was not felt only by humans. Before the war, Cpl. Rex Kelley of Lewiston’s constant companion was a large collie dog. After Kelley left for Camp Bartlett and then France, the dog was constantly searching for his master. At the beginning of August, the dog took off from the family home, on the hunt for Kelley. It was at this time that Mrs. Frances Kelley received the news that her son had been seriously wounded on 23 July near Epieds: “Mrs. Kelley is confident in spite of rumors that persist to the contrary, that her son is alive and that she will hear soon,” the *Lewiston Evening Journal* opined. “In the meantime, however, a faithful, lonesome collie dog, who does not understand, is hunting for his master.”²³⁴ Kelley was, in fact wounded, having received two machine gun bullets through his right leg, fracturing the bone.²³⁵ However, he would survive the war and return to his mother.

While at their rest area, the 103rd received a large draft of replacements and the regimen of training began again. The distinctive National Guard and northeastern flavor of the regiment was significantly lessened by their losses at the Marne. Spaulding Bisbee noted on 11 August that morale was already on the rise again, with baseball games, opportunities for leave to Paris, and a relaxed environment greatly boosting the soldiers' spirits: "Tonight there is a bunch of them singing out in the street in front of my house. How soon they forget their hardships! You wouldn't think that they had lately come out from one of the largest 'drives' of the war, if you could see them now."²³⁶ While the regiment would never again be at full strength, they were once again ready to resume the offensive. At the end of August, Bisbee reflected on how much they had come through already, while lamenting the loss of so many friends to transfer, wounds, or death: "I do miss serving with troops and would not exchange my experiences for anything. They were wonderful days and I felt that we were really the 'pioneers' of the American army in this war."²³⁷ Sgt. Russel Adams of Company B perhaps said it best: "We had plenty of war ahead of us, but we left something there at Chateau-Thierry."²³⁸

The transition from defense to offense is perhaps one of the most difficult operations to execute in sustained combat. For the 103rd Infantry, they endured two weeks of an active defensive posture, with patrols and skirmishing. This was followed by one week of sustained combat operations which sapped not only the vigor of the units, but also took some of the most experienced leaders out of action. The campaign provided a variety of lessons learned for the regiment: in liaison, the importance of flank coverage, use of local fires, coordination with artillery, and the synchronization of all the elements of combat power at their disposal. The learning curve had been steep and bloody but their leaders would never again send infantry over the top without layers of support. Nor would they be willing to support plans that called for resuming open warfare. The Aisne-Marne had taught them a hard lesson.

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Chapter VI

“Great Sport:1”

St. Mihiel, August-September 1918

Organizational experiences are useless unless there is a mechanism in place, and the appropriate mindset, through which to distill, and ultimately absorb, lessons learned and put them into action at the next opportunity. The Aisne-Marne had been a veritable charnel house and these lessons learned came at a steep price. Now that the A.E.F. had gained the upper hand they could remain consistently on the offensive. As such, there would be many opportunities to apply these lessons in offensive warfare. The question was, however, would there be enough time for the leaders to put those lessons into their training regimen? Or would A.E.F. insistence on open warfare mandate repeating the same mistakes? With the next offensive—to erase the St. Mihiel Salient—only time would tell.

After the bloodletting at the Aisne-Marne, the 103rd Infantry Regiment went into a rest camp at La Ferte in central France at the beginning of August. Here they received 431 replacements—mainly from the Midwest—although this influx of new blood did not bring the regiment back up to full strength. On 4 August, after the men had a few days to relax, the regiment held a memorial service for those they had lost. The service was held at a park in Ussy-sur-Marne, with General Cole, Colonel Hume, and Chaplain Anderson as speakers.² On 14 August, the regiment moved to a real rest area, Chatillon-sur-Seine, far back from the front lines. Men lounged in the sun or splashed in the Seine River, pushing the horrors of war as far from the forefronts of their minds as possible. Baseball games, too, became part of the schedule. Drill resumed again to train up the new replacements.

Changes in leadership came as well, as vacancies from casualties were filled from the regiment's depleted ranks. Capt. Sherman Shumway was moved from command of Company H and took over command of the 2nd Battalion while Hosford was promoted to major and took over the 3rd Battalion for the still-convalescing Major Southard.. Shumway was a rising star in the 103rd Infantry. Born in Dover, Massachusetts, he had spent most of his life in California. He moved to Skowhegan, Maine in 1911. As Company E was recruiting to war strength in June of 1917, Shumway enlisted as a private. Two months later he graduated officers training camp as a second lieutenant. One year later, at the age of 24, he was now commanding a battalion. Captain Healy described him as, “a natural fighting

man and a born leader of men. He had a wonderful brain and was quick to grasp the situation of things. These attributes constitute the secret of his success.”³ Each battalion was now under the command of a proven combat leader, one who had shown coolness in the face of enemy fire and was well-respected by their men.

While at the rest area, some of the men who had been wounded in the spring began to return to the regiment, including Pvt. Howard Crosby. Wounded and gassed on 16 June, he had not been declared fit for duty until 31 July. From there, he was sent to a replacement camp near Paris. While he was on guard duty outside a hotel, he and a fellow guard were invited by a French matron to attend a wedding party in the hotel. Upon seeing the Doughboys enter in their olive drab uniforms, “the entire assemblage arose with the cry ‘*Vive la America,*’ and we replied with ‘*viva la France.*’” The Doughboys were made to be guests of honor that evening. At the end of the night, the bride arose and related that, “it gave them great pleasure to have as guests two Americans, their best friends and valiant Allies, who had been wounded, and were now about to return to the front.” Reflecting on that evening, Crosby remembered, “Since the big battle, and the Yankees had shown the world that they were made of steel, the French can’t do too much for an American.” Crosby returned to the Machine Gun Company the next day, with the feelings of fraternity with their French allies firm in his mind.⁴

These men who were returning to the regiment were often doing so against the directives of the Army. “It was not the policy of G.H.Q. to return enlisted men to their original Units,” recalled Sgt. Algernon Holden, “but many of them did return by going A.W.O.L. (absent without leave) from the Hospitals a day or two before they would have been discharged.”⁵ The veterans of the “Old Second” were not inclined to go to war with other outfits.

Some men took advantage of the break in action to take some unsanctioned visits to Paris and became absent without leave. One of these men was Pfc. Albert “Chub” Foster in Headquarters Company. Upon returning to the regiment, Foster and his partners in crime were called before Colonel Hume. According to “Chub,” Hume gave them the strict injunction, “don’t you men ever do that again unless I tell you.”⁶ Sanctioned visits to Paris were supposed to be on the docket for more of the men but orders arrived before the leave forms did. It seemed that Paris was to be eternally just out of reach for the soldiers of the “Orphan Regiment,” as Colonel Hume had begun calling it.

Capt. Spaulding Bisbee received entertainment of his own. As the regimental intelligence officer, he was ordered to take a flight in an airplane

to see “just how the earth, trenches, troops etc looked from up above.” Up he went, to 6,000 feet, where the infantryman was quite surprised “how easily we could see things on the ground.” The descent was “thrilling:” a 4,000-foot nose dive, one that the officer would not forget for some time.⁷

The March Back up to the Front

Orders arrived on 27 August that brought the 103rd Infantry back to the reality of war again—and back to the front lines. The regiment entrained at Poincon for Bar-le-Duc, a journey of 160 kilometers. Captain Bisbee relayed the journey in a letter home, describing the intense activity at each train station; how there was usually a YMCA, Red Cross, or Salvation Army canteen where workers would hand out coffee and sandwiches before the train pulled out again. The regiment arrived in section between 29-30 August, detraining at Longeville. The entire regiment consolidated here on 30 August. The men moved into nearby woods to wait for darkness, before moving out on long night marches from dusk until dawn—“A slow tiresome hike,” as Lieutenant Swett put it.⁸ “We hiked for three nights, camping wherever morning found us,” recalled Robert T. Shepherdson of Company E.⁹ The roads were packed with marching men, overloaded trucks, and struggling mule teams, as the American Expeditionary Force moved thousands of men into a new position.¹⁰ John Longley of Headquarters Company reminisced after the war:

By morning light, we were to find a spot to hide. Usually there were few places to hide which meant we had to dig a hole and cover ourselves with anything we could find: brush or corn stalks. We’d lie there all day; sometimes it was hot as hell. Once it was dark, we’d move out again.¹¹

Spaulding Bisbee marveled at what he was seeing:

in the zone of advance the roads are full of troops, either going or coming from the Front...Sometimes it fairly thrills you to realize that this awful power of the Allies is to break upon the Germans, and before long. It makes me think of a great big dormant monster that will awake when the time comes and fairly crush its foes to the ground.¹²

A massive American field army was assembling.

The land was slowly rising as they got closer to their destination. Wagon teams had to be doubled up to get battalion trains up to the summit of the hills.¹³ The men themselves were fighting exhaustion, as they had been on shortened rations, consisting, Lieutenant McGrew said, of “bully beef, hard

tack, profanity, stagnant water, bully beef stew, bully beef and hard tack stew, and beef a la bully.”¹⁴ They arrived at Rupt-en-Woevre on 5 September, on the north face of the St. Mihiel Salient. While the men rested, officers from each battalions conducted their reconnaissance of the front line positions. On the early morning of 7 September, the 1st Battalion took over a portion of the front lines, with the other two battalions in reserve. The weather was rainy and overcast during this period, making movement difficult.¹⁵ In the stormy nights, the 1st Battalion withdrew its outposts to the main line of resistance so that they would not be overrun without anyone noticing. They would be pushed out again just before daybreak. This pattern continued through the night of the upcoming attack, so in all probability the Germans were fairly used to spotting movement on the American front lines.¹⁶

The St. Mihiel Offensive

American forces were concentrating around the St. Mihiel Salient in larger numbers than ever before in history. Just south of the city of Verdun, the Meuse River flows past the city of St. Mihiel. To the east, the Moselle River runs parallel. In between, the ground rises up to form long ridgelines called the Heights of the Meuse, before dropping off into the Woevre Plain leading to the Moselle River and the city of Metz to the northeast. Along the south, the US lines ran from Apremont to Xivray to Mousson—the Toul Sector—as they had since the Yankee Division had left them in June. To the north, the lines hugged the Heights of the Meuse, passing through the towns of Rupt and Vaux. In between, in the shape of a spearhead pointed towards the heart of France, were about 50,000 German soldiers, occupying what was left of the previous year’s offensive gains. This was the St. Mihiel Salient. It was filled with concrete German trenches, pillboxes, and dugouts that ran the length of ridgelines, spanned about with barbed wire, and covered by artillery. The Germans had a year to prepare this area for defense, and they had not wasted time. However, they were inside a pocket, surrounding by vastly superior American and French forces on both sides; and they knew it. Accordingly, German command began planning to evacuate the salient.¹⁷

Allied planners gave General Pershing and the A.E.F. their first offensive. Over 350,000 Allied and US troops assembled on all sides of the Salient. The overall concept for the operation was that Allied and US forces would advance from the north and south to cut off the Germans inside the Salient, and then push forward, close the pocket, and even out the line. The two divisions chosen to close the pocket were the US 1st Division and the 26th Division, which seemed somehow fitting, since the two had shared so much of the war together. The 1st Division would advance from the south

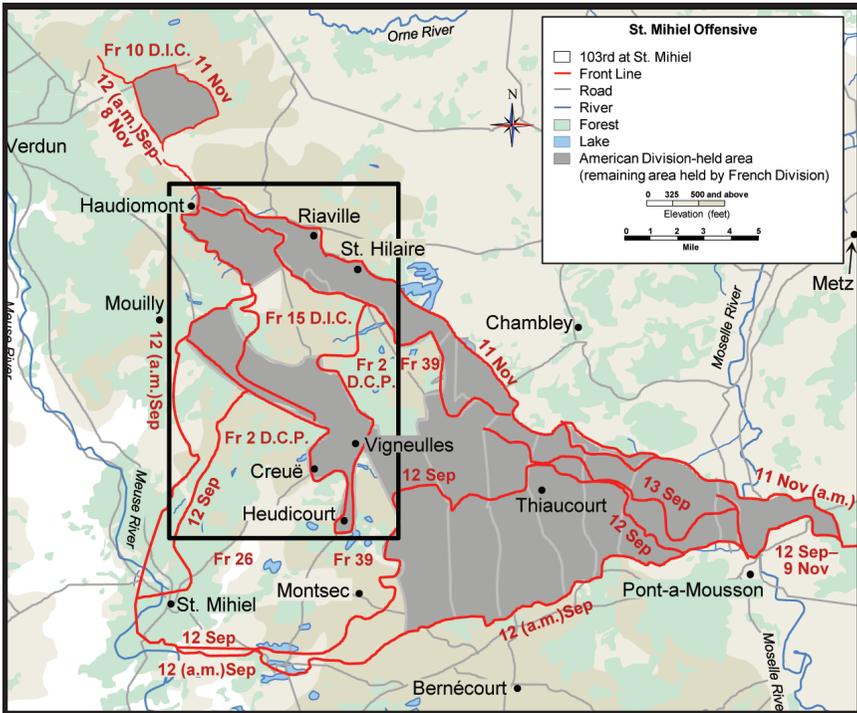


Figure 6.1. The St. Mihiel Offensive. Graphic created by Army University Press staff.

on the right flank of the Toul Sector while the 26th Division would drive southwards from the north-western shoulder of the pocket. The objective for both divisions was the town of Vigneulles, in the center of the Salient.¹⁸ A.E.F. Chief of Staff Col. George C. Marshall maneuvered dozens of divisions with their supports into place and everyone could tell that the level of preparation was leading to something big. “We certainly are seeing things in our neighborhood right now,” writing Captain Bisbee on 9 September. “I’ve seen preparations ever since I came to France but nothing like what is going on now.”¹⁹

On the night of 11 September, Captain Shumway’s 2nd Battalion moved into position replacing Major Hanson’s 1st Battalion. The roads were crowded with men, equipment, and materiel all being pushed forward through the rain to prepare for the offensive. The orders for the attack were published late in the day, so the officers could do little in the way of reconnaissance. Supporting detachments of engineers, gas, and flame troops did not arrive until late on the night of the 11th, complicating the efforts to synchronize all elements of combat power for the attack. Company D of the 103rd Machine Gun Battalion did not show up until the morning of 12 September. The two 75mm guns that were supposed to

be supporting the 2nd Battalion's attack never showed up at all. Nor did the ammunition for the battalion's Stokes mortars. The adapters for the Viven-Bessieres rifle grenades were in short supply, leaving attacking infantry without a valuable weapon to reduce machine gun nests. Grenades themselves—fundamental in the attack—only numbered about 1,000 for the whole battalion.²⁰ Communication was poor due to lack of telephone wires. But even with all these issues, by 0100 on 12 September, all battalion commanders reported that they were in position.

Shumway was to lead the way, followed by Major Hosford's 3rd Battalion one kilometer behind, supported by the 1st Battalion in reserve.²¹ Shumway placed Company F on the right and Company H on the left as his attacking element. Company E and Company G were placed in support, from right to left.²² The 26th Division line ran as follows: on the extreme left was the 104th Infantry, in column of battalions three deep like the 103rd. Then came the 103rd Infantry in the center. The 101st Infantry regiment was on the right, with two battalions on the front line with one in support. The 102nd Infantry Regiment was held as division reserve. The rate of movement was to be 100 meters every four minutes, timed with the creeping barrage. While it appeared to be a return to open warfare, key leaders within the units would ensure that they were taking the lessons learned at the Second Marne to heart.²³

The division would be attacking over ground the likes of which they had not seen since the Toul Sector. It was back to the world of "No-Man's Land" and war-torn vistas. "Terrain in front of our positions was extremely difficult to pass over being pitted with old trenches and covered with tangled masses of old wire," wrote Captain Bisbee.²⁴ The German lines were filled with elaborate fortifications and pillboxes, all made of concrete. They had held this position since 1914 and had spent years improving it. Although German high command knew an attack was imminent they had not been able to withdraw all their infantry, but had pulled back most of their heavy artillery.²⁵ Even without their heavy guns, their defenses were formidable. There were four successive lines of German trenches in front of the 26th Division: Kiel, Essen, Stettin, and Prusse.²⁶ German troops from the 60th Landwehr, 82nd, and 85th Regiments occupied these positions, some of them from the 5th Landwehr Division, which had faced the 103rd Infantry at Xivray.²⁷

The Attack Begins

During the night and early morning of 12 September, scouts from the 2nd Battalion accompanied by two platoons of engineers from Company

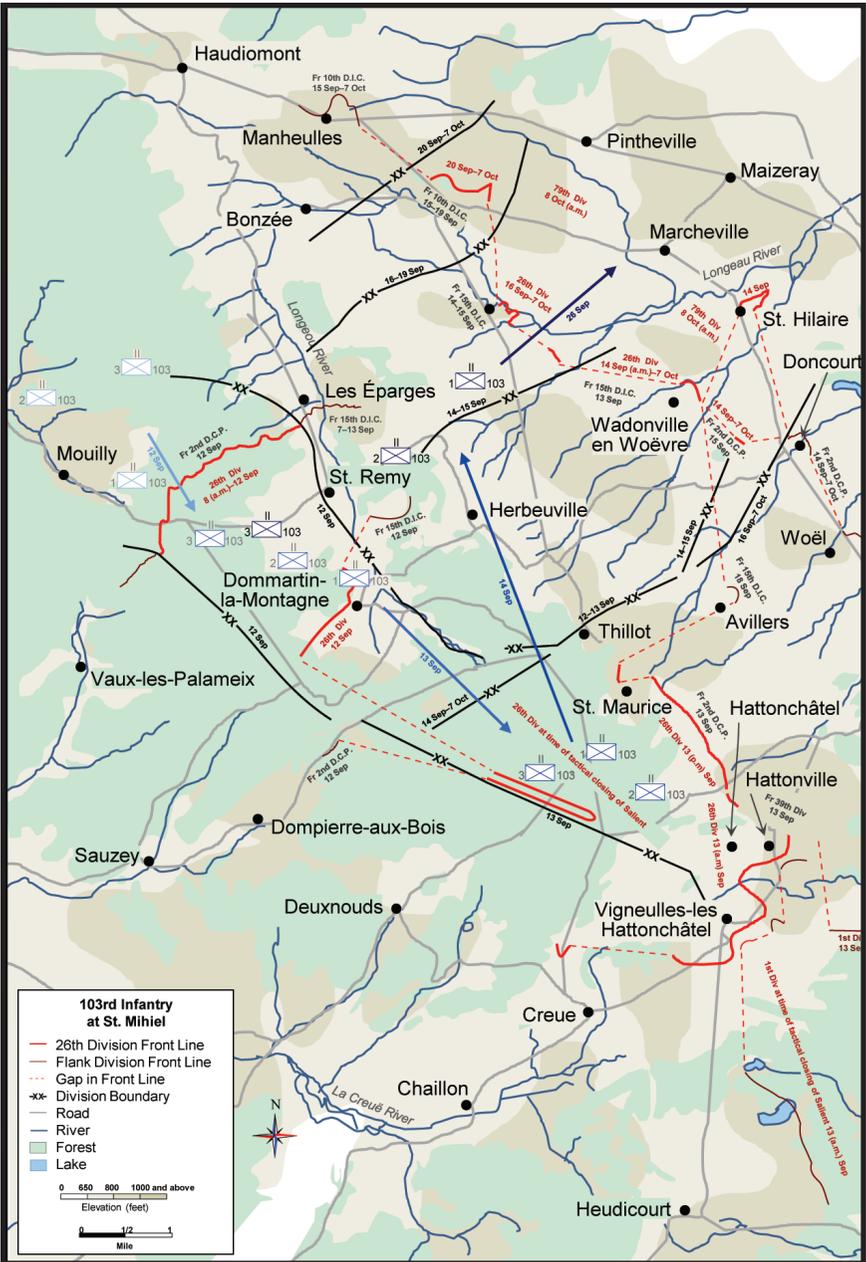


Figure 6.2. 103rd Infantry at St. Mihiel. Graphic created by Army University Press staff.

E, 101st Engineers were out in front of the 2nd Battalion, cutting and marking lanes through the wire to connect with the gaps in the wire that were to be blown open by the US artillery.²⁸ Lane marking was accomplished by laying down strips of white cotton webbing. Pioneers leading the way in the morning attack would ensure that the lanes were clear and properly marked. There were four details, consisting of eight men each. They worked furiously in the darkness all night long, even as the US artillery barrage began.²⁹

At 0100 on 12 September, 202 US field guns of all calibers opened up on the German lines in a thunderous barrage.³⁰ It was an incredible sight, recalled Pvt. Howard Crosby: “Above Mouilly at which place I went over the top, the artillery stood in the open, hub to hub, for more than a kilometer.”³¹ The sound was something the men never forgot. Pvt. Warren C. Merrill in Company E remembered when he first began to hear the first guns go: “At 12:30 the mortars began to speak, then the 75’s picked it up and soon we could hear the 6-inch batteries working and over all we could hear the rumble of the 12, 14, and 16-inch batteries away back. For a few moments there was silence in the dugout. Then someone laughed nervously and remarked that ‘Hell has broken loose over in Germany.’”³² The 103rd had never attacked behind an artillery preparation such as this before, and were rarely on the distributing end of such a punishing barrage. Shells smashed and shattered German dugouts, displaced machine guns, blew great gaps in the wire entanglements, and cut communication lines.

At 0500 the barrage paused for five minutes to permit sound-ranging from the batteries. German prisoners later stated that they assumed that the attack was coming at this time and emerged from their dugouts. They were then caught in the open by high explosive and gas shells when the barrage continued again. The same happened at 0700.³³ The 101st Trench Mortar Battery—formerly Battery C, 1st Heavy Artillery Regiment, Maine National Guard—added their own firepower to the barrage. Just before 0800, they fired thermite shells—meant to explode in the air and shower defenders with molten metal—which covered the Kiel trench in flames. This was the first time thermite shells were used by the 26th Division in the war.³⁴ The 37mm battery from Headquarters Company, 103rd Infantry also opened fire, engaging previously identified machine gun nests near Kiel trench. Enemy return fire was very light, as most of their artillery had been removed.

Over the Top

At daybreak, the men of the 103rd were fed and given coffee after having spent a restless night listening to the sound of the guns. The

men clambered out of their dugouts at 0730 and filed into their trenches. Lieutenants and captains checked their watches. All had to be perfectly synchronized with the artillery, because all the elements of combat power were arrayed on a timeline. Any deviation could be fatal. At precisely 0800, the artillery lifted fire on German positions and initiated their creeping barrage. At the same time, the 2nd Battalion went “over the top.” “At 8 sharp Captain Healy gave us the word,” wrote Private Merrill, “and we scrambled up over the parapet and stood there looking around at the havoc that had been created...away out front was our barrage creeping forward slowly and tearing great holes in the earth and smashing trees into toothpick material. Soon we came to what we once Boche wire but nothing was left but a few strands and when we passed those we were in the Boche first line trenches.”³⁵

The two attacking companies passed through their wire in squad columns before shaking out in four lines once passing through it. The supporting companies followed at a distance of 200 yards echeloned in depth like a checker-board. Friendly artillery fired its last salvoes short, causing twenty-seven casualties in the 2nd Battalion. German 77mm guns also fired airbursts but these were largely ineffective.³⁶ German machine guns opened up when the Doughboys were 300 yards away. Kiel trench was taken without much resistance and the battalion picked up their first dozen or so prisoners. As they approached Essen trench, the battalion received heavy machine gun fire.

It was here that Shumway began to manage the fight on his own terms, not those dictated by A.E.F. doctrine. His battalion snipers engaged one enemy machine gun nest while Shumway sent out platoons from his supporting companies with attached machine guns to flank the trench. These were the infiltration tactics that the Germans had used against them just months earlier in the Toul Sector. They relied on disciplined and motivated junior leaders. Sgt. Brooks Savage of the Skowhegan High School Squad, back in action after receiving a wound on 22 July, led three men around the flank to knock out one of the German machine guns.³⁷ Sgt. Albert Klick led a group of six men against one enemy machine gun and eliminated it. He continued on alone, capturing about 20 prisoners. Advancing again, he was wounded twice, but declined the use of a litter and walked nearly three kilometers to the nearest aid station.³⁸ The Mecklenburg, Germany native would receive the Distinguished Service Cross for his gallantry. His brother Eric, also a sergeant in Company H, had been wounded on 19 July. Both men would be wounded again in November, but refused anything other than basic treatment from the medics.

Forrest and Everett Wentworth, also of Company H, were brothers from East Dover, Vermont. Both wrote letters home describing the battle. “We started over at about 8 o’clock in the morning after a seven-hour bombardment,” wrote Forrest. “We followed our own bursting shells so closely that only in a very few instances did the Germans have time to get their machine guns before we were on top of them,” remembered Everett.³⁹ Cpl. Chester Chapman from Company E—who had been wounded twice at Chateau-Thierry—took 40 prisoners in one dugout by himself.⁴⁰ Part of the second wave, Pvt. Howard Crosby assaulted the German position at 0825 only to be thrown to the ground by an exploding shell two hours later. Visibly dazed by the explosion, Crosby was ordered to the rear by his commander. Along the way, another shell struck near him, filling his knee with shell fragments. Wounded for his fourth time in the war, Crosby found himself once again in the 101st Field Hospital.⁴¹

The 103rd advanced again, this time being held up for an hour at the Stettin trench by machine gun fire. The 101st Infantry was hung up on the right by fire as well, so Shumway detached Company E to clear out the machine guns in front of the 101st and ordered his machine guns from Company A, 103rd Machine Gun Battalion to lay down a barrage on the trench.⁴² He then sent flanking platoons around to the left and the right. As the machine gunners kept the Germans’ heads down, the flanking parties came in behind the defenders.⁴³ Three men from Company G, led by Pfc. Henry Lait—from the small Jewish community in Bangor—actually advanced into the open to draw enemy machine gun fire to themselves. Lait engaged the Germans with his Chauchat, trying to pin them down until the flanking platoon could get there. He was successful, but was struck with multiple machine gun rounds and killed. His actions won him the Distinguished Service Cross.⁴⁴ Company E returned to the battalion, having seized seven machine guns and their crews.⁴⁵ Shumway’s deliberate combined arms approach minimized friendly losses and gradually reduced enemy strongpoints.

In the rear, Captain Bisbee was beginning to process the first prisoners. The first group came in around 0900, approximately an hour after the operation began. “They were a mixed lot,” he related, “some old and some young, but all glad to be our prisoners, and many asked if they were to be sent to New York.”⁴⁶ He was about to have his work cut out for him.

It was at the Stettin trench that a whole battalion of about 900 Germans surrendered to the 2nd Battalion, which was now down to around 400 men because of all the men who had been detailed to clean out dugouts or escort prisoners to the rear. Twenty-four-year-old Captain Shum-

way received the surrender of the German battalion commander, who was a count in the Saxon peerage.⁴⁷ The count was wearing his full dress uniform, as were most of the officers on his staff. He was more put out at the loss of his staff car than being captured. He asked his captors for an auto to carry his heavy trunk. The reply came from a sarcastic Doughboy: “An auto, old hoss? We’ll hunt for one together. Go on, there now; forward, march!” And with that the count set off with an American bayonet behind him.⁴⁸ Bisbee was jubilant: “we captured...nearly 900 prisoners, many officers and doctors and one major, a real live German Count.”⁴⁹

The battalion halted and reformed here as the prisoners were sent to the rear to be processed. They were held up at the Prusse trench for two hours until all machine gun nests could be eliminated with flanking parties.⁵⁰ They then pressed on to the Chanot Bois, capturing two enemy field guns before coming under heavy artillery fire from Cote Amaranthe and withdrawing back to the edge of the woods. Rather than attempt a frontal assault through the woods, Shumway led his men around the southern edge of the forest and cut the Dommartin-Hill 381 Road. Patrols headed out towards Dommartin and eliminated one machine gun nest, but met heavy machine gun fire coming from the church and drew back.⁵¹ Shumway halted here for the night, occupying abandoned trenches southwest of Chanot Bois.⁵² Between 1500 and 1800 that day, the 2nd Battalion had captured over 1,200 prisoners, half of the total number taken by the entire division in their drive into the St. Mihiel Salient.⁵³ They had advanced three kilometers into the enemy salient. Most importantly, they had cracked four lines of German trenches. This left the entire German line vulnerable, and they had to pull back from the whole front.⁵⁴

Mopping Up

Behind the 2nd Battalion, Hosford’s 3rd Battalion was mopping up the dugouts, placing guards over stores of ammunition, and taking more prisoners. Cpl. Edward Nickerson of Company L spotted a short and stout German major pop out of a dugout, running for his life. Nickerson called on him to halt and then fired a warning shot, but the major was not having it. Not wanting to lose such a prize—suspecting that the major was probably carrying a coveted iron cross—Nickerson took after him. The race took them down a communications trench leading to the main trench line, where Nickerson suddenly realized that he was in a crowd of Germans. Deciding that discretion was the better part of valor, Nickerson quickly backpedaled towards his own platoon but found that the Germans were pursuing him. Luckily for him, they had their hands up and were yelling “Kamerad.” “So Nick came back with his rifle over his shoulder and with 36 Germans following him,”

Sergeant Holden remembered somewhat ruefully. “We could have altered this event slightly and gotten him a Medal, but we didn’t.”⁵⁵

At midnight, the 26th Division received new orders. The main effort was to secure the town of Vigneulles, some ten kilometers away, and link up with the 1st Division which was approaching from the south. This would seal the St. Mihiel Salient, trapping any remaining Germans in the pocket. The 102nd Infantry—the division reserve—was the closest unengaged unit at hand and began an all-night march to seize Vigneulles. The 104th Infantry would pivot northwards and seize Thillot while the 103rd Infantry on their right flank would move six kilometers ahead to the town of St. Maurice.

The advance began at 0530 on 13 September and the 2nd Battalion almost immediately received machine gun and sniper fire from the *Foret de la Montagne*. They drove the Germans back and captured three more enemy field guns. The advance was slowed by intermingling of units from the 104th Infantry as each regiment worked to stay within its zone of advance. Colonel Hume was on the scene, urging the men forward at the head of the columns.⁵⁶ Through persistent and dogged fighting around Hill 403, the 2nd Battalion reached the heights around St. Maurice around noon of 13 September.⁵⁷ The battalion was then ordered to occupy the nearby towns of Billy-sur-les-Cotes and Vieville-sur-les-Cotes—both on the *Woevre Plain*. 2nd Battalion, 103rd Infantry occupied both these towns with the 3rd and 1st Battalions in the woods on the heights behind the town. Both villages were in ruins.

The 26th Division achieved all of its goals. In a night of hard marching, the 102nd Infantry had arrived at Vigneulles at daybreak, surprising the remaining German garrison. The 1st Division arrived later in the day, closing the pocket. The 26th Division was relieved by the French 39th Division on the morning of 14 September.

A Complete Victory

St. Mihiel was a resounding success for the 103rd Infantry, and the A.E.F. At the cost of 17 killed in action, 17 seriously wounded, and 95 slightly wounded, the regiment had captured around 1,200 German soldiers, six 77mm field guns, two 105mm pieces, four 150mm guns, three 210mm guns, 60 light machine guns, many heavy machine guns, and one large *minenwerfer*, as well as large stores of materiel. In fact, the seizure of so much German food and drink was a delight to the doughboys. They carried off large amounts of German beer, bread, tobacco, sauerkraut, and sausages.⁵⁸ “We found plenty of things to eat, both for men and horses,” wrote Pvt. Robert Shepherdson of Company E after the battle. Maj. Stanhope Bayne-Jones,

regimental surgeon, wrote of finding German food and kegs of beer: “As we had not much to eat for several days, you can see what a feast and joy this was!”⁵⁹ Vermonter Forrest Wentworth wrote, “Oh, dad, talk about beer! The Germans had hundreds of kegs of it there and it tasted fine, too.”⁶⁰

The discovery of so much food and other delicacies also had a somewhat sobering effect on the soldiers when they realized its implications: “If you think the Germans are going to be starved into surrender, you want to get that idea out of your heads at once,” concluded Everett Wentworth.⁶¹ Despite this realization, the battle significantly raised the morale of the men in the 103rd Infantry. Shepherdson recalled, “Oh, but it is great sport for five or six men to capture a machine gun and take from eight to 15 prisoners and not get a scratch out of it...we had very few men hit at all and most of them were not badly wounded. I for one carried my usual luck with me and came out all whole.”⁶²

The area liberated had been under German occupation for nearly four years and the remaining civilians had hid in their basements during the battle, fearing to come out. “Of course our men had to examine the basements lest [sic] there be Germans hiding down there,” recalled Sergeant Holden. “Our French-Americans came in very handy as they had learned to speak modern French in place of the 17th Century French that was still being used over here.”⁶³ The citizens were overjoyed, and many wept upon seeing their liberators. French flags appeared from hiding places and were let fly for the first time in four years.⁶⁴ “I was the first one from our regiment to come into a certain town,” remarked Captain Bisbee, “and I wish you could have seen the excitement. All the women ran out (there are very few men) and cried ‘*Vive les Americans*,’ and actually wept they were so glad.” Lest he let his own spoils of war go unremarked, he concluded with, “This is German paper and German ink.”⁶⁵ The French priest in the town of Rupt en Woevre wrote a letter to Major General Edwards, closing with, “Several of your comrades lie at rest in our truly Christian and French soil. Their ashes shall be cared for as if they were our own. We shall cover their graves with flowers and shall kneel by them as their own families would do, with a prayer to God to reward with eternal glory these heroes fallen on the field of honor, and to bless the Twenty-sixth Division and generous America.”⁶⁶ At last, the soldiers of the 103rd Infantry were finally able to come as liberators to the nation they had sailed across the ocean to aid.

Tactical Innovation in Combat

In part because of the thoroughness of US planning, the operation was the opposite of the Second Marne. General Headquarters adapted to chang-

ing tactical situations and allowed their subordinate commanders more freedom of movement. The massive artillery preparation had completely torn apart the German defenders and caused their low morale to plummet further. The Allies were of course helped by the fact that the Germans had already withdrawn much of their artillery and some of their infantry. But this did not change the massive logistical issues that the A.E.F. had to overcome to accomplish this offensive, or the thorough way in which it was carried out. The advance was so sudden and aggressive that German soldiers surrendered in droves, even emerging from the forests and dug-outs after the infantry had passed to surrender to support troops.

Most notable in the 103rd Infantry was the change that had come about in offensive tactics. Shumway did not win his fight by using his infantry alone; rather, he utilized all the tools at his disposal. Engineers and scouts cleared lanes and marked them, enabling the lead elements to rapidly take the first line. Machine gun detachments traveling with the assault elements ensured that the US troops would be able to have local fire superiority when they encountered resistance. Rather than attacking enemy strongpoints head on, they were either bypassed or reduced via fire and maneuver. No elements larger than a platoon made a direct assault, minimizing the overall losses. Artillery superiority kept enemy lines of communication disrupted. Efficient use of trench mortars, organic 37mm guns, snipers, and rifle grenades kept enemy troops suppressed when friendly troops were moving.

The regiment had maintained a steady advance, maintaining liaison on their left and right and even assisting other units when they could. Mutually supporting positions with sufficient troops in reserve enabled the regiment—and the division—to continue forward movement. Had the attack been stalled for any length of time, the attacking formations might have been broken up by enemy artillery. Instead, the 103rd maintained a good pace where they continuously kept the enemy off balance and wondering where they would strike next. The regiment was also able to bring superior mass to bear on one single point, with three battalions stacked up behind each other. This ensured that if the assault battalion began to lag because of casualties, the support battalion could take over the attack. Shumway and his subordinate company commanders spotted enemy weak points, massed direct and indirect fire on them, and maneuvered squads of motivated infantrymen on their flanks to reduce them.

In this action, the leaders in the 103rd Infantry demonstrated that they had a sound understanding of how to conduct a vigorous offensive operation. When asked by French Capt. Jean B. Le Meitour how he had

advanced his 2nd Battalion so quickly, Captain Shumway replied simply, “The experience of Chateau Thierry.”⁶⁷ From his position on the right on 20 July, he had witnessed the carnage in the 2nd Battalion on the railroad embankment. Outside Epieds and Trugny on 22 July, he had seen the unsynchronized masses of troops attacking unsupported, without artillery. He wished to avoid that senseless loss at all costs and so he integrated the lessons learned, moving them from theory into practice. As Sergeant Adams from Company B put it, “This one was a picnic compared to Chateau-Thierry. It was too bad all our fights couldn’t have been like Saint Mihiel.”⁶⁸

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Chapter VII

“Hell’s Windshield Wiper:”¹

The Riaville Raid, 13-30 September 1918

From the middle of September to the end of October, the 103rd Infantry would revert to holding front-line positions rather than continuously advancing. This duty had the potential to wear heavily on the soldiers. Much like the Toul Sector, defensive operations on the Woevre Plain, and the Heights of the Meuse, this task meant patrolling, working parties, dodging artillery and sniper fire, and simply surviving. While it was not as costly as an offensive operation, assignments such as this continued to sap combat power from the regiment. Another important factor to consider is that of troop morale. By September, about 25 percent of the original men remained. Some of the most experienced leaders had been killed, wounded, rotated back to the US, or transferred to other units. And as the unit incurred losses, they noticed that they did not receive replacements. Could the 103rd Infantry mount another offensive operation less than two weeks after St. Mihiel? Did it have the trained officers and NCOs to carry it out? Would the soldiers still show the same determination and self-sacrifice as they had two months prior?

Following the destruction of the St. Mihiel Salient, the 103rd Infantry settled into an uneasy watch on the Woevre Plain. Battalions rotated from the front line, to support, to reserve. The front-line companies moved north of St. Maurice to hold positions along a line from Champlon to Saulx, a front of about two kilometers. The support battalion held the high ground on the Heights of the Meuse near Combres, nearly three kilometers back from the front lines. The reserve battalion was in place in and around the woods of Les Eparges, near where the 26th Division had begun its assault on 12 September. The front-line companies were situated in trenches, but they were on the Woevre Plain; a large, open area with very little cover and concealment. This meant that any movement in daylight was prone to receive steady concentrations of heavy artillery fire and gas, much as life had been like in the Toul Sector that past spring. The support battalion also received significant artillery fire as they conducted salvage operations and organized the defenses on the high ground, digging trenches and stringing never-ending lines of barbed wire obstacles.²

Nearing the end of September, the 103rd Infantry had been holding the lines in front of the German-held towns of Marcheville and Riaville since

the end of the St. Mihiel operation. Once again, they settled into a routine of improving their defenses and conducting patrols through “No-Man’s-Land.” They repulsed a strong German raid on 20 September against an outpost in Champlon, demonstrating that the lessons learned at Xivray had not gone to waste. Yet tragedy—in the field or at home—was never far. On 21 September Lieutenant Swett received a stunning telegram: his wife of nine years, Jennie Record Swett, had drowned on the day of the St. Mihiel drive. The young man bent to his work, intent on pushing through the grief. On 24 September, four men in Company M were killed by a single bursting German shell. One of these was Cpl. Verne Weld from Canaan, New Hampshire. On 1 October, Chaplain Albert Butzer took a moment to write a letter of condolence to Weld’s mother, assuring her that, “He did not suffer at all, his death being instantaneous.”³ In 1930, Weld’s mother Nora took part in a pilgrimage of Gold Star Mothers to France to visit her son’s grave. She was finally able to visit her son’s final resting place in the St. Mihiel American Cemetery on 8 September 1930. She wrote in her diary, “It had been a sad day, but we had at least seen where our boys lay, and we felt a satisfaction we hadn’t known before going to the cemetery.” These post-war pilgrimages, paid for by the US government, were incredibly emotional. Some women found it overwhelming. Indeed, Nora Weld noted that one mother had been so overcome at her son’s grave in Verdun that she had died.⁴

The Meuse-Argonne Offensive

In the grand scheme of war plans, the St. Mihiel operation had been a small prelude to what was coming. Allied planners worked for months on the master stroke, the one that was designed to knock Germany out of the war for good. Millions of French and American troops in four independent army groups were slated to attack along the line of the Meuse River to the Argonne Forest. The Meuse-Argonne Offensive was the largest US military operation of the war. And it took place in some of the most imposing terrain that the A.E.F. had seen. The Argonne Forest was an obstacle in and of itself. Attacking divisions had to blast their way through the reinforcing obstacles laced throughout the forest by the Germans, who were fighting on ground of their choosing. Attacks had to be coordinated, synchronized, and continuous. The overall objective for this offensive was the railway hub in the city of Sedan, which would divide the German forces in France and Belgium. Once divided, the Germans could be isolated and chopped up into smaller pieces. Opposing the Allies were approximately 450,000 Germans of the Fifth Army Group. Pershing hoped that the violence and swiftness of the initial attack could overwhelm these divisions before reinforcements arrived.

In concert with this massive offensive, planners had also allocated several diversions and feints, meant to confuse the Germans as to the main point of attack and tie down troops from reinforcing other sectors. To the right of the 26th Division, the 78th and 90th Divisions planned two-battalion raids in their front, while the 89th and 42nd Divisions would execute smaller demonstrations.⁵ The 26th Division—situated to the west, and on the extreme left of what had been the base of the old St. Mihiel Salient—had been assigned one of these diversionary raids, around the towns of Marcheville and Riaville on the Woivre Plain, both heavily defended and about three kilometers to the division's front. The intent was to make the Germans think that the Americans were making a lunge towards the city of Metz. Metz was a strategic objective, one that the Germans thought that the Americans would try to seize during the St. Mihiel Campaign. Indeed, the bulk of their forces between the Moselle River and the Argonne Forest were posted to defend Metz along the Michel Line.⁶ Given that the 26th Division was by now one of the veteran divisions of the A.E.F., this lent credence to the idea. The attack was slated to be timed with the beginning of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive on 26 September. The orders for these raids were pushed down to the corps commanders on 24 September, along with the plans for the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.⁷

Raid on Riaville

Rather than the entire division assaulting, however, it was to be a two-battalion affair. Each infantry brigade was ordered to provide one battalion. The 1st Battalion, 102nd Infantry was tapped to represent the 51st Brigade, while Hanson's 1st Battalion, 103rd Infantry would be the 52nd Brigade's assault battalion. In the 103rd Infantry, verbal orders indicated that they would be going into action again. At around 1400 on 25 September, General Cole summoned Colonel Hume, Major Hanson, and Captains Sherman Shumway, Spaulding Bisbee, and Herbert Bowen to the 52nd Brigade Headquarters. The 26th Division—now under tactical control of the 2nd French Colonial Corps—had only just received the orders for this attack. General Cole briefly summarized the assault: Hanson's 1st Battalion, with attachments from Company F, 101st Engineers and other support troops, would assault Riaville on the left in conjunction with the 1st Battalion of the 102nd Infantry which would make Marcheville their objective on the right.⁸ Col. Hiram Bearss, commanding officer of the 102nd, had overall command of the entire operation. Their orders were to attack and hold the two towns until nightfall and then withdraw back to US lines. It was hoped that the two battalions could tie down significant numbers of German troops from going to reinforce the positions between the Meuse and the Argonne.

3rd Battalion, 103rd Infantry was to maintain its position on the frontlines—which had been dubbed Center of Resistance (C.R.) Augusta, a nod to the 103rd's Infantry's Maine roots—while the 103rd's 2nd Battalion was held in reserve. The actual written orders were finally issued around 1830 that evening, letting Major Hanson know that H-Hour was 0530 on 26 September.

Much like the previous two offensives, there was not much time to react. Fortunately, Hanson had visited the 3rd Battalion's outposts several days prior, so he had some idea of what the ground was like. There was no time to make a good reconnaissance of the area. In fact, there was barely enough time to move the men into position. In his command post at Champlon, Major Hanson oversaw the staging of his companies along the line of departure. He did not even receive maps of the area until nearly midnight, which he then distributed to his platoon commanders. A bright moon aided the stumbling troops who made their way forward into the trenches to wait until H-Hour.⁹

Enemy Disposition

Across the way, Riaville waited. The fortified towns of Pintheville, Riaville, and Marcheville were outposts for the strong German Michel Line. Any attempt to strike at this line would have to be made across a wide, open plain, in full view of the defenders. Since the Germans believed Metz to be the main objective in this region, they had fortified this zone in depth, and were able rapidly reinforce it with infantry and artillery. One trench line ran from Pintheville to the north down to just behind Riaville. This was the support trench. The main enemy line of resistance was along one trench running in front of Riaville, and south through Marcheville: Trench Haudinot. The 60th Landwehr Regiment held Pintheville south to Riaville which was garrisoned by troops from the 15th Landwehr and the 4th Jaeger Regiment. Three rows of barbed wire obstacles guarded Trench Haudinot with other obstacles further out in front.¹⁰

The sudden burst of friendly artillery sounded at 2330 as the guns of the 51st Field Artillery Brigade began the preliminary bombardment. They made up but one part of the massive artillery preparation that was firing along the entire US and Allied line, as American guns fired more shells in this six-hour bombardment than were fired in all four years of the American Civil War.¹¹ German guns returned fire, showering the front lines and rear areas equally, causing several casualties in the 103rd Infantry. White and green rockets were seen shooting up from the German lines outside Riaville. Both sides braced for what the morning would bring as the din of the barrage rumbled across the plain.

A patrol from the 1st Battalion went out that night under cover of the barrage to scout out the line of advance. They observed the silhouettes of a group of men moving up the road and assumed them to be US troops also out scouting for the morning's assault. However, when challenged by the men from the 103rd, the group "failed to make a satisfactory reply." The scouting party immediately opened fire and sent this group of Germans scampering to the rear.¹²

The Assault

At 0530, the 1st Battalion went over the top from Trenches Wagner and Tirpitz at C.R. Augusta as the artillery barrage around Riaville shifted to a box barrage to pin the enemy inside the town—a Xivray and Siecheprey in reverse.¹³ Companies A and B led the way, with A on the right and B on the left, each supported by a platoon from the 103rd's Machine Gun Company. Companies C and D were in support, protecting the battalion's exposed flanks.¹⁴ The assault troops rushed forward in small groups, outrunning a light German barrage that fell around Champlon. As best they could, the advancing troops followed the existing trench lines from Champlon to Riaville. A small road network led up to the towns, bordered by a water-filled ditch that offered some cover from enemy fire. The morning fog and the dust caused from the artillery fire hid both the advancing Americans and the Germans in their trenches. Aided by this concealment, the attackers were able to cross most of the lethal ground without being torn to bits. The assault was not the mad rush as it had been at Second Marne; the advancing troops attempted to use the terrain to their advantage as best they could.

Keeping Liaison between the Battalions

One platoon from Company D under Lieut. Charles Bates was detailed to keep liaison between the 103rd and the 102nd Infantry. Lieutenant Bates, a replacement from California, had only recently arrived at the regiment. On the front lines only two weeks, he now led a platoon in combat, trying to maintain the vital line of communication between the two assaulting elements.¹⁵

Bates secured the small town of Saulx midway between C.R. Augusta and Riaville, which had been shelled past the point of recognition. Here the signalmen began setting up telephone lines to relay messages back to headquarters, and medical personnel from the 101st Ambulance Company established a dressing station.¹⁶ Bates found himself alongside Col. Hiram Bearss, commander of the 102nd Infantry. Bearss was a Marine Corps officer, who had already earned renown and the Medal of Honor for his actions in the Philippine Insurrection in 1901. Bearss was in a temper that

morning and told Bates to move off with his platoon to the point of attack. Flustered, Bates took his platoon forward through the staccato bursts of occasional machine gun fire. It was just now getting light out, although the smoke and dust still obscured the battlefield. Still between the two regiments in the advance, Bates bumped into Colonel Bearss again, who was advancing with the 102nd.

“Go ahead and take the town,” said Bearss, in a much better mood now that the advance had begun. “You can do it.” This was not exactly his job. But, a good lieutenant, Bates did exactly as ordered, and at a blast of his whistle, his platoon jumped up and dashed the two to three hundred yards into the town—but it was the wrong one: the men from Company D were in Marcheville, instead of Riaville. Still, the men fought their way forward, tossing grenades and doing their best to root out the hidden machine guns in the village. They took up a position in a ditch between the two towns and Bates then went to find Colonel Bearss to report their situation.¹⁷

Bearss received his report and told him to go back to his platoon, assuring him he would send reinforcements. However, when Bates returned to his position, he was shocked to see that his platoon was gone—someone had moved it without him. Simultaneously, he spotted a column of enemy troops coming from St. Hilaire down the communications trench towards Marcheville. Thinking “a second lieutenant was less important than a colonel,” Bates decided to stay in place and fight off the Germans to permit Colonel Bearss’ party a chance to escape.¹⁸ Seizing an abandoned Chauchat automatic rifle, Bates directed his fire at the enemy column until he was joined by another soldier. Handing off the Chauchat to him, Bates took up a rifle and the two men kept up a good volume of fire long enough to persuade the Germans to take another rout into Marcheville. For seizing the initiative at a critical juncture, Bates was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross after the battle.¹⁹

He was able to rejoin his platoon and the men stayed put in their isolated position between the two towns all day. Sgt. Albert Brackett from South Paris, Maine was wounded while in this position, but refused to be evacuated for fear of causing more casualties. Even while wounded, he occasionally stood up in the open to draw the fire of enemy snipers in order for his men to get a sight of their locations. He received the Distinguished Service Cross as well.

The Attack Stalls

Despite the bombardment, the rest of the 1st Battalion ran into the inevitable machine gun fire in front of Riaville around 0730, just about 300

yards shy of their objective.²⁰ As the fog and dust cleared, the advantage went to the enemy. Machine guns swept the open fields as snipers picked off targets of opportunity. Hanson tried to maneuver his force as best he could. Company B under the now-recuperated Capt. Wesley H. Woods flanked northwards around Pintheville while Capt. Timothy D. Bonney's Company A attempted to drive through Trench Haudinot to the southeast.²¹ Lieut. Guy Swett's Company D covered the right rear flank, minus the platoon under Bates. Lieut. Frank Burbank's Company C was held in support to exploit any breakthrough.²² During the action, two of the 103rd's 37mm guns under Lieutenant McGrew were brought up to support Major Hanson's advance; McGrew—who had been offered a rotation seat to go home to the US just weeks earlier and refused it—would fall wounded in this fight, an indication of how far forward the guns were.²³ With a broken ankle and a wound to his head, he watched through his field glasses as his guns pelted the German concrete and steel pillboxes; they caused casualties, but the machine guns were simply re-manned and the enemy fire continued.²⁴

Cpl. Herve L'Hereux of Company A wrote a detailed account of this fight in a letter home to his mother three days after the attack:

We had advanced until we had almost reached a certain town which was full of enemy machine gun nests. The bushes and trees both sides of the town were filled with Boche snipers and we were in an open field. We took advantage to hide in shell holes and all the little hollows in the ground, but it was a new battleground and shell holes were very few and far between.²⁵

Communication from the 1st Battalion back to C.R. Augusta was difficult, as it had to be done by runner, and the entire plain was now being swept by machine gun fire and artillery. The Germans were attempting to cut the raiders off from getting any support. Finally, at 1045, a message to headquarters came in from Major Hanson: he was stalled.

There is much artillery and machine guns in concrete emplacements in Riaville. Our artillery apparently does not destroy them or put them out of action. We have many wounded. Put artillery on Riaville and Tr. Haudinot, also on little patch of woods N.E. of point 9477 and keep it going.²⁶

Hanson gave the order for the 1st Battalion to draw back from Riaville to allow the guns to do their work, and the companies scrambled to get all of their men away from the deadly artillery, even as German trench mortars continued to shell them.

That morning, Lieut. William H. Jutras of Company A had dashed through enemy machine gun fire to alert the platoon on Company A's right that they were about to be flanked, allowing them to maneuver to face the new German counterattack. But he needed to communicate this new troop movement to the company on the right so that they would not be firing into friendly troops, so he again ran out into the machine gun-swept maelstrom to deliver this message. While doing so, he was badly wounded; but he got the message through and saved his platoon. With the withdrawal, the wounded officer was left on the battlefield, unnoticed, for the moment.²⁷

Jutras had been a shoe worker in Manchester, New Hampshire before the war. On 8 September he wrote home to his parents, "Don't worry, I am always enjoying the best of health and am always on the job. Believe me, I love it. This is the life for a man who wants to work and you can imagine how proud I am of my commission as First Lieutenant."²⁸ Jutras was spotted by one of the medics in Company A, Andreas Nilsen. Nilsen was one of the new replacements that the regiment gained in August and was from North Dakota. Discarding safety, he ran out past the wire, picked up the lieutenant, and began to carry him back to the rest of the company. Nilsen managed to make it 50 yards before he had to drop into a shell hole to avoid the fierce enemy fire that was tearing at the ground around him.

Corporal L'Hereux recalled, "We were ordered to fall back nearly a kilometer and take shelter in a certain trench until our artillery had destroyed or heavily bombarded these machine gun positions. We had just reached this trench when a Red Cross man arrived and told the Captain that a lieutenant was left seriously wounded on the field."²⁹ Jutras and Sgt. Cyrus Wallace from Dexter, Maine volunteered to go back with Nilsen. When they arrived back at the shell hole, L'Hereux recognized fellow Manchester-native Jutras, "and there I was so happy that I had come to his rescue." The lieutenant was gravely wounded, but still conscious: "One bullet had pierced his upper lip, entered his mouth, and came out on the left side of his throat. Another one had entered his left shoulder and made its way into his body." They placed Jutras on a tent shelter half and began to carry him back as the rest of the battalion took shelter to wait for the artillery to hit Riaville. Bullets from snipers snapped and bit the air around them, while machine guns raked across the plain. They were under this fire the entire way back until they reached a trench deep enough to shelter in, where they collapsed. Nilsen and Wallace then went to get a litter while L'Hereux stood watch over Jutras.³⁰

In the meantime, Major Hanson was still waiting on his promised barrage as the battalion waited along the Marcheville-Fresnes Road. A few shells fell into the town, but the bombardment was desultory against concrete pillboxes and the companies were forced to maneuver in the face of heavy fire as best they could.³¹ Hanson was also having difficulty maintaining liaison with the 102nd Infantry on his right flank due to the furious concentrations of enemy fire directed at the open areas between the towns. This was around 1400, and while US artillery fire slackened, the German guns roared to life and blanketed Marcheville with a deadly barrage. US guns were not hitting their targets, and were in fact firing short, so a runner was sent back to C.R. Augusta to relay this to the artillery liaison officer.³² That runner was Mechanic Ralph Moan, who had been pressed into service for that day's mission, even though his battalion was being held in support.

Moan had already made the trip across "No-Man's Land" twice that day and he figured his luck might be running out. He timed his run to follow a German barrage that was tearing up the landscape, "great bursting mud clouds playing toss with bodies," as he related in a poem after the war. He followed it, "drunk with fighting fear" heading for the trenches at C.R. Augusta. "Back came Hell's windshield wiper vomiting death, and I dug in—Dug in with all I had." The barrage crept closer as Moan frantically tried to create a small trench for himself to survive the deadly overpressure from the shells' blasts. One shell impacted almost directly on top of him, tossing his body nearly twenty feet—yet preserving him from the deadly shell fragments. He awoke in a hospital, confused as to where he was: "And now a voice, 'My boy. For you/the war is over.' You hear that, Mom? I'm still alive, I did not die. I'M COMING HOME."³³ As presented in the remarkable poem from a boy from Downeast Maine, the brutal reality of the Riaville battlefield that day is made starkly plain.

Moan did not die. Instead, he was sent to recover in the Vosges Mountains. After the Armistice, he rejoined his friends in Company K and they reformed their singing quartet. He arrived home to Maine in 1919 to discover that his bravery at Riaville had earned him the French *Croix de Guerre* and the Distinguished Service Cross. Moan later went on to perform vaudeville shows, taking his singing voice on the road as "Ralph Moan, Famous Baritone." His path took him back to the US military in 1957, where he and his second wife ended up working at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. He passed away in 1982, never talking to his children about what he had seen in 1918. That same year his wife presented his diary and the poem he wrote to the United States Army Historical and Education Center at Carlisle, Pennsylvania.³⁴

Back on the plain of the Woivre, Corporal L'Hereux was enduring the same bombardment that had rendered Ralph Moan unconscious.

The shells seemed to drop everywhere but the very spot that we were in. I doubled myself as small as possible making as small a target as possible. I held the shelter half over the helpless Lieutenant so that the stones and mud would not fall on his face. I would bend my head, which was protected by my steel helmet, in the direction that the shrapnel was flying and faith seemed to tell me that they could not get me.³⁵

Sergeant Wallace returned with a stretcher, and together they loaded the wounded lieutenant onto it and they began a two kilometer hike to the aid station, through swampy trenches and over shell-wrecked fields. Exhausted, they turned Jutras over to the doctor, who dressed his wounds and said that he expected the lieutenant to live. L'Hereux and Wallace rejoined Company A, stopping along the way to eat a quick meal of "hard tack and raw bacon...it tasted better than chicken does when I am hungry."³⁶

Another Push

Despairing of ever receiving artillery support, Hanson made several attempts to seize Riaville. Company B entered the town twice, soldiers rushing into the streets to take cover in the ruins—only to be driven back by a German counterattack. Ensnared in concrete bunkers and trenches, the Germans seemed impervious to US artillery.³⁷ Leading his platoon forward during one of these assaults, Lieut. George Bourque of Company B was killed in the wire.³⁸ He had a premonition of his death and had told Captain Bisbee the day prior that "he was going to get his."³⁹ The Germans now attempted to drive the 1st Battalion out from in front of Riaville. It was their turn to be met by machine gun and automatic rifle fire. Springfields cracked and sent the Germans back to their pillboxes and trenches. These attacks were defeated, and by 1730, both sides glared at each other across the ruined village, exchanging machine gun and rifle fire. Lieutenant Riddle of Company D was hit between the eyes with shrapnel, wounded, and evacuated.⁴⁰ Orders to withdraw finally came at 1930.⁴¹ As dusk fell on the battlefield, Hanson began drawing his companies back, covered by ambush patrols and outposts to prevent further casualties. The two battalions that had made the attack moved back in bounds, the one covering the other as it moved. Their objective—to take and hold the two towns until nightfall—was complete.⁴²

The Outcome

In the 103rd, 13 men were dead and 53 wounded.⁴³ Among the dead was Lieutenant Jutras, as Corporal L'Hereux found out:

I was sorry to hear the next day that Lieutenant Jutras had died in the hospital. He was the last officer in our company who had left the states with us last September. He was loved by all of us and the whole company mourns for him. It is still raining most of the time, which makes it very hard on us. I am always in the best of health and hope you are the same.⁴⁴

The raid was determined to be a success. In concert with the demonstrations and raids staged by the rest of the US divisions in this sector, the Germans could not be sure if these would develop into full-blown assaults as they were seeing between the Argonne and the Meuse. The Germans, assuming that the veteran 26th Division would try to push on to Metz after the first day, kept troops in the sector which were badly needed elsewhere.⁴⁵ Locally, however, the Germans retaliated with a heavy gas bombardment in the following days, striking Companies I and M in their positions on the Heights of the Meuse.⁴⁶ About 165 men were hospitalized from 27-28 September because of these gas attacks, most with burns to the face and eyes which could have been prevented if gas discipline was observed in the prescribed fashion. Divisional reports show that many of the men wore their masks for only 15 minutes at a time.⁴⁷ On the night of 29-30 September, 1,200 shells of gas and high explosive hit the 2nd Battalion which had replaced the 3rd Battalion after the first attack. During this attack, masks were worn the entire time and the men evacuated the area to allow decontamination efforts to proceed. Because of this increased discipline, only seven casualties from the 103rd Infantry were reported.⁴⁸

The regiment's history recorded the men's own thoughts on the raid as follows: "Comment on this attack is unnecessary. It was the sort of sacrifice attack that has to be made and is made oftentimes, as was this, at considerable cost, for it is not an easy thing to go forward—on a mission such as was theirs, to hold for a day, and then withdraw."⁴⁹ Capt. Stanhope Bayne-Jones, the 103rd Infantry's doctor, commented on the Riaville raid succinctly—"another severe scrap with the old Hun."⁵⁰

The Meuse-Argonne Offensive came as a surprise to the German high command, who did not think that the Americans could pivot so many divisions from the St. Mihiel sector over towards Verdun in under two weeks. Only on 25 September did the Germans realize how many troops were massing near the Meuse and the Argonne, and by then it was

too late. The opening blows did indeed cut through the initial defenses. The diversions on the Woivre Plain proved crucial to keeping German troops tied down there.

However, that was a hard thing for Yankee Division soldiers to hear. They had executed the attack to the best of their ability but had to abandon their objectives at nightfall—both by order and by necessity. Having completed two smashing offensives, this was a bit of a check to their morale. A few operational problems persisted. One problem was the time it took orders to flow from corps to division to brigade to regiment. Luckily, Brigadier General Cole was in the habit of briefing his regimental and battalion commanders a verbal warning order as soon as he received news from division. This way, the battalions could get their companies moving and preparing. But if you consider that the Germans took three days to prepare and rehearse for the Xivray raid, the American timeline for planning seems absurdly short. The old problems of communication and liaison continued—although there was not much that could be done to keep lines of communication open over that wide space between the point of departure and the objective, with German artillery continuously hammering it.

There was also much that was good to be seen in the Riaville raid. Hanson had done his best to maneuver his platoons, using terrain to the best advantage. Like Shumway two weeks earlier, he employed his 37mm guns where he could and utilized fire and maneuver to gain a lodgment in the town. Squads operated with initiative and platoon commanders led by example. The lessons and training stuck and the regiment still had offensive spirit. What the attack really needed to be successful was strong artillery support beyond just the initial preparation, to conduct counterbattery fire and interdict enemy reinforcements. However, without rapid lines of communication or good modes of observation, this was impossible to get. Of the diversions made on 26 September, that made by the 26th Division was one of the strongest and well-fought.⁵¹ Understrength, the 103rd Infantry had once again demonstrated that they could be counted on to fulfil the mission.

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Chapter VIII

The Final Push:

Meuse-Argonne, September-11 November 1918

With the arrival of October, the 103rd Infantry had been in France for a full year. Yet, only about a quarter of the regiment's original members remained. Even the replacements who had arrived in May and August could begin to talk like veteran soldiers. Only the 1st Division had been on front lines longer than the 26th. Some element of the regiment had been holding a front line position every month that year—save for the rest camp in August—since February. There was a distinct sense of unit pride in the 26th Division, but that was tempered by storm clouds on the horizon. The rifle regiments were all down to around 1,700-1,200 men available for duty, which was below even 50 percent of their authorized strength. As the war dragged on for weeks after the victorious St. Mihiel drive—and no replacements appeared—soldiers in the regiment began to feel that survival was more important than victory in battle. Relegated to holding sectors rather than attacking, they could only listen to rumors and news from the battle in the Argonne and wait for their turn to come.

After the Riaville raid, the monotony of trench life began again for the Doughboys of the 103rd Infantry on the Woevre Plain. While other divisions of the A.E.F. were driving on German positions and pushing the enemy slowly back in savage fighting between the Argonne and the Meuse, the 26th Division held in place. Regular patrols went out into “No-Man’s Land” to secure information or capture prisoners. Details went out to conduct salvage missions—pulling scrap off the battlefield for recycling, since the Allies were using so much metal in production of arms and equipment.¹ The men tried to make the best of their situations. Capt. Stanhope Bayne-Jones wrote home, “You would not have thought men capable of such endurance as they have shown. Their moving idea is to keep the Germans in retreat—and prevent his ever getting set in concrete trenches and behind iron loopholes again—and I think they’ll do it.”²

March to Verdun

The Meuse-Argonne Offensive was turning into a meatgrinder for US divisions. Two weeks after the start of the offensive, the 26th Division was finally tapped for service east of the Meuse River. On the nights of 6-7 October, the 26th Division was relieved from the St. Mihiel Front by elements of the 79th US Division. As each battalion passed through

Rupt-en-Woevre, they discovered that the 79th had left “vast amounts of equipment of all kinds.”³ Algernon Holden and Company L found a bunch of new Browning Automatic Rifles in the detritus and happily exchanged them for their Chauchats. However, the men found them not to their liking and returned the next day and traded them back—an inspection in August had found that the “majority of officers and non-commissioned officers are bucking the Chauchat as a good weapon.”⁴

The regiment began a series of night marches to the Verdun Front—assigned to a sector about 12 kilometers to the north of the city of Verdun. The region was nothing but devastation. “As we marched quickly up to our new station we passed through village after village that consisted of nothing but a board nailed onto a stake with the name of the village painted on the board,” remembered Algernon Holden, now the first sergeant for Company L. “Nothing remained but a few scattered building stones and several acres of weeds.”⁵ On the night of 9 October, the regiment arrived in the vicinity of Fromerville. The regiment remained here until 14 October when they moved in to relieve the French 18th Division in the Neptune Sector, extending from Ormont on the left to Beaumont on the right.⁶ The division remained sorely undermanned from actions during the St. Mihiel drive and their continued front line service in that sector. No drafts of fresh troops had arrived since the August rest period.

Neptune Sector

The region east of the Meuse River and north of Verdun was on the extreme right flank of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Divisions here were under the command of the French 17th Corps which had been driving since 8 October to push the Germans from their fortified positions on the Heights of the Meuse and to protect the right flank of the US First Army. They, too, faced the same determined enemy dug into successive lines of fortifications as the First Army was encountering west of the Meuse.⁷

The sector now occupied by the 26th Division was even worse than that found around St. Mihiel—full of hills, blasted trenches, ravines, shell holes, and remnants of old villages. It had been the scene of horrific fighting in 1916 as the French and Germans bled each other for control of Verdun, and the landscape bore witness to the millions of men who fought and died for control of this ground. Captain Bayne-Jones described the landscape he now lived in: “The ground is all torn up by shells and old bones, skeletons, Boche boots with feet and leg bones sticking out of them, old casques, cartridges, belts, rifle barrels, tin cans and trench refuse show how they lived and died in those battles. No one can describe these sights to you except your own

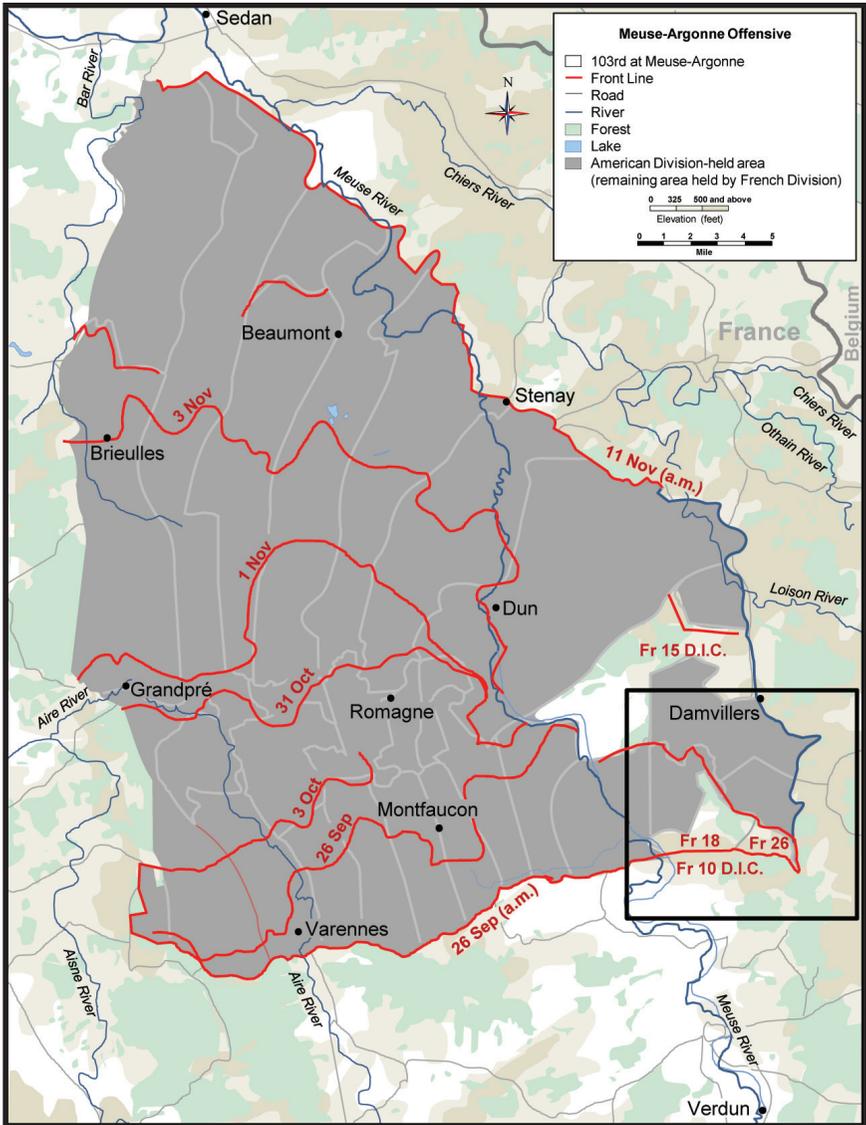


Figure 8.1. The Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Graphic created by Army University Press staff.

eyes—and we live in the same holes as if there was nothing unusual around us.”⁸ German artillery was especially deadly in this sector and there was little in the way of shelter for the troops in reserve and support, let alone those enduring the hardships of the front line trenches. From the first days of the regiment’s arrival into the sector until the very last day of the war, it was subjected to daily shelling and gassing.⁹ To make matters worse, the regi-

ment experienced a significant shortfall in supplies. On 11 October, Colonel Hume notified division headquarters that the regiment was short 700 blankets, 1,000 pairs of shoes, and 3,000 pairs of socks. To drive the point home, he reminded them that “During the last 48 hours over 100 men have been evacuated because of cold and sore feet contracted by lack of above equipment.” Shortages of basic supplies such as this were hurting readiness.¹⁰

The 26th Division was held in corps reserve until 14 October. The first unit of the 26th Division to go on the offensive was the 104th Infantry. After marching all night on 14 October, they moved into positions alongside French units. On 16 October, they made an assault supported by fourteen tanks on the Bois d’Haumont—a wooded German strongpoint. Despite losing 13 tanks, the 104th succeeded in taking half of the woods, but were forced to halt due to heavy artillery fire.¹¹ On 17 and 18 October, the rest of the division moved in alongside the 104th, relieving the French 18th Division and the supporting units of the 29th US Division.¹² With the 26th now in charge of the sector, the 51st Brigade took the left and the 52nd Brigade the right. The 102nd Infantry went into the front lines on the left, the 101st Infantry in support. The 104th Infantry remained in the front lines on the right. The 103rd Infantry remained in support until 22 October, in position supporting the 104th opposite the Bois d’Haumont.¹³

However, this did not mean that the men were immune from the dangers of war. On 9 October, Company I was gassed again. Pvt. Louis F. Bean wrote home to his sisters from the hospital: “I was pretty well blind for a few days but I am getting better now.” It took him two days to get to a hospital after he was gassed, due to the difficult nature of the ground and the near-constant enemy fire.¹⁴ On 17 October, 1st Lt. Lieutenant Lester A. Stone, the regiment’s dentist, was killed by a shell in his dugout.¹⁵ The unlucky Pvt. Howard Crosby was now a runner for the 3rd Battalion’s headquarters. On 20 October, while running a message to Company I near Bois d’Haumont—a region known as “Death Valley”—he ran right into a cloud of mustard gas.¹⁶ This was his fifth and final wound. Evacuated to a gas hospital, he was transferred further and further behind the lines. Finally, on 12 December, he was declared unfit for further service and sent home to the United States.¹⁷

On the nights of 22-23 October, the 103rd relieved the 104th on the division’s right. Two battalions manned the front lines with one in support. The positions they held had once been occupied by the Germans and were in a bad state of repair. The 1st Battalion—now commanded by Capt. Irvin Doane, Hanson having been rotated into a new position—was posted on the right, with Companies A and B on the front line, with C and D in close support: “Front-line companies in shell holes, support Co’s in pill boxes,

dugouts, and shell holes.”¹⁸ The 2nd Battalion took up position to their left. The terrain was rough: ravines, hills, and woods, all battle-scarred and torn to bits by continuous artillery and machine gun fire. The terrain presented difficulties in maintaining liaison and communication with the different elements. The enemy made nothing easy, subjecting all units in the Neptune Sector to vigorous artillery fire and near-constant gassing. Confronting the three attrited divisions of Claudel’s 17th French Army Corps, of which the Yankee Division was one, were four enemy divisions, the 1st Landwehr, 15th Division, 32nd Division, and 192nd Division. Claudel never received any reinforcements while in this sector. The role of the Allied troops in this sector were to merely hold the Germans in place while the large offensives to the west pushed further and further into enemy defenses.

The 51st Brigade Attacks

On 23 October, the 26th Division made its last large-scale offensive movement. The 51st Brigade was to assault Belleau Bois—no relation to the Belleau Wood of Second Marne fame—and Hill 360 beyond it in conjunction with French assaults on the left. They were facing the 1st Landwehr Division, which counted 112 heavy machine guns and 216 light machine guns: the Yankees were attacking “a wall of machine guns.”¹⁹ The 101st and 102nd Infantry Regiments began their assaults on 23 October, making considerable gains. In severe fighting through 26 October, the 51st Brigade took and lost Belleau Bois four times. German concrete positions defeated the repeated efforts of 26th Division artillery to knock them out, while German artillery and *minenwerfer* fire pounded the 101st and 102nd Infantry Regiments in their forward positions. On 27 October, the 51st Brigade made one last push, taking and holding the Belleau Bois, but was unable to take Hill 360. The division took 3,800 casualties in these days of fighting.

The division was nearing its breaking point. The 51st Brigade was a hollow shell from four days of attacks that wore its already thin ranks practically threadbare. In a move that shocked the beleaguered Yankee Division, Major General Edwards was relieved by Pershing on 20 October. His orders were to go back to the United States to take on a training role; he remained in place until 24 October when Brig. Gen. Frank Bamford arrived to replace him—literally handing over the division when it was in action. It had been a terrible month for Edwards, receiving the news of the death of his only child, Bessie, to influenza while she was serving as an Army nurse in Washington, D.C. His aide, Captain Simpkins, also succumbed to influenza and died before the general could reach his bedside.²⁰

The relief of their beloved commander, combined with no replacements, terrible weather, influenza, and constant bombardment left the Yankee Division with little fighting spirit. There was a spike in psychological cases in October, men simply breaking down under the strains of prolonged combat. The division inspector reported at the end of October that the men were “all in,” “shell shy,” and “Mentally and physically exhausted.” He noted that the men were, “in a depressed state of mind and suffering from both nervous and physical fatigue.”²¹ The 51st Brigade was on the verge of collapse, he warned. On 27 October, the 101st Infantry could only count 435 effectives, while the 102nd Infantry only mustered 383 men on the front lines. Despite this, the 26th Division stayed on the front.²²

Contact with the Germans

The 103rd maintained its position on the right, patrolling and trying to keep the enemy off balance with raids and other small actions. On 24 October, 16 Germans in Company D’s sector came over and gave themselves up as prisoners to Capt. Irvin Doane—now the 1st Battalion’s commander—and the battalion’s chaplain, Father Michael Nivard.²³ Twenty-three more came over later, with 30 more up and out of their trenches talking to the Americans.²⁴ This would have unforeseen consequences to come. On 28 October, the 2nd Battalion took over the 1st Battalion’s positions and moved to the support position in Ravine la Mamelle, while the 3rd Battalion took up position in the left sub-sector where the 2nd had been.²⁵

Lieutenant Swett received his commission as a Captain on 29 October, and with it received orders to make a reconnaissance to attack. Fortunately for the company, the attack order never came. The following day, “the Boshe shelled the devil out of us,” sending over mustard, phosgene, and chlorine gas.²⁶ The weather remained cold and wet, and the Doughboys struggled to keep dry just as they struggled to stay alive. Sam Avery in Headquarters Company wrote home on 1 November, “We are eating good, which is half the battle while in the trenches. When I say trenches, of coarse [sic] I mean the front, for there is no such thing nowadays. Only shell holes or holes that each individual doughboy digs himself. The Boshe [sic] have been driven from their trenches and holes and is given no time to resume his old tactics.”²⁷ Although this was the brash tone the men used when they wrote home, it contained a grain of truth: the Germans no longer had any offensive momentum.

Company L Conducts a Raid

On 3 November, Company L received orders late in the evening to execute a raid on the enemy lines to their front to ascertain if they were held

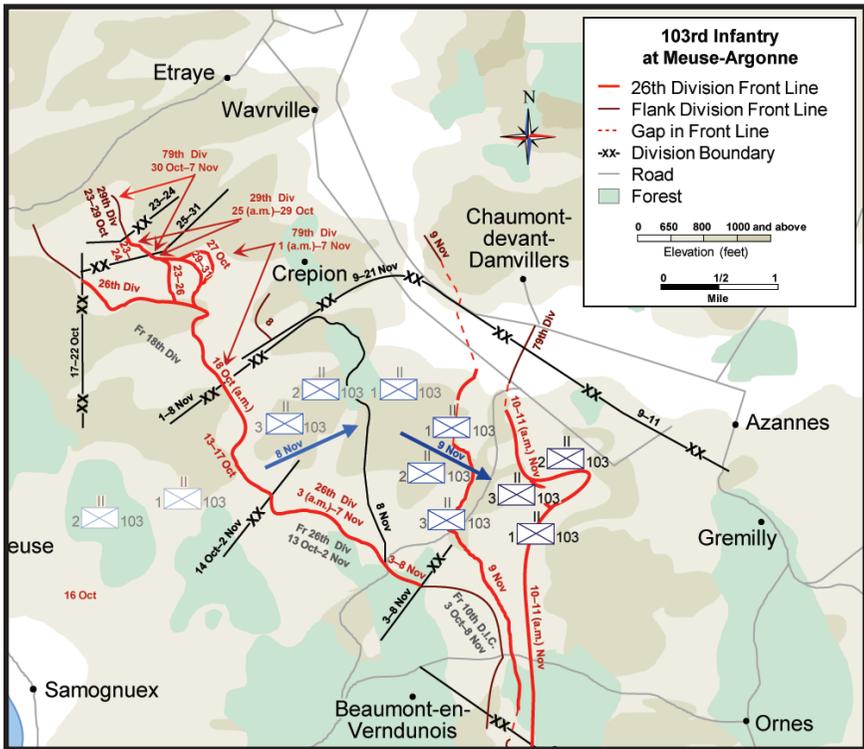


Figure 8.2. The 103rd Infantry at the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Graphic created by Army University Press staff.

by a strong number of troops and to take prisoners, if possible. Lieutenant McConnell, commanding, with two other officers and 90 men—all that remained of Company L—led the raid on 4 November. Behind a diversionary barrage from the 102nd Field Artillery, Company L stepped off at 2100 in four assault columns with groups on the left and right to protect their flanks. They reached the first line of enemy wire after 55 yards, with the main enemy line 20 yards further. Enemy light machine guns positioned in shell holes fired on them, followed by German heavy machine guns further back. Company L responded with rifle fire and grenades. The right column entered the enemy lines, but found the trenches vacant. The right center column did the same but were forced back under heavy fire. The other columns could not pass through the wire because they were pinned down by machine gun fire. All withdrew, reaching their own lines at midnight, having ascertained that the Germans were very much still there. Patrols were sent out to recover the wounded. Losses were five killed and nine wounded; enemy casualties were unknown.²⁸ In retaliation, the Germans shelled “the Piss” out of the 1st Battalion’s sector on 4 November, as Cap-

tain Swett grumbled to his diary, remarking that he felt “sick as hell,” from the constant gassing.²⁹

The Division Front is Reorganized

Shortly following this raid, the division front reorganized. The new positions were 104th Infantry on the left, then the 103rd, and the dwindling 51st Brigade on the right, the 79th Division taking over the zone previously covered by the 51st Brigade on the left. On 6 November, the 1st Battalion, 103rd took over the front in the Bois d’Haumont, with the 2nd Battalion in support, and the 3rd Battalion in reserve.³⁰ All battalions were severely depleted in numbers; the 2nd Battalion was down to about 150 men who could effectively man the front-line positions—a shadow of the over 1,000 men the battalion was authorized.³¹ Captain Cabot, commanding the 3rd Battalion, counted “200 rifles.” Company I could only muster 34 men on 8 November; Company L, 67. In Company A, all platoons were led by corporals. Company B fared only slightly better; they had a few sergeants left.³²

Disease, as well as enemy fire, caused gaps in the ranks. The entirety of Company F had to be sent into quarantine in Verdun on account of diphtheria. Sam Avery in Headquarters Company wrote on 5 November, “What seems to worry us boys over here the most is the epidemic that is raging over there [in the US], for in letters every one gets this is mentioned and I’ve seen more than one poor chap that has lost either a mother, sister or wife. It was only today that one of the boys in the company received a letter stating that his mother and youngest sister had both died the same day from this same disease. Beleive [sic] me this is tough news for the fellows, and what makes it worse is the fact that there are others in all there [sic] families that are subject to the same thing, and this fact plays on the boy’s mind.”³³ The Influenza of 1918 was wreaking havoc back in the US, both in Army cantonments and on the home front. The letters now bore the news of the sad losses.

It was here that Sgt. Russell Adams of Company B “finally caught it,” as he put it. On 3 November, he had gone out of the way to use the latrine in an area that was still saturated with mustard gas and had been burned on his “private parts.” He was in the hospital from this ignominious injury until the Armistice.³⁴ The 79th Division was brought into the sector and ordered to make a drive on the Yankee Division’s left flank towards Hill 360. On 7 November, the tired 3rd Battalion was ordered out of its position in reserve to join the 79th Division, along with a battalion from the 104th Infantry. This movement was over congested roads and with few

maps. The 3rd Battalion managed to get into position to support the 157th Infantry Brigade.

Colonel Hume Relieved

That same day—7 November—Colonel Hume was relieved of command by General Bamford. The charges consisted of allowing his men to fraternize with the enemy and not being aggressive enough. While men of the regiment had exchanged words with the Germans opposite them, who had asked for an informal cease fire, the men of the 103rd said the only cease-fire that would take place would be when the Germans surrendered to them. The Germans did not agree to this and the shooting continued, although visiting inspectors claimed that the men of the 103rd were deliberately firing high. However, General Bamford saw the entire incident as an indictment of failed leadership and ordered Hume relieved. General Cole, commanding the 52nd Brigade, was relieved the following day for not being aggressive enough. Lt. Col. Cassius M. Dowell—a Regular Army officer who had been a Judge Advocate General before the war and who was an operations officer at 26th Division headquarters—took over command at this vital time.³⁵ His first action was to visit the front lines, disguised as a private soldier—where he immediately levelled the charge of fraternization once again, against troops of both the 1st and 2nd Battalions. When Major Hosford's explanation was not satisfactory, Dowell relieved him, as well.³⁶

Cole, Hume, and Hosford were all gone by 8 November.³⁷ All three commanders would later request a formal court martial, be exonerated, and were restored to their commands after the Armistice, as the charges were unfounded. In just days following the Armistice, Dowell would also accuse Doane of allowing his men to fraternize with the enemy, but Doane was not having it. Every officer in the 1st Battalion—including the chaplain—provided sworn statements denying that any fraternization took place.³⁸ The issue was dropped, but the damage had been done. The entire incident soured the men of the 26th Division against what they saw as Regular Army interference.

Because of these changes in leadership, morale was understandably low. Pvt. Maurice Buzzell of Houlton wrote home to his family, "They have broken our regiment up in the last couple of days. They have taken Colonel Hume and Major Hosford away from us, and quite a few of our other officers, and transferred them to other outfits. We certainly did not like to see Colonel Hume go as he used us fine."³⁹ For the past three weeks, the Doughboys had been living in rain and mud with little shelter from the

near incessant gassing and shelling. Food rations were low, because of the great difficulty in moving rations up to the front lines when targeted by artillery and machine guns. Since 1 October, 116 men had been wounded and 235 had suffered gas exposure significant enough to report to the field hospital.⁴⁰ Still, the rugged veterans of the Chemin des Dames, Xivray, Belleau Woods, Hill 190, St. Mihiel, and Riaville stood-to every morning to turn again to the dogged task of driving the Germans back.⁴¹

The Regiment goes in Pursuit

The regiment was due to assault on 7 November, but Hume's relief forestalled this action. His attack order, dated 6 November, shows how the regiment had completed its evolution into a combined arms unit. The regiment was to attack in battalion depth, machine-gun companies attached to each battalion. The regimental mortars and 37mm guns were to travel with the assault battalion, providing more firepower to augment the preparatory barrage. A short order, it encapsulated how the regiment had institutionalized the lessons of the past five months of offensives.⁴²

On the night of 7 November, reports came in from both brigade sectors that the enemy was seen withdrawing, with no intent to disguise their movements. This was accompanied by a bombardment of about 9,000 shells of gas and high explosive across the 26th Division's front.⁴³ At noon on 8 November, the 1st Battalion reported, "seeing 200 of the enemy with full equipment moving towards the East. At about the same time the 104th Infantry on our left reported by telephone that 83 of the enemy fully equipped, were moving in the direction of Flabas."⁴⁴ The Germans were falling back to their next line.

Patrols from the 1st Battalion, 103rd Infantry immediately pushed forward into the enemy's former lines, followed by the main body of the battalion, the 2nd Battalion trailing them. Enemy artillery continued to target the advance with high explosive and gas shells. One of these caused Capt. John Healy in command of Company E to be gassed. He had managed to go through some of the fiercest fighting of the war unscathed, one of the few company commanders to do so, but the gas caused a complete physical collapse, and he was evacuated off the front lines. He recovered, however, and lived to return home to his farm and family—a wife and two small children.⁴⁵

By 1505, the 1st Battalion had cleared the Haumont woods and patrols were on the edge of the town of Flabas. As night fell, Company D pressed through Flabas and established outposts in the woods beyond, pressing the German rearguard. Captain Swett established a defensive perimeter and sent out patrols, waiting for Company A to come up.⁴⁶

After midnight, the 3rd Battalion was relieved of assignment to the 79th Division—where they had not had time to take part in any operations—and ordered to head back to the 26th Division to be prepared to attack by 0600 on 9 November.⁴⁷ The tired doughboys turned around and headed south again.

The A.E.F. was hammering forward, breaking through the German Hindenburg Line and attempting to crack the hinge of the lines around the cities of Sedan and Metz. The 26th Division was once again in their role as a diversionary force, pressing the enemy as much as possible east of the Meuse without committing to an overall offensive.⁴⁸ On the morning of 9 November, the 2nd Battalion passed through the 1st Battalion and took over the advance, reinforced by the Machine Gun Company. Dowell insisted that the 2nd Battalion must advance without concern for its flanks, that one more push would break the Germans who were only manning a thin line. Dowell was concerned that waiting for liaison with other units would slow the advance.

The Hotchkiss guns rattled off in a short barrage to cover the advancing men from the 2nd Battalion. The 3rd Battalion was placed in reserve, having marched all night to get back to their regiment. After about a kilometer, the 2nd Battalion's advance was halted by strong machine gun fire on the ridge in the Bois le Comte in the Ravin de la Vaux Hordelle. Lieutenant Colonel Dowell afterwards described the German defense in this sector as "a checkerboard machine-gun defense—a checkerboard of machine gun nests."⁴⁹ The 2nd Battalion's axis of attack had them rolling up the German right flank obliquely, which allowed them to move inside enemy trenches although it exposed them to severe flanking fire from their left. The position in the Bois le Comte was eventually cleared, but the battalion continued to take severe flanking fire from the Bois de Ville, a wooded hilltop about 800 meters to the east. This, combined with accurate minenwerfer bombardment, halted the advance. Two attempts to infiltrate the enemy lines on the ridgeline of the Boise de Ville were fought off. One company from the 1st Battalion was sent over on the left to try to turn the enemy's flank, but ran into enemy trenches, was pinned down, and unable to maneuver. At 1630, one last assault was made with slight artillery preparation accompanied by a machine-gun barrage. Company H, down to 25 effectives, combined with Company G for this assault, the two advancing as a single unit. In Company E, only sergeants were left to command the platoons.⁵⁰ This shadow of a force advanced about 100 yards before being brought to a halt by machine gun fire from front and flank, as well as trench mortar fire. A frustrated Shumway noted in his reports that he verified every one of his movements

with regimental headquarters via telephone as well as runner.⁵¹ Patience was wearing thin between commanders.

At 1930, after 12 hours of combat, the battalions dug in—“Companies spent the night in the open in contact with the enemy.”⁵² The Stokes mortars and 37mm guns were placed on the hill in the Bois le Comte in preparation to support the attacks of the following day. On the right, the 101st and 102nd Infantry made some small gains that day as well, but the 104th Infantry on the left was held up and was unable to make any headway.⁵³ Attacks going forward would not have their flanks covered by liaison with the units on the left and right.

Attacking the Bois de Ville—November 10

Captain Cabot and the 3rd Battalion now took over the advance at six in the morning on 10 November, to be supported closely by the 1st Battalion. Dowell messaged Doane that morning: “Report from prisoners indicate that resistance will not be strong if attack is pressed vigorously. Our 51st Brig is at least 3 kilometers ahead of us on our right...directs that we go forward at all costs.”⁵⁴ He directed that Doane send Companies A and B forward, again “at all costs.” However, no matter what prisoners said, resistance remained strong. And the 51st Brigade was in fact not three kilometers ahead at all, but barely 200 meters ahead of the 103rd.⁵⁵

The assault was preceded by one hour of artillery preparation. Shells from the Stokes mortars slammed into the hilltop as the advance began. Aided by thick fog, three companies advanced up the wooded slope of the Bois de Ville and through the ravines surrounding it under extremely heavy fire. Pvt. George Stevens of Company I, one of the surviving Passamaquoddy, was shot through the legs while pulling an injured comrade off the battlefield. He did not realize the extent of his injuries until he reached the aid station.⁵⁶ Nearby, Pvt. Moses Neptune—Chief Neptune’s son—was killed in the advance. Leading the attack of Company I, 1st Lt. Herbert Peart, accompanied by a sergeant, broke through and seized a trench held by 16 Germans. He paused behind a tree to assess the situation, writing a note to his battalion commander: “Captain Cabot: 7:19 AM. Am held up by machine gun fire on left. Have located four of them. Also on my right—” His note was cut off when a machine gun round caught him in the head, killing him instantly.⁵⁷ Peart was Australian-born and came to the US to study at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, graduating in 1917. In 1915 he had received the Carnegie Medal for saving the life of a young woman who was drowning. Now he lay dead on the slopes of the Bois de Ville.⁵⁸

At 1050, Cabot messaged Dowell that he was struggling, held up by machine-gun fire from south of the Ravine de la Montagne. Company I on the left was down to 21 men, with Peart dead and the other officer wounded. The company was being led by corporals. Doane had committed Companies A and B to the right, Cabot noted, and they were sending back four prisoners taken in the action.⁵⁹ At 1220, Doane reported that his two companies on the right had good liaison with the 102nd, but that his companies on the right were struggling to find the 104th Infantry. Dowell indicated that there was little chance of a counterattack and that all battalions should advance without worrying about flank security. Doane reiterated that he was receiving heavy flank fire from the Trench du Bosphore, as well as fire from the ravine. He coordinated fire from the mortars and one of the 37mm guns to try to suppress these guns. He had one killed in action and 11 wounded at this point, noting that the 3rd Battalion seemed to be down to 140 men.⁶⁰

By 1535, the battalions were ready to try another push. Two companies each of the 1st Battalion tried to protect Cabot's flanks so that he could maneuver on the German machine guns. Company A on the right was able to find a crease in the German lines in the 102nd Infantry's sector to roll up some machine guns to aid their advance. Doane requested artillery preparation on the Bois de Ville, with the caveat that the rounds be dropped 100 meters shorter than before. Dowell replied that he would have a concentration of "75 and 155 on Bois de Ville ceasing promptly at 16.30."⁶¹

This turned out to amount to about 15 rounds, but the 3rd Battalion pressed forward again at 1630. As the companies were struggling to advance up the hill under heavy fire, Company K under Lieutenant Blackman executed a turning movement on the right through the Ravin de Champneville. He directed his men to push through as quickly as possible, "to advance steadily firing their rifles at any targets and even at suspicious looking places in order to make the enemy keep their heads down." They took the first machine gun, then advanced again, knocking out three other machine gun emplacements. This netted 27 prisoners and finally broke the enemy hold on the Bois de Ville. The 3rd Battalion seized the hill and pushed down the reverse slope, Company K on the right and Company I on the left. By 1700, the 3rd Battalion had advanced to the railroad track and had cut the Azannes-Beaumont Road, snagging seven more prisoners. However, they were opposite strong German positions in the Trench du Bosphore: a concrete line of trenches protected by rows of wire obstacles. The 3rd Battalion organized a thin line of automatic rifles in shell holes here on the edge of the Bois de Ville. Two more men in Company K were

killed by machine-gun fire.⁶² German artillery continued to be strong, both high explosive and gas. Seventeen men in Company M had to be evacuated when a gas shell landed literally in the doorway to their dugout.

The assaults of 10 November were the brainchild of Captains Cabot and Doane working together to try to solve the problems of liaison and fire support, while fulfilling Dowell's commander's intent: to seize the Bois de Ville at all costs. An "all costs" order like this were not something that the two officers were going to rush into, head-on. Working together, they patched together a plan to protect Cabot's flanks as he maneuvered and felt his way against the Germans in their concrete defenses. Lieutenant Blackman was only able to flank on the right because Doane's Company A was working against the flank machine guns.

At midnight, Colonel Dowell received orders to withdraw his reserve and support battalions and place them on the front lines. The 1st Battalion consolidated on the right flank of the 104th Infantry on the left around one in the morning on 11 November while the 2nd Battalion filled the gap between the 103rd and the 102nd Infantry on the right.⁶³ That night, all three battalions of the 103rd Infantry were placed on the front lines to prepare to advance the next morning.⁶⁴ This was the first and only time in the war that all three battalions shared the front lines together—an indication of the severity of the losses, since the full regimental front could muster 600 men at most. The 104th Infantry had managed to outflank the enemy to their front and make some gains, but the 101st Infantry was so fought out that the shattered unit had to be pulled off the front lines. The 102nd extended its own thin front to try to cover where the 101st had been.⁶⁵

The Last Attack

By 26 October—as the Yankee Division was clawing its way through the Belleau Bois—President Woodrow Wilson and Prince Max of Baden had come to an agreement for a negotiated peace settlement. From there, it fell to convincing the Entente leaders, both civilian and military. British Field Marshall Douglas Haig favored moderate terms, while General Pershing—eager to prove that his A.E.F. could redeem their slow movement through the Meuse-Argonne—pushed for an unconditional surrender from Germany. Indeed, on 17 October, Pershing had sent a telegram to all corps and division commanders to press the attack, upon hearing that the Germans were requesting an armistice: "Germany's desire is only to regain time to restore order among her forces, but she must be given no opportunity to recuperate and we must strike harder than ever. There can be no conclusion to this war until Germany is brought to her knees."⁶⁶

Foch came down in the middle, advocating for an armistice, but with harsh terms.⁶⁷ By 6 November, the Germans had appealed for an Armistice. Foch impressed on all commanders the importance of pushing the attack on 9 November.⁶⁸ The same day, a very strong rumor went out from US wireless stations in Paris that the Armistice had been signed, causing confusion across the front and in rear areas. This was corrected by G.H.Q., but the damage had been done.⁶⁹

This rumor surged around the lines until the announcement of the real signing of the Armistice went out at 0545 on 11 November. Rumors continued that morning that an Armistice had been signed, but division headquarters sent out strict notices that the regular duties would go ahead with no change. The phone buzzed at regimental headquarters 0915 on 11 November: only the artillery would fire. The infantry would remain in place until 1100 at which time the Armistice would go into effect. However, at 0945, the regiment received the Corps' orders that all infantry were to advance at once, halting at 1100 and holding all ground taken. Confusion reigned surrounding this order, since it seemed to be contrary to what appeared to be the end of the conflict. Colonel Dowell requested clarification and received it. He later said, "I hope my soldierly qualities of subordination and obedience will never be given as severe a test again."⁷⁰

But orders were orders and so the officers and sergeants went back to their outfits to go out into the hell one last time. The German machine guns—quiet up until now—chattered to life as the waves of advancing Doughboys came into sight. Each battalion advanced about 200-300 meters, straightening the line along the Azannes-Beaumont Road; the 3rd Battalion surged forward and seized the crossroads labelled le Cap de Bonne Esperance, but halted about 100 meters shy of the Tranche du Bosphore, which was too full of enemy machine guns to allow any further movement. This was the farthest advance of any unit in the 26th Division at the cessation of hostilities—just shy of the Hindenburg Line.⁷¹ Where they ended the war was a mere four and a half miles north of the mighty French fortress of Douaumont, where in 1916 the French and Germans fought the battle of Verdun. This battle lasted nearly a year and caused a million total casualties.

Sgt. Leon Labonville from Houlton, in Company L, was the last man to make the ultimate sacrifice from the 103rd Infantry, being killed in the final attack. Many more men were wounded. Litter bearers were in short supply, so men from the field hospitals filled the role, including Captain Bayne-Jones. "This morning I nearly got picked off 15 minutes before the shooting stopped," he related in a letter to his sister. "I was going down a

ravine with some litter bearers to get a wounded man when all of a sudden a machine gun ahead opened up and the bullets came clipping by, hit the ground and trees around us, and made us throw ourselves on our bellies in any old hole...we lay there until the armistice let us get up. It would have been tough luck to get such a souvenir at this time.”⁷²

Armistice

At 1059, every Allied and German gun fired their last salvos. “Suddenly, all the guns behind us stopped barking and rolling, the last ‘freight car’ rattled over our heads, and all the machine guns suddenly stopped, though they had been rioting away up to the very last minute,” remembered Bayne-Jones. As the last rounds thundered off into the distance, a profound quietude came over the battlefield. “Eleven o’clock came and then that awful silence!”⁷³ The exhausted doughboys dropped where they were, many in shock. “All the men knew what the silence meant, but nobody shouted or threw his hat in the air,” wrote Bayne-Jones, “and then someone said, ‘I guess I’ll go look for some grub.’”⁷⁴ That seemed to sum it all up, in the doughboy’s own way. Some slept, some smoked, some ate; but there was little in the way of celebration on the front lines. The men were well and truly worn out. Fifty-eight men of the regiment had been killed in action in the last 24 days in combat.⁷⁵ Lieut. Reginald Foss was on the front lines at the end and wrote back to his parents, “At just 11 everything stopped short and the silence was almost uncanny—couldn’t get used to it for a couple days. The Boche stood up in his trenches, sang, and waved his hands but there was no response from our side.”⁷⁶ Captain Swett simply recorded, “Slept in Boshland.”⁷⁷

Men took the news in different ways. “When I heard of the Armistice I was dumbfounded,” recalled Hazen O. Hager of Company F from Dover, Maine. Hager was barely 19 years old, but was in terrible health because he had been twice gassed and had hurt his leg when an artillery shell landed near him. He was worried about what would happen when he returned home. “I didn’t know what to do. At first I was elated and then I said, no. I felt sick to my stomach. I felt so rotten and I was in such bad shape. ‘If I go home I can’t do anything’ I thought. To tell you the truth, I really felt bad when it was over.”⁷⁸ At Officer Candidate School off the front lines, Algernon Holden also felt heartsick, thinking that Germans had not been defeated and had got off easily. He wrote that he spent the day in a café with a disgruntled *poilu*, drinking wine: “He swore in French and I in English until the wine was finished.”⁷⁹ Albert G. Butzer, chaplain for the 103rd wrote back to his parents in Buffalo, NY: “We stopped fighting this morning at eleven o’clock, but it was a fight to the finish—no let up

on either side until the clock pointed exactly to eleven, then both sides stopped instantly and since then there hasn't been a shot fired. Seems just like going from hell to heaven...Eight of my boys were killed just a few hours before fighting stopped...spent all afternoon finding their bodies and bringing them to one place where we are going to erect a little cemetery for them.”⁸⁰

“The guns had ceased to speak after a long morning of mutual re-
crimination, recalled Lieut. Ralph Monroe Eaton, “we could not believe that they were at last still.” For him, the end of the war marked the first time he saw a US flag on the front. “One never sees a flag or hears a bugle,” he wrote. “Imagery and symbolism are replaced by weary limbs and ceaseless eyes.” Then he saw the ambulances and trucks coming up from Verdun, “on each the Tricolor and the Stars and Stripes, and we knew by that sign that the end had come.”⁸¹

On 12 November, the work of burying the dead began. War correspondent Bert Ford made his way over to the 103rd's sector: “A more perfect Winter afternoon could not be desired...there was the sign of fury everywhere. Shell after shell had partly disinterred the arms, legs or heads of Frenchmen who had fallen in earlier battles.” His party made their way through “Shrapnel Valley, a deep ravine pocked by shell craters and yawning with dugouts now abandoned. We met a doughboy from Vermont. He pointed to a file of musicians, instruments under their arms, coming Indian file over a hill.” The band had come up from Verdun to pay their last respects to the men who had fallen on 10 November.⁸²

The 3rd Battalion assembled on the hill in the Bois de Ville to lay to rest their battle dead from 10 November. Lieut. Herbert Peart was placed in a trench with ten other doughboys from the battalion, including Pvt. Moses Neptune. His father, Passamaquoddy tribal Governor William Neptune, would later receive the news of his son's death. He took it stoically, expressing his thankfulness that his son had a dignified and Christian burial. A tarp covered the dead, with an American flag laid over the top of it. Capt. Charles Cabot, commanding 3rd Battalion, rings under his eyes and covered in mud, said a few words to the remnants of his battalion that ringed the grave on three sides: “They gave their all for the cause. It is your duty to go back and tell their relatives and friends how gallantly they died. They were brave fellows, true Americans, real men... Lieutenant Peart was a gallant leader and met a soldier's death on the field of battle. The brave fellows beside him are Cpl. Leon le Bonville and Privates Charles Worth, Frank Klavikowski, J. McGiven, John Elliott, F.R., Snow, Albert O. Abraham, Charles W. Bargiall, William Whitney

and Moses W. Neptune.”⁸³ The 103rd Infantry band played “Nearer my God to Thee,” and then the firing squad stepped forward and fired three salute volleys. As the last reports echoed over the hillsides and ravines, a small party of mounted German officers appeared into view under a flag of truce, to turn over trench maps and other items to the Americans. It was a sight that stirred the imaginations of many and brought a fitting close to the Meuse-Argonne—the bloodiest battle in American history.

The war—although it was over—had not completely erased feelings of enmity between the combatants. The German major who approached Captain Cabot was impeccably dressed—clean uniform, spurs, and the Iron Cross prominently displayed. This in contrast to the American officer, who was dressed as a plain Doughboy without even insignia of rank—a precaution against being captured—and who was muddy and exhausted. The German major viewed Captain Cabot with apparent disgust and asked in English to see a major or someone of equal rank. Cabot, a laconic man from Cambridge, Massachusetts who would later write the 103rd’s history, replied that he was sure he could help the major out. The German did not seem convinced and directed his steely glare at the crowd of doughboys who were gathering to see what was turning into an interesting show. At the height of the tension, a soldier from the 3rd Battalion piped up, “Who’s the skinny Heine, fellows?” That broke the mood entirely; the German officer wilted and handed over his information to Captain Cabot.⁸⁴

Relief

The remnants of the 103rd Infantry were relieved from the Neptune Sector on the nights of 12-13 November and began a ten-day march back to a rest area on 14 November.⁸⁵ On 18 November, the entire 26th Division was finally relieved off the front lines. No other division but the 1st had spent longer holding front-line sectors.⁸⁶ It was a ghost of what it had been. Apart from 1,000 replacements sent to the 51st Brigade on 8-9 November, the division received no replacements in this sector. Even this influx could not restore the fighting spirit of the brigade. For the entire war, the 26th Division had taken 13,664 casualties and received 14,411 replacements—barely enough to replace the combat losses. Not even close to enough personnel to replace all those who were transferred, were sick, or were rotated home. In comparison, the 1st Division took 22,320 casualties but received 30,206 replacements. The 2nd Division took 23,235 losses but got 35,353 replacements. Even the National Guard’s 42nd and 32nd Divisions received far more replacements than their losses. The 26th Division was understrength when they came off the Chemin des Dames in March and for some reason remained so for the duration of the war, by the end,

drastically so. Due to its depleted strength, it was determined that the 26th Division would not become part of the Army of Occupation now planned for Germany. It was bound for a real rest camp and then home.⁸⁷

With the relief complete, 14 November saw the 103rd Infantry on a series of easy marches to the rest area of Montigny le Roi 85 miles away. In good weather and rising spirits, the regiment reached its new home in less than ten days. Regimental headquarters were established at Chauffort, with the rest of the troops billeted in the surrounding villages of Epinant, Is-en-Bassigny, and Sarrey.⁸⁸

Coming off the Neptune Sector, the 103rd Infantry was in rough shape. Since 1 November, the regiment had undergone morale-sinking command changes, three days of non-stop attacks, and then an all-out assault just when they thought it was all over. But even in this demoralized state, the regiment carried on. They made more significant gains in this sector than did the other regiments in the division, even without the replacements that the 101st and 102nd Infantry Regiments received. Doane, Shumway, and Cabot maneuvered their troops and held to their lessons learned, even in spite of the poor information coming out of headquarters. These three young leaders—who all began the war as privates or second lieutenants—demonstrated the fundamentals of command from platoon to company to battalion. They led from the front, knew their tactics, and knew what they could ask of their soldiers. By the end, they and their soldiers had been pushed to the breaking point. And yet, they did not break. This stands as a testament to the strong bonds of comradeship and unity that had always been the bones of the regiment.

Peace had come at an immense cost to the 103rd Infantry. Over the course of the war, 371 men had been killed in action, with another 21 dead from disease or accident. Company E had suffered the most, with 50 men killed, Company C lost 42, and Company D with 40. The Aisne-Marne Offensive had devastated the regiment. While on the “*Pas Fini*” front, the regiment had suffered 168 men killed in action. Of course, the dead were not the end of it. From their first moments on the Chemin des Dames in February up until the final moments of the war, the men of the 103rd had been wounded and gassed in large numbers. Rough estimates show that 29 officers and 1,960 enlisted men were wounded, but that does not even begin to tell the full story.⁸⁹ In all likelihood, nearly 75-90 percent of the regiment was gassed during the last two horrendous months on the line. The official number of wounded does not take into account the men who were wounded several times over, or the men who were wounded but declined to report it for fear of being sent to the rear

and separated from their companies. With all that considered, well over half the men who left New England in 1917 became casualties. And the visible wounds were only the beginning.

Notes

1. Guy Swett, "WWI Journal, September 30, 1918" (MEARNG Archives, Augusta, ME).
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Chapter IX

“A Detached World:”

Homecoming, November 1918-Present

At the end of 1918, Mr. and Mrs. James McCleary of Rumford received a notice from the War Department in October, notifying them that their son John in Company B had died of bronchial pneumonia on 16 October. He had been wounded back in the Aisne-Marne Offensive. They were thus shocked to receive a letter from him dated 14 November, as was his wife who received a letter from the same date. John McCleary expressed his happiness that the war was over and that he hoped to be home around Christmas or soon afterwards.¹ Decidedly alive, he came home with the rest of the men the following spring.

Incidents like this led families to preserve hope that their loved ones might actually be okay. However, it was more often than not that the reports were accurate. On 12 December 1918, the *Cape Vincent Newspaper* announced that Lieutenant Henry J. Scobell of Company M had died from his wounds received at Chateau-Thierry. He had been wounded on his scalp, twice in the back, his left arm was broken in two places, and his right forefinger had been shot off. While in the hospital, he succumbed to pneumonia, leaving behind Miss Stella Todd of Bangor, to whom he was engaged to be married.² Pvt. James Morris, having survived the war from start to finish and who had been gassed three times, died of bronchial pneumonia on 21 January 1919.³ Even though the war was over, the casualties continued to mount.

The men who had started out with the 2nd Maine back in 1917 were themselves surprised to have made it to see peace. No longer sergeant, but now Lieut. Algernon Holden in Company L wrote, “I have wondered a good many times if I would ever set my foot on Yankee turf again—and now that it is almost certain, it hardly seems possible. We have been living in a detached world over here.”⁴ The 103rd settled into the rest area near Montigny-le-Roi and it was a happy Thanksgiving for those men in 1918. In order to keep the men in good shape and—more importantly—out of trouble, the division set up a solid regimen of daily drills, sporting events, and inspections. Old and deteriorated uniforms were turned in and new ones drawn, weapons and equipment were cleaned, and the body of war-torn men began to look like soldiers again.⁵ Passes and furloughs arrived and soon men were off to enjoy a taste of France, one far different than

what they had experienced over the past year. Cpl. Linwood Jewett in Company E managed to snag a seven-day furlough in the French Alps: “On my trip here I saw views of the Alps that seemed almost unreasonable if they were described to one. You couldn’t convince anyone unless they saw some of the sights with their own eyes... Tell Pa that I’ll be home soon and I’ll tell him all about the war with its curiosities and horrors, for I sure have seen both sides.”⁶ Most of the men would get passes to France or England before they left Europe.⁷

Some soldiers still were not satisfied with their experience “Over There” and requested transfers to units in the Army of Occupation, most notably officers such as Irvin Doane and Guy Swett. Swett managed to get his long-coveted captain’s rank in Company H, 127th Infantry of the 32nd “Red Arrow” Division. He was not forgotten by the men he had led in Company D, as evidenced by the postcard he received dated 13 December 1918 from Pvt. Frank Kempf, who thought his old officer should know exactly where the boys were should he change his mind and come back. Kempf had sent a postcard of Epinant, where the company was posted, with a hand-drawn arrow showing the location of the company office; just in case.⁸ While at face value it might seem shocking for citizen-soldiers who had just been through one of the most horrific events of the 20th century to want to remain in the Army, the feeling of purpose and duty was strong for many men. They had become accustomed to Army life—even to leading. As in Doane’s case, he’d found what he excelled at. “I could write a story book about my experiences,” he wrote home to a friend after the Armistice, “but will tell you them when we are waiting for the dog to circle a rabbit someday.” The life he led was hard, he wrote, “but I rather liked it.” It could be hard to leave that life behind; and so many opted not to.⁹

President Wilson Visits

On Christmas Day, the men enjoyed a lavish dinner and were treated to a distinguished guest who dropped in on their billets—none other than President Woodrow Wilson. He ascended to the second story of Company C’s barracks via a ladder, presenting an amusing sight as the dignified president in black coat and top hat climbed the rickety ladder.¹⁰ He was accompanied by General Pershing and other A.E.F. cadre, who “all seemed pleased at conditions as they found them.”¹¹ Mrs. Wilson was present as well and was delighted with Company C’s “soup gun”—its rolling kitchen.

Men from the regiment were still coming back from the hospitals but some were going into them even after the fighting had ended. Pvt. Edwin

D. Booth of Detroit, Maine from Headquarters Company had been gassed at Apremont and Chateau-Thierry but kept going through the Armistice. He collapsed from nervous breakdown on 9 February 1919 and was in the hospital until the unit went home.¹²

Back at home, news was still coming in. Mr. and Mrs. James Rogers of Bangor finally received the joyous news that their son, Sgt. James Rogers, Jr. was back in the United States—albeit in a hospital, recovering from a serious head wound received on 22 July. One soldier wrote to his parents in a letter that arrived just before Christmas, “I was sure born under a lucky star, after being where I have and coming out alive. Several times I have almost been hit by shrapnel, also caught in many gas attacks, but come out without a scratch. Hoping this finds you O.K. Lots of love.”¹³

Officers continued to be moved about. Captain Bisbee returned to the regiment from time away at staff training only to be taken away again at the beginning of January. He and other regimental intelligence officers were gathered together by the G-2 for 1st Army, for the purpose of re-writing intelligence regulations governing infantry regiments. Being the senior captain—and the one with the most front-line experience—Bisbee found himself president of the board. The board was composed of officers representing each of the Corps in 1st Army. Within two weeks, they had completed their report which was to be used for the instruction of new intelligence officers.¹⁴ The A.E.F. was desperate to capture these lessons learned. On 19 December, the officers and NCOs of all three battalions were assembled for a multi-day seminar to discuss the operations. The three vignettes chosen were Belleau Wood, St. Mihiel, and Bois de Ville. Officers who had been in each of the actions were detailed to oversee the proceedings.¹⁵

Lt. Col. Cassius M. Dowell had a rocky start with his new regiment in combat and it did not improve at all once the fighting was over. After the Armistice, he had caught one of the men from Company L in abject drunkenness, and Dowell backed him up against a wall, giving him a strong verbal dressing down, telling him that he meant to create a good record for the regiment. “Hell colonel,” the soldier replied, “this regiment had a record before you ever saw it!”¹⁶ Dowell continuously harped on all the issues the regiment had, daily, following the Armistice. He issued memo after memo reprimanding the officers and men for things like discipline on the march, not adhering to timelines, not being motivated enough to train, and for thinking that the war was over. “Men are dull, apathetic, and sullen,” Dowell remarked in a memo on 24 November. A

far cry from the men who sang their way out of the Toul Sector in June. In an insult to every man who struggled in the Bois de Ville, Dowell did not think that any of his men deserved notice for their time in the Neptune Sector, and so did not submit any of them for citation or for the Distinguished Service Cross.¹⁷ Thankfully for all involved, Dowell was recalled to the 26th Division staff early in January and was replaced by Colonel Percy W. Arnold. Colonel Arnold established far better relations with his new regiment than Dowell had. Tragically, at the end of January, this officer suffered an unfortunate accident; he fell down the stairs in his billets and suffered a brain injury that led to his death. Lieutenant Colonel Beck assumed command at this juncture.¹⁸

Pershing Reviews the Division

Just following this tragedy, the regiment moved to a new rest area, in the vicinity of Eccommo. Again, the men were kept occupied by drill and work parties as well as athletic events which were facilitated by the regiment's chaplains. There were efforts to educate the soldiers, with the chaplains and other instructors teaching basic English literacy classes to those members of the regiment who were illiterate or non-English speaking. Some of the men who had left college to join the A.E.F. were able to attend lectures at European universities.¹⁹ Some men even went on details of clerks, interpreters, truck driver, and chauffeurs to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.²⁰

On 19 February, General Pershing—now the great victor leading the A.E.F.—came to inspect the 26th Division. There was little love lost between the Yankee Division and General Pershing. Lieutenant Holden of Company L wrote, “I have never seen the Commander in Chief nor am I so anxious to see him as I might be... We have been doing as hard scrapping as any American outfit has done... General Pershing once called us ‘Boy Scouts’ but now he says the boy scouts are as good soldiers as there are in the A.E.F.—pretty good eh?”²¹ Lauded by the American public, to the Yankee Division, Pershing was the one who had berated them for Seicheprey, neglected to send them replacements, and taken Edwards and other National Guard officers from them. While the 26th Division had many positive interactions with Regular Army officers and soldiers—since there were so many transfers going on—Pershing seemed emblematic of everything that the Yankee Division soldiers resented about the Regular Army.

It was a rainy day when the inspection took place and the 103rd Infantry had to march eight miles to the parade ground at St. Biez-en-Belin to wait for three hours in the “mud and rain,” as Pvt. George S. Harris of

Headquarters Company remembered.²² The full division passed in review for General Pershing, bayonets fixed and with helmets and light packs. The review over, the men of the 103rd still had a month to wait until the long-awaited move to their port of embarkation to take them homewards.

In the middle of March, the Yankee Division held a massive tournament, consisting of athletic and military tests which pitted each unit against the others. Elimination trials had already taken place in each unit, so the best teams were sent to compete. This tournament lasted three days and at the end of it, the 103rd Infantry came in second.

Colonel Hume Returns

Of greater joy to the men in the “Old Second,” however, was the return to the fold of their beloved “Old Man.” Colonel Hume had been exonerated on all charges through the legal diligence of Colonel John Logan, a Boston lawyer and one of those caught up in the in reliefs of Yankee Division commanders. While he and the other aggrieved National Guard officers cooled their heels near Chaumont awaiting their next assignment, he had put in appeals for all of them: and won. Now Hume could be back with his regiment just in time to see it return home.²³ An undated news story from the *Lewiston Daily Journal* said, “Maine has every reason to rejoice that Colonel Hume is returning home to this state with his title restored and his honor vindicated. No man among the military circles of the Pine Tree State is more beloved than Colonel Hume. He is respected for his military efficiency, and his personal leadership is quite apart from the prestige in which an officer is ordinarily held by the men under him. Colonel Hume returns at the head of that splendid organization, the 103rd Infantry, composed of the stalwart men of Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, who have proved their gallantry on the battle fields of France. He shares with them the laurels that rightfully belong to the brave.”²⁴ Hume’s return was joyous to the regiment, not only because of their affection for him, but because of what it signified: a small victory over what was seen as a system prejudiced against National Guard soldiers. Whether this prejudice existed or not, the perception was there. With Hume exonerated, the regiment felt as though it was vindicated and could return home with heads held high.

Back from the Trenches

On the last day of March, the regiment made its final move in France, travelling to a giant debarkation camp near the port city of Brest. Here the men underwent their final de-lousing, turned in equipment, completed their last physicals, and awaited their transports to be available. Sgt. Russell Adams, now returned to the regiment after his mustard gas wounds

had recovered, received his physical along with the rest of the men of Company B. The doctor approached him and gravely said, “Adams, I have some bad news. Somewhere along the line you’ve picked up some phosgene gas in your lungs, and it’s done some damage. If you take it easy, don’t smoke, eat well, and get plenty of rest, you might live until you’re thirty-five or forty. If you don’t you could go at any time.”²⁵ Men chafed at the waiting and took the opportunity to send last letters home. Sgt. Alfred Foster in Company C wrote home to “Dear Bobbie,” warning her, “not to depend on me to plant gardens. But you can depend on me to help eat the things that come out of the garden.”²⁶

Transports Home

All companies of the regiment except for Companies L and M, were loaded onto the transport *America*. Companies L and M boarded the *Agamemnon* a few days later. Just a few days separated them from home. On board the *America*, Spaulding Bisbee—now a major—took one last look at France: “The Colonel & I & others stayed on deck until France faded in the distance. We didn’t have much to say but we thought a lot. I remembered the fellows & friends whom we had left behind at the sectors N.W. of Toul, Chateau Thierry, St. Mihiel & Verdun. We might have been with them but for the grace of God.”²⁷ The trip was uneventful, other than bouts of sea sickness. With no more threats of the dreaded U-boats, officers and men slept, smoked, and read the days away. There were movies every night—some of them were “war movies,” Hollywood mock-ups that the troops greeted with howls of laughter. “Unfortunately the Hollywood Directors knew about as much about modern combat as hens know about Heaven,” remembered Algernon Holden, wryly.²⁸

On 5 April, the *America* sighted Boston Harbor—much to the delight of all the boys from New England who had been dreaming of this sight for a year and a half. Soldiers scanned each boat in the harbor, eagerly looking for familiar faces. Algernon Holden spotted Navy men who he had tried to enlist in the Army before the war. Major Bisbee was waving to the many boats he saw when “suddenly we came close to a boat & I looked down on her deck & there was Ethel and my mother. They were waving frantically & I shouted myself hoarse trying to say ‘Hello.’”²⁹ They were met on the docks by their beloved former commander Major General Edwards, as well as Governor Milliken and a delegation from Maine to welcome them home. Edwards himself had just returned from a trip to Maine where he spread the word far and wide: the 103rd Infantry had covered itself in glory. Former officers of the regiment who had been promoted into other units were on hand to meet their “boys,” so it developed into a family

reunion of sorts. The scene was played all over again on 7 April when the *Agamemnon* docked in Boston.³⁰ Local papers in Maine listed rosters of their boys who were arriving home. One enthusiastic eleven year-old in Houlton Maine, Arthur Halbert Porter, penned a poem for the town's heroes, called "When Company L Comes Marching Home:"

By and by On the fourth of July,
Company L will come marching by,
The people will shout hooray! Hooray!
Even the farmers who are making hay
Back from the trenches and the barbed wire,
Back from the trenches where the Rifles fire,
Back from the trenches where the guns shoot hell,
Back from the trenches comes Company L.
By and by on the fourth of July,
Company L will march through the square,
Where the birds are flying in the air,
Up the street past the jail there they meet a merry hail,
From even the prisoner in his cell who is glad to be watching
Company L.
Back from the fighting where the great guns boom,
Back from the fighting with their brave commander Hume,
Back from the fighting where they fought so well,
Back from the fighting comes Company L,
They are greeted with a hoorah! Hoorah!
Won't that be a glorious day.³¹

The troops immediately boarded trains for Camp Devens, with lines of shouting citizens waving flags and blowing kisses heralding them along the way. Leaves were granted to let the soldiers get home to see their families. Many meetings were bittersweet. Capt. Frank Burbank's wife had died of pneumonia just two months prior—he greeted his four year-old daughter. Major Bisbee returned home to Rumford to see his father—only to discover that his father could not see him: he had gone blind. Each company commander and officer had to carry the news of the boys who had been lost to their families, which must have been an agonizing task.³²

The Grand Review

On 25 April, the division assembled for one last grand review. This time it was not on the cold snow-filled fields of Neufchateau or the mud of Eccomoy. Now it was through the very beating heart of New England: Boston. Immense crowds packed the streets and people lined the roofs of the parade route, all hoping to catch a glimpse of their proud soldiers. Maine paid for those men of the regiment who had been wounded or had been sent home to travel to Boston; the same was accorded to the relatives of those who had given the ultimate sacrifice. Lodging was provided free of cost as well. One of those in attendance was Sabattis Lola who took the steamer “Calvin Austin” down the Maine coast to Boston from Pleasant Point. The father of slain Passamaquoddy Charles Lola, Sabattis was there as a representative of the nation.³³ Governor Milliken stood in the reviewing stand alongside General Edwards and the other governors of the New England states. Colonel Hume was also in the stand, ready to watch his boys parade by one last time.

The men of the 103rd assembled that morning and received their lunches on Beacon Street. At 1300, the cold troops finally started forward. Bands playing and flags flying, the 26th Division began its last march, the men in full kit wearing their steel helmets—now decorated by the insignia of each regiment. Those of the 103rd Infantry bore the white pine tree that was so distinctive of northern New England. The service flag of the division led the way with its 1,760 gold stars—the number of men who had been lost. Behind it came the cars carrying the men who had been wounded to a degree where they were unable to walk. And then came the regiments.³⁴

Leading the Supply Company of the 103rd Infantry was an uncommon little soldier: a dog named “Brownie.” The dog had belonged to a French officer who had been killed and the pup was wandering around the front lines. Brownie was adopted by Cook Elmer Child near Soissons and became part of the company. During one action, Brownie was said to have carried water over to a wounded soldier. Doing so, the dog was struck by German machine gun fire. Stretcher bearers carried off both the wounded soldier and the dog. His proud owner decorated the dog with a wounded stripe; Brownie would accompany Child home to Bridgton, Maine.³⁵

As the 103rd’s band hove into view, leading the regiment with its proud colors, Colonel Hume must have stifled tears of joy and sorrow: joy for the men who had returned, and sorrow for the missing faces of his boys of the Old Second. However, the band did not allow him much time

for retrospection. Upon spotting their beloved leader, the band immediately swung from “The Stars and Stripes Forever,” into “The Houn’ Dawg Rag.”³⁶ They could not resist one last chance to treat the “Old Man,” to one final rendition.

Major Bisbee proudly led his battalion on horseback, in awe of the packed crowds that lined the way. “It was estimated that over 1,000,000 people saw the parade,” he remarked later. Bisbee finally passed the reviewing stand after four hours of parade, and executed a salute to the governors and General Edwards. In one of those gestures that endeared him to all who he commanded, Edwards, who had already seen thousands of men pass by, called out, “Well done, Bisbee, your men are magnificent!” As Bisbee put it, “That was enough praise & as the men heard it we all braced ourselves and marched a little better.”³⁷

Mustering Out

From the victory parade in Boston, the men returned to Camp Devens where the work of mustering the men out of the Army began immediately. “Before our eyes the regiment wilted away,” recalled Bisbee.³⁸ Under the regulations of the day, when the regiment had been sworn into Federal service, all the men had left the rolls of the National Guard and became members of the US Army. Thus, when they were mustered out, they were given discharges from the Army. They were not returned to state service, as would happen following World War II and all subsequent conflicts. This meant that at the stroke of a pen, whole National Guard organizations ceased to exist. This demobilization process would have drastic consequences for national readiness as states attempted to rebuild their strength after the war. By 1 May, the majority of men were all civilians again. Just like that, it was all over.

Colonel Hume Presents the Colors

On 14 June, Colonel Hume executed his final act as commander of the 103rd US Infantry Regiment: presenting the colors of the 103rd Infantry to Governor Milliken on the east lawn of the Maine State House. Grasping the staff firmly, Hume handed the flag to the governor, saying: “Governor Milliken: these Colors of the 103rd Regiment, the National presented to the 2nd Maine by the citizens of Augusta and the Regimental by the Colonial Dames of Maine, we were proud to carry overseas but much more proudly we brought them back decorated with the names of our victorious campaigns and not a single stain of defeat on them. Now, Governor, to you, as representative of this State, I give in custody these precious emblems that they may be preserved and pointed to as a lesson

in patriotism to our children and to our children's children."³⁹ Governor Milliken took the colors from Colonel Hume, replying, "Colonel Hume: I count myself honored indeed in this privilege of receiving in behalf of the State of Maine the Colors of the 103rd Infantry. I can assure you that these Colors will be carefully treasured by the people of Maine and cherished as the visible symbols of the magnificent gallantry with which you and all the boys of the Regiment upheld the glorious traditions of our State."⁴⁰ The colors of the regiment are housed in the Hall of Flags in the Maine State House and in the Maine State Museum.

Return to Normal Life

The war was over. But life was not yet normal for the veterans of Maine, nor for the families who had lost loved ones. Following his advancement to lieutenant back in the early days of February 1918, Lieutenant Herbert Cobb was transferred from the 103rd Infantry to the 61st Infantry Regiment in the 5th Division to lead a Signal platoon. In a letter back home to his family on 8 October 1918, he wrote, "I for one will surely be glad to see peace declared." Just a few days later, a German artillery shell struck the dugout that he was sleeping in, killing him instantly. His family was not notified of his death until January of 1919.⁴¹ On the one year anniversary of the Armistice, Portland held a memorial service for the city's men who had lost their lives in the war, including Herbert Cobb. The keynote speaker was none other than Major General Clarence Edwards.⁴²

Time seemed to not diminish the reminders of war. In 1929, the parents of Musician Arthur Stowell—killed at Xivray—received a surprising notice in the mail: their son had been awarded the Croix de Guerre back in 1918 by the French government. There was no explanation as to why it had taken eleven years for this award to be noted. The cold hand of war continued to reach back to touch the families of those who had died.⁴³

The veterans of the war tried to return to the lives that the war had interrupted. They raised families and got jobs. Some handled the transition well. Some did not. After all, they had seen things it was incredibly hard to relate to their fellow citizens. How could Cpl. Edward Morency of Company A—who qualified as a sharpshooter at Camp Keyes in 1917—explain what he had seen as a sniper in France? How could he explain what it was like the time that he was in No-Mans-Land inside a dummy tree as an observation post, when he saw that German shells were getting the range of the tree? Could he explain how he felt as he hurriedly got to the ground, just in time, as four German shells plastered the tree? Could he relate what it was like to fire over 10,000 rounds from his rifle, at living

people?⁴⁴ One nameless veteran of Bangor's Company G put it best when he wrote, "Time dims the memory for dates and names of places and even the whine of shells is like some far-off nightmare. Perhaps we try to forget and remember only too well as we meet daily our comrades of those past days, and remembering, think of some who never came back."⁴⁵

The bonds created in combat were something that the veterans felt strongly about. Ralph Monroe Eaton, returned to professorship, mused, "I remarked yesterday in the subway station, the sullen indifference of the crowd, each going about his business resentful of the gaze of his neighbor." Those who had faced death together, he thought, knew each other more fully than those who had never seen war. As he tried to sort out how to make sense of those who had not seen what he had, he wrote, "I found myself wishing that I might put them all together in a sodden trench at night, when the sky is wavering with the crimson of the tir de barrage and the earth shaking under the impact of shell. It would at least make them friends."⁴⁶

The Mission

"We had accomplished our mission," mused Algernon Holden after the war, living in Houlton, Maine. "The super-men, the would-be World conquerors, had been defeated. We had done that which had to be done to give the civilised [sp] World a chance to lick their wounds and get on with rehabilitation." But as Holden watched the US abandon the League of Nations and then stand by as Germany grew stronger, he began to feel that the politicians had thrown away everything that he and his comrades had gained.⁴⁷ For—although life began anew for the veterans of the 103rd Infantry—they would carry the war with them forever. And all around the entire United States, millions of people like them went back to the work of being civilians. History does not so much go in circles, but it absolutely rhymes. And this story was being played out in every community around the country as regiment after regiment was dissolved.

From the outset of the US entry in the war, many wondered if the United States would be able to field an army large enough to actually make a difference in time on the European continent. No one knew just exactly how the federalization of the National Guard would work out, or if the mobilization process would be effective. While the Border Call-up of 1916 had shown that regiments could assemble and move to a point of mobilization, it had not tested the organization of Guard units into divisions. The 26th Division experienced a slightly different mobilization process than other divisions, because of the precipitous actions of its commander to

bring it into combat sooner. This meant that the division did not have the time others did to meld together at a training camp in the US, to receive its full complement of equipment, and to conduct training in an environment that was without distractions. That said, the 26th Division was able to garner more front-line experience in lieu of much of what they missed at a training camp.

National Guard Mobilizations

Taking these lessons into account, the Army provided most of its Guard divisions at least several months of pre-combat training during World War II, in addition to the massive Louisiana Maneuvers in 1941. In some cases in 1942 and 1943, guard divisions prepared for overseas deployment for six months or more, to include division-level exercises at the large training centers in Louisiana, Tennessee, and California. Training began at the company level before moving to the battalion, regimental (analogous to the brigade combat teams of the 21st century), and then divisional levels. Further combat experiences in Korea and Desert Storm caused the Army to institutionalize multiple-month-long stays at mobilization stations for Reserve Component units deploying in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Deployments would vary between nine and 12 months, meaning that with stays at mobilization and demobilization stations, Reservists could be away from home for 13 to 15 months at a time. However, a fight with a peer adversary such as the US faced against the Central Powers in 1917 would require faster mobilization in modern times—especially with the acceleration of military technologies.

The experience of the 103rd Infantry demonstrated the positives and negatives of a National Guard organization in large scale combat operations. The organization showed extremely good unit cohesion, steadiness under fire, and the ability to make tactical changes quickly. The close-knit company organizations bonded together on the Chemin des Dames and in the Toul Sector. This helped them when the summer and fall offensives began. Soldiers operated with greater trust in each other because of relationships that traced back before their entrance into the military. Even over the past century, this has not changed much in the National Guard.

However, because the men came from community-based organizations, losses fell far harder on them than they would had they been serving alongside strangers—just as they would in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, and the War on Terror. Casualties were not memories left overseas; they were holes in the communities that the soldiers came home

to. For the rest of their lives, there would be daily reminders of friends no longer with them. For the 103rd Infantry, the battlefield effect of extreme losses can be seen by the slackening in their combat effectiveness towards the end of the war; by October of 1918 they were not as aggressive as they had been even a month earlier. This could also be ascribed to their very low unit strength and the environmental effects of weather and disease.

That said, the 103rd Infantry demonstrated that the National Guard—once put down as being merely untrained militia—could and would fight large scale combat operations with the same level of intensity, commitment, and tactical exactness as their Regular counterparts—a great many of whom were recent recruits themselves. The entire A.E.F. was plagued by the same issues that befell the 103rd in attempting to keep liaison and synchronizing the battlefield. The 26th Division's attacks of 18 and 20 July that relied on open warfare doctrine were similar in human cost to the attacks at Cantigny by the 1st Division in May and at Belleau Wood by the 2nd Division in June. These first offensive ventures all struggled with synchronizing liaison, artillery support, and communications, as well as utilizing attached enablers such as mortars, machine guns, and engineers. Even as the veteran divisions learned these lessons, the National Army divisions that would come in to the fight later would have to learn them the hard way in the Meuse-Argonne. The 103rd Infantry, then, was not unique in its struggles but rather was indicative of the experience of A.E.F. combat units, regardless of component.

The real strength of the 103rd Infantry lay in the skill and quality of their leaders and the steady character of their men. On very few occasions did the men demonstrate near panic; namely, during the last day of the Second Marne when unit cohesion had been lost. At all other times, they maintained the steadiness of regular troops—often because they were committed to not letting their comrades down. Regimental, battalion, and company leaders showed a willingness to embrace innovation and work with allied units. Although there was a divide between regular and National Guard troops at the time—especially amongst the officers—this did not appear to impact unit-level operations. The influence of the French tutelage could be seen in the resigned way that the unit went about the conduct of their duties: "*C'est la guerre.*" The National Guard troops demonstrated that they were more than capable of assuming the operational mission as part of an expeditionary Army.

Since 1918, the US Army has shown that it has not been capable of conducting expeditionary operations without the National Guard and Army Reserve. Even so, questions often remain about levels of Reserve

Component training and capabilities, especially with combat units (as in Desert Storm with National Guard round-out brigades that did not deploy with their divisions). But the Active Component must assume that it will operate overseas with Reserve Component units of various types and varying levels of competency. For example, between 2002 and 2013, there were 47 Army National Guard brigade combat team deployments. During Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2005, almost half the Coalition forces in Iraq were Guard—around 69,000 soldiers. The deployment of the 42nd Infantry Division headquarters marked the first use of a National Guard division since Korea. Still—and this is critical—Active Component commanders remained suspect of National Guard capabilities in equipment, training, and manpower.⁴⁸ In future conflicts, the National Guard will be as vital a partner as it was in 1917-1918, and the story of the 103rd Infantry can serve as a way to illustrate how critical Reserve Component organizations can be, as well as showing their strengths and weaknesses.

The Legacy of a Unit

The “Old Second” was restored as a regiment in the Maine National Guard in 1921 as the 103rd Infantry Regiment, many of the old veterans returning to its ranks. In 1924, the regiment received its official motto, taken from James Hanson’s message to Hume on Hill 190: “To the Last Man.” That same year, the officers of the regiment—many of them from the 103rd of the Great War—received a message from across the ocean: it was a good will letter from the town of Liffol-le-Grande, who had not forgotten their old friends.

In his own name as well as the name of the entire population of Liffol-le-Grande, M. Luval, mayor sends his best regards to the valiant officers and soldiers of the 103rd regiment of American infantry and particularly Col. Hume. By their behavior and irreproachable bearing during their stay in our little city, they showed the greatest military qualities. Their ardent courage, their vigorous tenacity, their irresistible spirit contributed in large extent to the common victory. Therefore, the mayor is happy to send, with friendly greetings, this expression of French gratitude.⁴⁹

The 103rd Infantry fought with the 43rd Infantry Division during World War II in the Pacific, making amphibious landings and adding Guadalcanal, the Solomon Islands, New Guinea, and Luzon to its list of battle honors. In 1959, the regiment converted to tanks, becoming the 103rd Armored Cavalry. It underwent a further change in 1961, designated as the

20th Armor Regiment. In 1967, it went through its final transformation, becoming the 133rd Engineer Battalion. Under these colors it deployed to Iraq in 2004-2005 and to Afghanistan from 2013-2014. With battle honors from the American Revolution all the way up to Operation Enduring Freedom, it is one of the Army National Guard's most experienced units. Although the name has changed, it has never failed to live up to its World War I heritage with its motto: "To the Last Man."

The World War came and went for the United States in a brief two-year flurry of activity. As a nation, we outgrew and forgot it. Our shores were not invaded. Our fields were not shelled. Our homes were not burnt. But the individuals who took part in it could never forget what it meant for them. For millions of Americans, the world—and their place in the world—would never be the same. Units such as the 103rd Infantry had been hurriedly formed and sent up against one of the best armies in the world. And while there had been stumbling, the National Guard had proved itself to be of the same mettle as their Regular counterparts. In combat, the distinctions fell away, and they were all soldiers together. It was their heritage that formed the bedrock on which the US Army of World War II was built. Their legacy—of proud and quiet courage—should never be forgotten.

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Conclusion

The Soldiers

Israel Ford was living at home with his mother and sister in Canaan, New Hampshire in 1920. He had been wounded with the Supply Company, 103rd Infantry during the war and arrived home in January of 1919 on a stretcher. His family had been nursing him back to health, but in April of 1920 his health took a turn for the worse. He died on 20 April, another casualty of a war that had been over for a year and a half. Similarly, Cpl. Jack Welch from Enfield, New Hampshire died on 5 February 1923 from the effects of poison gas received when he was in Company K.¹ Over the years, many of the stalwart veterans would succumb to old wounds or gas exposure.

The Skowhegan High School Squad emerged from the war cut to pieces. Cpl. Ralph Merrow was wounded at Xivray and after a lengthy recuperation returned home to work at a drug store. Corporals Alvan Bucknam and Harry St. Ledger had been killed at the Aisne-Marne—and were buried in their hometown, their graves the same distance apart as their bodies were found on the railroad bed outside Belleau. Harry St. Ledger's brother would marry the sister of Margaret Chase Smith, carrying on the bond between the families that had been cut by German machine gun rounds outside Belleau Wood.² Sgt. Casimir Bisson was wounded there as well. Sgt. Brooks Savage was gassed in the fighting outside Epieds at the end of July and then wounded severely in the legs on the day before the Armistice. He would struggle to walk the rest of his life although this did not stop him from serving in the Maine State Legislature from 1941 to 1948.³ Mechanic Carl Tobey had been transferred to the Support Company and was wounded by shrapnel in the arm at St. Mihiel. John D. Emery—brother-in-law of Roy Marston—took a commission as a second lieutenant in the Machine Gun Company where he was twice gassed and received wounds to his knees. Bugler Clyde Badger was the only young man to escape physically unscathed.⁴

The Passamaquoddy Veterans

On 22 June 1921 Charles Lola's remains were returned to Pleasant Point.⁵ His burial was one of the largest military funerals conducted on the Down East coast. One month later, Moses Neptune's remains were returned home and laid to rest beside Lola.⁶ Yet still the Great War touched the small Passamaquoddy community. George Stevens had been wounded on 10 November—shot through the legs as he was helping a wounded soldier off the battlefield. His wounds were slow to recover and aid from the Veterans

Administration—his son stated—was even slower in coming. His son, himself a veteran of the Korean War, recalled listening to his father cry out in pain during the night as he was growing up. George Stevens suffered from common prejudices at the time. While the battlefield had served as the great social equalizer, he found that the old barriers returned when Company I came home. His son related of one time when his father returned from a visit to the nearby town of Calais, where he railed at an injustice perpetrated against him by one of his fellow veterans from the 103rd—saying that had he known it would be like this when he came home, he (Stevens) would have left the man to die on the fields of France.⁷ Stevens became embroiled in legal troubles; in one case he was accused of manslaughter against a fellow Passamaquoddy, who had died when the canoe they were in tipped over. The case went before Maine Governor Sumner Sewall, himself a veteran of the Great War. Testifying on Stevens' behalf was one of his former officers from Company I, Malcolm Stoddard, now in charge of the Veterans Home at Togus, Maine. The charges were eventually dropped.⁸

But George Stevens couldn't catch a break. In 1969, he became embroiled in a dispute with the state over rights to his land. In an impassioned plea for justice, the aging Stevens said on local television, "I told them I wouldn't go. As a veteran of World War I, I have a right to live where I choose."⁹ This legal dispute formed the basis for a landmark court case surrounding Indian land rights in Maine, finally resolved in the Maine Indians Claims Settlement Act of 1980, signed by President Jimmy Carter. The rights for which George Stevens had fought on the fields of France sixty-two years prior were finally being granted.

Samuel Dana returned home to Pleasant Point minus his leg. Before the war, he had been an avid baseball player who was "built like Babe Ruth and he could really hit." He and David Sopiell, Peter Stanley, and Moses Neptune had all played on the Pleasant Point team, which had been scouted by the Minor Leagues. The team had an innate advantage in that they communicated in their native tongue, confusing their opponents.¹⁰ These days were gone, as Moses Neptune slept eternally in the cemetery and Sopiell and Dana had been wounded. But this did not stop Dana from becoming a leader in his own community. He served as the Passamaquoddy representative to the Maine Legislature in 1923, 1935, and 1943. During his last term of service to the legislature, Dana was honored by the Maine House of Representatives on 27 January 1943. The Speaker called the house to order, and said,

It is a privilege, Sir, to extend the greetings of the 91st Legislature to you on this occasion, when you report here official-

ly to represent your people. Perhaps some members of the House may not be aware of the fact that during the first World War you suffered the loss of a leg serving the United States of America in the Expeditionary Force in France. You served your nation well in time of war. You have also served your people well in time of peace. That is shown by the confidence they have continually placed in you by sending you back as their representative here, this session being for the third time.

The Chair then directed Dana to occupy Seat Number 5, at the request of the representative of Bangor. That representative was none other William Southard, who had been Dana's battalion commander over many a shell-tossed field.¹¹

It was not until 17 July 2016 that the Passamaquoddy warriors of Company I were officially honored. The Maine Bureau of Veterans Services and the Maine Army National Guard joined together to present the Maine Honorable Service Medal to the families of killed and wounded Passamaquoddy veterans. As over 300 people looked on, multiple generations of the Passamaquoddy families accepted the gold and silver medals in a ceremony charged with emotion. Even after 98 years, the pain of loss was still fresh in collective memory. In some small way, hopefully this ceremony was able to bring about closure for families who gave their sons to a nation that did not even look upon them as citizens.¹²

Officers of the Regiment

There were those whom war seemed to have no effect on. Men such as Irvin Doane. Rather than go home with the 103rd Infantry after the war, he transferred to a Regular Army unit in the Army of Occupation in 1919.¹³ Finding that Army life suited him, Doane stayed in, joining the 22nd Infantry Regiment.¹⁴ By 1942 he was a colonel, posted in the Philippines. It was here that he was captured by the Japanese, while commanding a provisional regiment of Army Air Corps personnel that was fighting against the invaders in the jungles. He made and survived the Bataan Death March and was held as a prisoner until November 30, 1945, making his captivity one of the longest recorded in World War II.¹⁵ When he returned to Maine, he became a Maine guide, disappearing into near-obscurity. A street was named in his honor in Princeton, Maine, just adjacent to Indian Township—the home of the men of the Passamaquoddy that he led in World War I.

There were others for whom the war would never be quite far away. Ralph Monroe Eaton returned to his Harvard professorship where he went on to write two books on philosophy. In 1926 he won a Guggenheim

scholarship to study in Germany with the renowned philosopher Edmund Husserl.¹⁶ The man who wrote so movingly of his experiences of war was having a hard time reconciling the past with the present and future. He sought treatment in Zurich with the renowned psychoanalyst Carl Jung, but that did not seem to help. In 1932, he tragically took his own life.¹⁷ A remembrance to him in *The Harvard Crimson*, posited, “Our intellectual systems have released a world of potentialities. But each individual is faced with the Herculean task of making a personal adjustment to this formidable problem, and to the war generation even more than to ourselves this presents an undertaking which is sometimes too much to ask of a man.”¹⁸ For Eaton—and others—it had been too much.

Donald F. McGrew, the commander of the 37mm gun platoon, came back and wrote a serialized history of his part in the war for the a newspaper in Lewiston, Maine, called “The Pine Tree Legion.” In it, he pays tribute to the soldiers of the 26th Division, an outfit he hoped he’d never have to see called together for war again, he wrote, but if a war came, he’d pray to all the gods to go with it again. An adventure writer before and after the war, McGrew bounced from place to place. He served as a regular soldier before the war, a newspaper reporter and editor, worked in the iron ore mines of Minnesota, worked as a locomotive engineer—in short, did bits of everything. All the while, pumping out dozens of fictional adventure stories. His personal life was as colorful as his work life; he married many times. Although his writing carried the humor of a light-hearted man, it also contained some of the sadness seen in Eaton’s work. And in 1955, Donald “Mac” McGrew took his own life in his cabin in California.¹⁹

Spaulding Bisbee lost no time in tying the knot with Ethel and the two were married on 17 June 1919 in Portland, with Colonel Hume as the best man. Bisbee soon found that he had been decorated with the Chevalier of the Order of the Crown of Italy, the only Maine soldier to be so honored—though he never found out why. He continued his service in the military, staying in the Maine National Guard.²⁰ By World War II, he was still serving, now commanding the 103rd—the regiment had been reformed in 1921. This time he led his Guardsmen through the Louisiana Maneuvers of 1941—where they earned the sobriquet “Bisbee’s Foot Cavalry—and then into the Pacific in 1942. He retired from the Maine National Guard in 1950 as a brigadier general while continuing to serve the state as its first chief of Civil Defense. He passed away in 1958. He and Ethel are buried in Portland, Maine’s Evergreen Cemetery.

Other veterans followed his lead. Frank Burbank—who had meticulously journaled Company C’s time on the Chemin des Dames—also

stayed in the Maine National Guard. He transferred to the Coast Artillery where he still served when World War II began. He had remarried in 1919 and had two more children.. James Healy from Company E remained in the Maine National Guard as well, where he would retire as a brigadier general. His work with his old friend Spaulding Bisbee continued in the Civil Defense Force, where he pushed for the first woman to receive a state commission—Lieutenant Jeanne P. Archer, in 1950.²¹ Herbert Bowen also stayed in the Guard, eventually becoming commander of the 152nd Field Artillery Regiment. That regiment's first commander was James W. Hanson.

James Hanson, who had led his men up Hill 190, returned to the National Guard in 1920. In 1922, he became the first commander of the newly-organized 1st Battalion, 152nd Field Artillery Regiment. He only held this position for a few months because he was selected by Governor Percival Baxter to serve as the Adjutant General for the Maine National Guard. Hanson would hold this position until 1941, becoming Maine's longest-serving Adjutant General. In this time, he oversaw the rebuilding of the Maine National Guard and was responsible for its high level of readiness when World War II began. He also oversaw the codification and publication of *The Roster of Maine in the Great War* and *The Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Maine, 1917-1919*, two of the best primary sources on Maine's contributions in World War I. Additionally, he served as the chief of Maine's State Highway Police from 1927-1936, somehow balancing his duties.²² Because of his outstanding administrative abilities, he was appointed as the State Director of Selective Service from 1940 until his death, on 15 October 1943. During this time, he balanced the industrial needs of the state, such as shipbuilding and farming, with the need for manpower. For his 45 years of dedicated service to the nation, Hanson was posthumously awarded the Medal for Merit and was interred with Zara—his “Darling Baby Wife”—in Arlington National Ceremony.²³

Roy L. Marston from Skowhegan had stayed on as part of the welcoming party in England and had charge of landing the infantry brigades of the 2nd Division and parts of the 42nd Division. He was wounded at Luneville while on observation duty with French and British and was made officer in charge of the advance section's fuel and forage section. He arrived home only two weeks before the Yankee Division, now a lieutenant colonel.²⁴ A local newspaper account of his return stated that he “is just now engaged in the important mission of getting acquainted with his 15-months-old son.”²⁵ A vigorous man, he became treasurer and general manager of

Coburn heirs (Inc) timberland; director of the First National Bank and Skowhegan Trust Company; Post Commander, Simon Peters American Legion Post; served on the executive committee, Department of Maine, American Legion, serving as a member of the American legion delegation to France in 1921. That same year he entered the board of managers of the National Home for Disabled Veterans, appointed by Congress through 1928.²⁶ He would go on to serve as its vice president in 1929. In addition, he was on the managing officer board of Central Maine Power Company in 1921.²⁷ He died at Togus Veterans Home as a result of an operation on 6 July 1936.²⁸

Albert Greenlaw, the former Adjutant General, would also stay in the Maine National Guard. He retired with the rank of brigadier general, having commanded the 86th Brigade which contained his old 103rd Infantry. He became the Commander of the Maine Chapter of the American Legion from 1919-1920. In 1920, he opposed the Wadsworth Act—mandating peacetime conscription: “Representing Massachusetts and Maine in the American Legion conference, we consider the principle of universal military trailing should only be adopted with due safeguards against military caste and with provisions for civilian control and equal opportunity. We oppose the Wadsworth bill in present form, which creates a Prussian military oligarchy, provides that none but college graduates may become officers, imposes an enormous financial burden and substantially deprives the states of all rights.”²⁹ The Chairman Committee of Veterans after the war, he helped dedicate the World War Memorial in Kittery on 11 November 1924. This was Maine’s first State Memorial. A bronze casket was sealed under the cornerstone, containing an honor roll of Mainers who died in the war and a message from Governor Percival Baxter to future Mainers.³⁰ From 1921-1929, Greenlaw was on the board of the Maine Public Utilities Commission.³¹

William “Bill” Southard, as we saw, entered state government. He would also become one of the founding members of Sons of Union Veterans, a fraternal organization made up of those with Civil War ancestors. Although too old to serve in combat in World War II, the doughty veteran lent his services to the Maine State Guard—the volunteer force raised to backfill the National Guard troops who were all overseas. His son, William E. Southard, Jr, followed his father into military service. He was killed in action in Korea with the 38th Infantry Regiment on 18 May 1951 at the age of 27.

Elson Hosford became one of the founding members of the Houlton American Legion Post, along with Frank Hume. It was formed in August

of 1919. It was the 47th Legion Post in Maine, named for Pfc. Chester L. Briggs, of Company L, killed in action by a direct artillery hit in Bouconville during the 16 June bombardment.³² Hosford himself was in the Veteran's Home at Togus near the end of his life. He left the facility against the doctor's orders to attend the funeral of his former commanding officer and dear friend, Frank Hume.³³ He died in 1944 and was buried in the same cemetery as his friend.

Frank Hume

After the war, one veteran of the 103rd was heard to say, "During the war there were at least two things we respected: one was German gunfire, and the other, Colonel Frank M. Hume."³⁴ Hume assumed a nearly mythical place in the memory of the men that he had led in the Great War. His ability to recognize and name nearly any man he had ever served with endeared him to his comrades in arms, as did the efforts he put forward to take care of them. He served as the first commander of the American Legion in Maine. In 1929, he attended a trip of Yankee Division veterans to France to dedicate the newly built church in the town of Belleau. It had been destroyed by shells during the battle in July of 1918 but the dedicated soldiers of the Yankee Division had raised money to restore it. In the process, the church became a veritable memorial to the YD: the walls were lined with the names of those who fell and each state had its own dedicated stained glass window. The states all sent building materials; Maine granite formed the altar. It was—and is still—a small piece of New England nestled in the hills of France. Hume himself hung the Maine flag in the entry, where the flags of all the New England states still hang today.³⁵

His post-war years were filled with veteran's reunions and commemorative events, as he served as the customs collector in Portland from 1927-1933. He twice ran for office, and twice failed, most probably because he was just not cut out to be a politician.³⁶ In 1937, the Maine National Guard placed him on the retired list, with a rank of brigadier general. The following year, he was honored by the State by having his portrait hung in the State House, in the same Hall of Flags that held the colors of his own beloved 103rd Infantry. He passed away of a heart attack on 6 June 1939.

His funeral drew out the entire town of Houlton. One man was heard to remark, "Well, there goes the Colonel. They're giving him a great send-off over here, but I wonder how they'll be meeting him on the Other Side." As the anecdote goes, a giant hulk of a man, obviously a simple workman, turned on the speaker, tears running down his cheeks. "Look, mister; don't you worry none about the Old Man. God ain't goin' too rough on

anybody who's as good to his men as the Colonel was to us. Don't make no cracks about him again!"³⁷ His packed funeral was attended by all the dignitaries of Maine, while an honor guard from Company I, 103rd Infantry kept watch over his casket. His casket was then loaded onto a caisson of a 75mm gun from the 152nd Field Artillery and wended its way to the cemetery, accompanied by the reports of a gun from that same regiment that sounded at every minute. His pallbearers were all men who had served with him in the war. Hume's old friend James Hanson ordered the flags at all the armories lowered to half-mast and men and officers in the National Guard wore black arm bands in mourning. Although forgotten today, Hume was one of the foremost men of the state during his life.

It was this cadre of officers that served to rebuild the Maine National Guard after the war. They applied the lessons learned from the year of hard combat to build a force that would not have to go through their same heartaches in the next war. This was duplicated at the national level, with officers like Marshall, Patton, and MacArthur using what they had learned in World War I to create a total force—Active, Guard, Reserve, and draftees—that received the same level of training to prepare them for the next conflict.

Ex-Service Men

But what of the ex-servicemen, as the returned Doughboys were now being called? Carl Arsenault, a private in the Machine Gun Company, had returned to work as a paper maker in Mexico, Maine as of 1933. Richard E. Atwood, a private in Company G, was a locomotive fireman in 1926, living in Revere, Massachusetts. Frank Bouchard, a private in Company M, returned to work as a laborer. Clair S. Corey of Company K was also working as a laborer. He had been wounded in action severely on the Chemin des Dames on 25 February, and then was gassed on March 17. Edward A. Dupell of Waterville, who had served in the Medical Detachment, worked as a hostler. Richard Farnham from Skowhegan had been in the mounted section of Headquarters Company and worked as a horse trainer after the war. Guy Gilbert of Bangor's Machine Gun Company found employment as a machinist and chauffeur. Herbert Guenther from Livermore Falls' Company C had accepted a commission into the air service during the war. Now he was working as a baker. John R. Hopkins of Augusta, was a barber, having served in the Medical Detachment. Edgar A. Knights from Albion and of Company H was a laborer. Urban Leavitt, after his time in the Machine Gun Company, worked as a saddler in Bangor. Thomas Leclair of Company E, from Ralph Spaulding's home town of Madison, returned to work as a woodsman. Angus McDonald of Com-

pany M, residing in Jackman, worked as a laborer. Verle L. Sweatt from Company B sent a letter to The Adjutant General of the Maine National Guard in 1924 trying to get his lost discharge papers replaced so he could gain work as a mailman. General Hanson responded immediately with the discharge, asking only that Sweatt return the proper paperwork.³⁸ The boys of '18 had to stick together no matter their lot in life.

Sgt. Russell Adams—who had been given a death sentence from his doctor when he was about to leave France—decided to give death a pass, at least for a while. When author Henry Berry tracked him down for an interview in 1976, Adams was still a hale and ornery soul. After telling Berry that the doctor had only given him fifteen to twenty years to live, Adams said, “I’ll be eighty-five on my next birthday, and I’ve worked hard all my life—still shovel snow and ride a bicycle.”³⁹ He passed away three years later.

In 1921, the regiment held its first of many reunions. This inaugural event was held at Camp Keyes in Augusta, where so many of them had begun their journey to war. General Edwards was in attendance, as were Governor Percival Baxter, Colonel Hume, and many of the other officers and men. In a deluge of rain reminiscent, the men said, of their time east of the Meuse, the veterans gathered to exchange stories, share laughs, and pay tribute to their fallen comrades. Edwards exhorted them to be active in politics: “I don’t care what party you play with, but I do want you to be sure that the men are fit for the places and no men in the nation can more quickly detect hot air and gas than you men.” But perhaps the only event that upstaged the speeches and toasts was the arrival of ten members from the old 103rd Infantry band. They came into camp with their instruments, playing “a lively march.” As the veterans assembled around the headquarters building, the band marched down a lane between them, “and instantly, without a pause in the music, the march was replaced by that old favorite ‘Hound Dawg.’” The crowd erupted into cheers and applause, the veterans acknowledging the old joke for one last time. No matter the sorrow and heartbreak, the bonds of friendship and camaraderie could still break through.⁴⁰

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