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Suggested Citation:

Birdwell, Michael E. "Old Hickory and the Hindenburg Line: The 30th Division in World War I." *The Journal of East Tennessee History* 74 (2002): 1-23.

# OLD HICKORY AND THE HINDENBURG LINE:

## *The 30th Division in World War I*

By Michael E. Birdwell\*

Their names may not be familiar. Some are listed among the 1,105 Tennesseans who died in the First World War. Others ranked among the 3,871 soldiers from the Volunteer State who suffered wounds in battle. Of the 89,925 Tennesseans who served in World War I, only Alvin C. York, the pacifist turned warrior from Pall Mall, is well known. Yet five other Tennesseans won the Congressional Medal of Honor for conspicuous bravery in the Great War. They have largely been forgotten, in part because the division in which they served, the 30th or "Old Hickory" Division, was attached to the British army. As a result, "their magnificently heroic efforts at the Hindenburg Line never received their due recognition at home."<sup>1</sup> Although soldiers of the 30th Division "achieved the honor of being the first [Americans] to plant foot on Belgian soil,"<sup>2</sup> York's exploit near Chatel-Chehery on October 8, 1918 made him internationally famous, especially after his feat was immortalized on film in 1941. Gary Cooper's portrayal of the backwoods hero shaped the public imagination of Alvin C. York for generations.<sup>3</sup>

At the outset of the war in August 1914, Tennesseans in the main agreed with President Woodrow Wilson that Americans should be neutral in thought, word, and deed. As the conflict wore on, however, many turned belligerent before the United States formally declared war. After the sinking of the *City of Memphis* in 1916, outraged citizens from Scott County prevailed upon the county commission to take action. Intent on teaching the "Hun" a lesson, the commission violated strict neutrality—they declared war on Germany—a year before the president signed the war

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\* The author is an assistant professor of history at Tennessee Technological University.

<sup>1</sup> Henry Berry, *Make the Kaiser Dance: Living Memories of the Doughboy* (New York, 1978), 20.

<sup>2</sup> Elmer A. Murphy and Robert S. Thomas, *The Thirtieth Division in the World War* (Lepanto, AR, 1936), 70. Hereafter Murphy and Thomas.

<sup>3</sup> *U.S. Military Personnel and Casualties in Principal U.S. Wars: By Branch of Service from the Revolutionary War to Vietnam; By Preservice Home State from World War I to the Vietnam War* (Washington, DC, 1980), CRS-7; David D. Lee, *Sergeant York: An American Hero* (Lexington, KY, 1985); Michael E. Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers: Warner Bros. Campaign Against Nazism* (New York, 1999), 87-130. York trained at Camp Gordon, Georgia and was attached to the 82nd "All American" Division.

declaration on April 6, 1917. Perhaps a bit overzealous, they were unable to raise, train, or equip an army to punish the Kaiser's troops.<sup>4</sup>

While gearing up for the conflict, President Woodrow Wilson and his advisors chose to follow the example of the British and on May 13, 1917, the Selective Service Act became law, instituting the first draft since the Civil War. It divided the United States into regions. Major Rutledge Smith of Cookeville, Tennessee, was appointed to administer the draft in the Southeast district. Additionally he oversaw Tennessee's Council of National Defense, making Major Smith the only man in the country to serve as both the head of civilian mobilization and conscription in his state.<sup>5</sup>

The majority of soldiers from the Volunteer State served in the 30th "Old Hickory" Division, a National Guard unit made up primarily of Tennesseans and North and South Carolinians. Approximately 95 percent of the original troops in the Old Hickory Division came from American-born parents, distinguishing it from other units whose ranks were filled with first-generation Americans. Most already possessed a degree of military training and gladly heeded the call when America entered the fray. By the First World War's end, they proved their mettle and earned an important place in its history. "[I]ts men won twelve of the seventy-eight medals of honor awarded during the conflict and more than half of the awards given by the British to American soldiers." They won all their medals within a ten-day period between September 29 and October 8, 1918.<sup>6</sup>

Several Tennesseans saw the opportunity for adventure and enlisted. Among them was founding editor of the *Nashville Tennessean* Luke Lea. Though he had no military training, Lea had connections in Washington and throughout Tennessee. With the aid of Fusionist Democrats, he was elected in 1910 to the United States Senate at the age of 32. During his term he served on the Senate Armed Services Committee and cultivated a number of influential friendships in the military and the government. Lea made a personal request to raise a volunteer artillery regiment;

<sup>4</sup> Esther Sharp Sanderson, *Scott County: A Gem of the Cumberlands* (Oneida, TN, 1974), 186. This was not unusual behavior on the part of Scott County citizens. When Tennessee seceded from the Union in 1861, Scott County seceded from Tennessee.

<sup>5</sup> The Council of National Defense was organized in August 1916 to coordinate planning for mobilization and cooperation with industry; see William J. Breen, *Uncle Sam At Home: Civilian Mobilization, Wartime Federalism and the Council of National Defense* (West Port, CN, 1984). For the draft see John Whiteclay Chambers, *To Raise an Army: The Draft Comes to Modern America* (New York, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> James A. Crutchfield, *Tennesseans at War: Volunteers and Patriots in Defense of Liberty* (Nashville, 1987), 120. During its time in the war, elements of the 30th Division fought along the East Poperinghe Line, Dickebush Lake, along the Ypres-Lys Salient, at Moated Grange, Voormezele, Saint Mihiel, Bellicourt, Brancourt-le-Grand, Busigny, Vaux-Andigny, Molain, Ribeaupville, and the Somme, in addition to its assault on the Hindenburg Line. Draftees were added to the ranks of the division in October 1917 to bring the unit to full strength. The original commander of the division was Major General J. F. Morrison. He was replaced by Brigadier General Winfield S. Scott, who later ceded command to Major General C. P. Townsley. Divisions in World War I were larger than in other wars, containing 27,000 troops.

it was granted on May 15, Chattanooga and soon began a football field as a parade ground. Some, like Battery E, were Belle Meade society types, and of East Tennessee gentry and gree. Other batteries, however, leggers, ex-convicts, prize fighters, Field Artillery Brigade, the would earn fame in their own

On May 18, 1917, the 30th Department's General Order. Beginning in August the "Sons and Australian "Aussies") of in South Carolina to begin Berry, had just returned to Mexican campaign that punishment border made them invaluable

At Camp Sevier—named a land speculator, and Tennesseees, and recently drafted a regimen of army life. As late to a huge complex of overture, soldiers soon grumbled about the summer heat, they yearned for news from the military discipline. Many that the war would be over

Training proved maddening no military training and we

<sup>7</sup> Lea, while attending officer training attending the school except myself. Lea Papers, Tennessee State Library, 16, 1918. Hereafter cited as Lea Green, OH, 1993), 29-41, 81-100. *55th Brigade, 30th Division: With*

<sup>8</sup> West, 28.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Camp Sevier was located Woodrow Wilson federalized the

<sup>10</sup> Michael E. Birdwell, "One So *Historical Quarterly* 63 (Summer

they were unable to raise,

Woodrow Wilson and his advisors on May 13, 1917, the Selective Training and Service Act of 1917, the Selective Training and Service Act of 1917. It divided the country into military districts. Cookeville, Tennessee, was in the 1st District. Additionally he overruled Major Smith the only man in the district. Mobilization and conscription

was reserved in the 30th "Old Hickory" Division, primarily of Tennesseans and made up of the original troops in the division, distinguishing it from other divisions of Americans. Most already had answered the call when America entered the war. They earned their mettle and earned the Purple Heart of the seventy-eight medals of the awards given by the President within a ten-day period

and enlisted. Among them was Luke Lea. Though he had no military experience throughout Tennessee. In 1910 he returned to the United States and was elected to the Senate Armed Services Committee. He had friendships in the military and in the volunteer artillery regiment;

(Lea, *Lea*, TN, 1974), 186. This was the first time Tennessee seceded from the Union in

coordinate planning for mobilization. See *At Home: Civilian Mobilization, 1917-1918* (Nashville, TN, 1984). For the draft see John R. Heilbrunn, *America* (New York, 1986).

*Sense of Liberty* (Nashville, 1987), 100. The division along the East Poperinghe Line, from Mezezele, Saint Mihiel, Bellicourt, to the Somme, in addition to its original assignment to the division in October 1917 to be commanded by Major General J. F. Morrison. It was transferred to Major General C. G. Brantley, containing 27,000 troops.

it was granted on May 15, 1917.<sup>7</sup> Batteries formed in Nashville, Memphis, and Chattanooga and soon began training at the University of Chattanooga, using its football field as a parade ground. Personnel in Tennessee batteries varied greatly; some, like Battery E, were composed almost completely of Vanderbilt graduates, Belle Meade society types, and political cronies of Luke Lea. Battery B, composed of East Tennessee gentry and University of Tennessee graduates, had a similar pedigree. Other batteries, however, "were strongly salted with farmers, policemen, bootleggers, ex-convicts, prize fighters, touts and some scum."<sup>8</sup> Later designated the 55th Field Artillery Brigade, the cannoneers were soon a part of the 30th Division and would earn fame in their own right by war's end.

On May 18, 1917, the 30th Division began organizational efforts under the War Department's General Order Number 95. It fell under federal control on July 25. Beginning in August the "Sammies" (the American equivalent of British "Tommys" and Australian "Aussies") of the Old Hickory Division shipped out to Camp Sevier in South Carolina to begin training.<sup>9</sup> Several guardsmen, such as Colonel Harry Berry, had just returned to Tennessee after having participated in the frustrating Mexican campaign that pursued Pancho Villa. Their experience along the Mexican border made them invaluable in training troops who had never fired a shot in anger.

At Camp Sevier—named in honor of John Sevier, legendary Indian fighter, avid land speculator, and Tennessee's first governor—willing National Guardsmen, enlistees, and recently drafted conscripts learned how to act as a team, adapting to the regimen of army life. As late summer turned to fall and winter, Camp Sevier swelled to a huge complex of over 30,000 men. Initially excited by the prospect of adventure, soldiers soon grumbled about the monotony of camp life. They complained about the summer heat, the mosquitoes, and the lack of contact with civilians. They yearned for news from the outside world and chafed under the bewildering rules of military discipline. Many soldiers, like Major Rutledge Smith's son Albert, feared that the war would be over before they finished training.<sup>10</sup>

Training proved maddening for officer and enlisted man alike. Many officers had no military training and were "forced to drill by day and learn the red tape and mys-

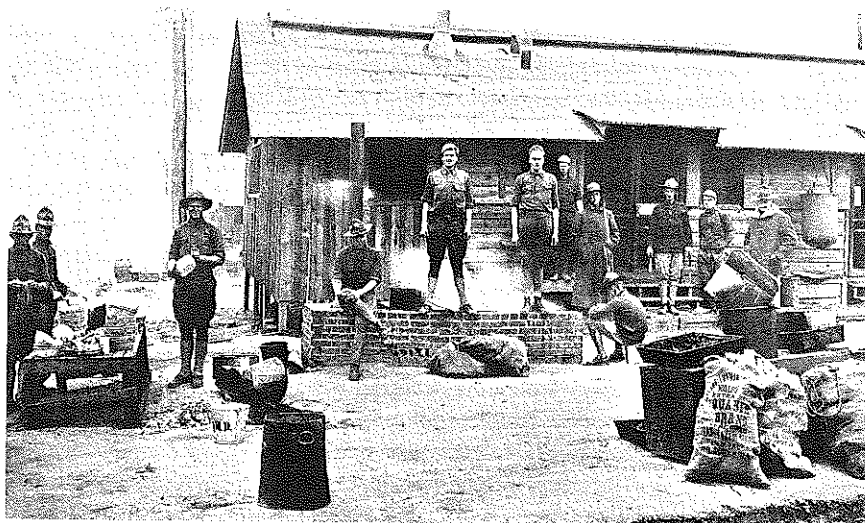
<sup>7</sup> Lea, while attending officer training school in January 1918, noted in his diary, "Every other officer attending the school except myself has had experience in administering the subjects we are studying." Luke Lea Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Acc. No. THS 741, Diaries, Box 26, January 16, 1918. Hereafter cited as Lea Papers. See also Mary Louise Tidwell, *Luke Lea of Tennessee* (Bowling Green, OH, 1993), 29-41, 81-104; and Ernest Patrick West, *History of Battery B, 114th Field Artillery, 55th Brigade, 30th Division: With Some Trials and Tribulations of its Personnel* (Chattanooga, 1967), 9-11.

<sup>8</sup> West, 28.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* Camp Sevier was located approximately six miles east of Greenville, South Carolina. President Woodrow Wilson federalized the National Guard on July 25, 1917.

<sup>10</sup> Michael E. Birdwell, "One Soldier's War: Albert Perrine Smith and the First World War," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 63 (Summer 1999): 101-103; Murphy and Thomas, 51.

teries of army paper work by night." Another problem that complicated drilling stemmed from the fact that many soldiers "found it difficult to obey someone who was 'home folks.'" Familiarity did indeed breed contempt and made discipline a contentious issue in the early days of training.<sup>11</sup>



One of the company mess sergeants with the company cooks and kitchen police at Camp Sevier. From Elmer A. Murphy and Robert S. Thomas, *The Thirtieth Division in the World War* (Lepanto, AR, 1936), courtesy of the Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection of the Knox County Public Library.

The quality and quantity of food served at Camp Sevier created a constant source of griping among the soldiers of the Old Hickory Division, who yearned for home cooking. Ernest West remembered, "Finally, we got around to breakfast or something. This turned out to be a gob of burnt, half raw kidney beans, bacon, coffee—no cream or sugar—whatever it was, it was certainly strong. They [the people who prepared the food] were called many things by personnel and 'cooks' was not in the category. . . . The boiled eggs were from some pre-war storage and in many cases, when broken, showed signs of advanced pregnancy or something."<sup>12</sup>

No barracks existed at Camp Sevier. Soldiers slept in pyramidal tents with wooden floors, made from felled trees about the camp. A sibley stove acted as the sole source of heat. Soldiers were required to keep the tent flaps open at night, even dur-

<sup>11</sup> Murphy and Thomas, 14.

<sup>12</sup> West, 15, 25. On December 8, 1917, the mess hall went up in flames due to faulty wiring. Few soldiers complained about the loss of the facility.

ing the winter storms that would improve their health.

Soldiers spent much of their time on the floor for the tents, a quarters, and various other structures that soon were in tatters. Many of the ones destroyed by the winter. The Infantry cleared so much of the Carolina Land and Dev.

As the weather grew worse, soldiers had only summer clothes. It played havoc on poorly equipped soldiers with newspapers or fabric. The harsh winter of 1917-18. In December and ice storms in the fall on tents, injuries were unleashed a host of diseases. Epidemics ravaged the camp. Soldiers in company H contracted smallpox. Other soldiers had no food. Battery B of the Private Lionel Camp. In February that gas masks were used. Soldiers soon changed

Colds, flu, pneumonia, and typhoid were rampant. In April Albert Smith had a fever of 103 degrees, and he died. While there he received a gas mask. Before he could depart the camp, he was very painful and he lay in bed. "After I was about well, [experience] . . . they told me I had to grit my teeth.

In spite of the hardships, some soldiers ate Some Sammies "who

<sup>13</sup> Murphy and Thomas, 33.

<sup>14</sup> West, 16, 19. Private Carl

<sup>15</sup> Albert P. Smith to Graen McGregor Smith Family, Nashville. Hereafter cited

<sup>16</sup> Albert P. Smith to McG

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Men and kitchen police  
The Thirtieth Division in  
Tennessee. Photo by  
Vin M. McClung  
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created a constant source  
of food, who yearned for home  
and to breakfast or some-  
thing like beans, bacon, coffee—  
anything. They [the people who  
were the 'cooks' was not in the  
kitchen and in many cases,  
were doing nothing."<sup>12</sup>

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burning stoves acted as the sole  
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due to faulty wiring. Few sol-

ing the winter storms that pounded the camp, because it was believed that fresh air  
would improve their health.

Soldiers spent much of their early days in camp clearing forests to provide plank  
flooring for the tents, and lumber for the training field, mess hall, division head-  
quarters, and various other buildings. The rough work played havoc with uniforms  
that soon were in tatters. The quartermaster lacked sufficient uniforms to replace the  
ones destroyed by the work of clearing land and drilling. A regiment from the 118th  
Infantry cleared so much land that soldiers "facetiously referred to it as 'The South  
Carolina Land and Development Company.'"<sup>13</sup>

As the weather grew colder, wool uniforms were in short supply and many of the  
soldiers had only summer weight cotton clothes to wear. Dropping temperatures  
played havoc on poorly provisioned troops who improvised, lining their uniforms  
with newspapers or fashioning ersatz jackets from blankets and scrap cloth. The  
harsh winter of 1917-1918 exacted its toll on Camp Sevier. Snow began falling in  
December and ice storms ravaged the camp in January, causing tree limbs to snap  
and fall on tents, injuring soldiers and damaging equipment. Frozen water supplies  
unleashed a host of diseases. Over the course of the winter a number of mini-epi-  
demics ravaged the camp, including diphtheria, mumps, measles, and cholera.  
Soldiers in company H of the 119th Infantry were quarantined when a soldier con-  
tracted smallpox. Other soldiers fell ill due to ptomaine from improperly cooked  
food. Battery B of the 114th Artillery suffered its first death of World War I when  
Private Lionel Camp succumbed to measles. So many succumbed to mumps in  
February that gas mask instruction was suspended. Bathing proved impossible.  
Soldiers soon changed the spelling of the camp to "SEVERE."<sup>14</sup>

Colds, flu, pneumonia, and other contagious caused numerous men to be hospi-  
talized. In April Albert Smith came down with a bronchitis infection and, with a  
fever of 103 degrees, was hospitalized on the order of his company commander.  
While there he received the disturbing news that he would have to be circumcised  
before he could depart for France. The operation, though successful, proved intense-  
ly painful and he lay in bed for over ten days.<sup>15</sup> He wrote his brother Greg saying,  
"After I was about well of Bronchitis I was circumcised. Gee that was some painful  
[experience] . . . they did not have enough cocain [sic] to deaden the pain & believe  
me I had to grit my teeth."<sup>16</sup>

In spite of the hardships, soldiers found time for relaxation and entertainment.  
Some Sammies "who had lived in the Tennessee mountains . . . had slipped away

<sup>13</sup> Murphy and Thomas, 33.

<sup>14</sup> West, 16, 19. Private Camp died on December 4, 1917; Murphy and Thomas, 32, 45.

<sup>15</sup> Albert P. Smith to Graeme McGregor Smith, April 6, 1918 and April 21, 1918, Rutledge and Graeme  
McGregor Smith Family Papers, World War I Correspondence, Tennessee State Library and Archives,  
Nashville. Hereafter cited as Smith Family Papers.

<sup>16</sup> Albert P. Smith to McGregor Smith, May 5, 1918, Smith Family Papers.

and located a quiet cove by a spring where a copper coil contrivance produced a delectable liquid affectionately called 'mountain dew.'<sup>17</sup> Others looked forward to Sundays. Ostensibly going into Greenville to participate in church services, many found an opportunity to be invited to someone's home to eat a home-cooked meal and relax on comfortable furniture. Albert Smith went to church for yet another reason, to "meet some good looking girls. I am nearly crazy to see & talk with some good looking girls."<sup>18</sup>

Soldiers who showed a special ability for reading terrain, thinking on their feet, or some other identifiable skill found themselves promoted to non-commissioned officers. Exceptional soldiers were ordered to attend officer training schools. As a result, there was constant shuffling in the ranks as many people shipped out to other facilities for specialized instruction.<sup>19</sup> Albert Smith was not enthused about the officers who remained at Camp Sevier. He complained to his mother about the questionable abilities of leaders in his unit and the real value of his military training. "Major Burke our Company Commander is a man driver & I believe is a little stuck up. Co. C is his pet[;] it is from his home town of Livingston [Tennessee]. My captain is a splendid gentleman but does not know anything about military training. Lieut. Roberts is alright but I believe he is ignorant."<sup>20</sup> He was equally concerned about the conscripts who lacked formal education, for few Tennesseans in Smith's detachment could read or write, skills he believed necessary to be a competent soldier.

Luke Lea, Harry Berry, and many others from the 30th Division shipped out after Christmas to officer training school at Fort Sam Houston near San Antonio, Texas. Lea found officer training more frustrating than rewarding. He complained in his diary, "There is not a single officer in the entire class who has not the most cordial contempt and dislike for the instructor, Major Cowgill. He is an insufferable minded man, in many ways ignorant and in all ways a conceited ass."<sup>21</sup> Lea considered the various instructors to be "cast offs" who lacked the ability to command and who were intent on destroying the army.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, he was baffled by the subjects they studied: "This morning we had our physical drill for an hour and a lecture by Major Cummins on the 'Sleeping Sickness in Africa' which was very pertinent, timely and useful if the western front we will serve is pushed back into Africa." The next day Major Cummins lectured on Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. When Lea asked the

<sup>17</sup> West, 21.

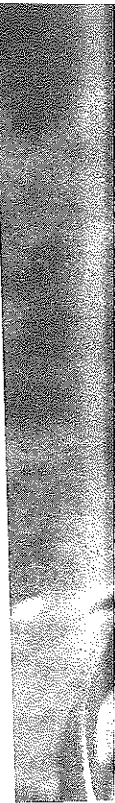
<sup>18</sup> Albert P. Smith to Mrs. Graeme McGregor Smith, December 1917, Smith Family Papers.

<sup>19</sup> Albert P. Smith to Mrs. Graeme McGregor Smith, April 28, 1918; Albert P. Smith to "Uncle Thurman," May 1, 1918, Smith Family Papers.

<sup>20</sup> Albert P. Smith to Graeme McGregor Smith, September 22, 1917, Smith Family Papers.

<sup>21</sup> Lea Diary, January 18, 1918, Lea Papers.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., January 21, 1918.



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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., January 29-30, 1918. Lea's merit in the military, he g  
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Luke Lea was a United States senator who resigned his office to raise and command a volunteer regiment of the 30th Division during World War I. From Elmer A. Murphy and Robert S. Thomas, *The Thirtieth Division in the World War* (Lepanto, AR, 1936), courtesy of the Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection of the Knox County Public Library.

major if the disease existed anywhere other than the Rockies, Cummins said that it did not, prompting Lea to note in his diary that "this will be very helpful to us when the war reaches the Rockies."<sup>23</sup> After a frustrating month in Texas, officers from the 55th Field Artillery Brigade moved on to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, for more training.

Instruction at Fort Sill proved more rigorous and satisfying. Days were divided between classroom lessons in the morning and hands-on demonstrations in the afternoon, covering a variety of topics that included driving automobiles, setting up field telephones, and calculating artillery telemetry. Officers found their time in

17, Smith Family Papers.

, 1918; Albert P. Smith to "Uncle

7, Smith Family Papers.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., January 29-30, 1918. Lea could be just as insufferable. Bristling because his civilian rank bore no merit in the military, he grumbled in his diary: "A year ago I was leaving the Senate where I had served for six years. Any and all of the instructors here who lord it over us would have been cringing and servile waiting hours to see me." Ibid., March 4, 1918.



Oklahoma well spent, though often exhausting. Emotions continued to run high. "Young America is earnestly enthusiastic and deadly in earnest in learning the science of modern warfare," Lea noted.<sup>24</sup>

Most of the men returned to Camp Sevier from officer training schools in March and April 1918, putting what they had learned into action. Artillery men had trained without cannon throughout most of 1917 and early 1918, using telephone poles on limbers as props. Infantrymen paraded with toy rifles and dummy grenades. By March artillery pieces and Vickers machine guns arrived. Practice with real weapons and live ammunition became common as exercises intensified upon the officers' return.<sup>25</sup>

Everyone welcomed spring weather. Training became more rigorous, and soldiers from the 30th Division received instruction in trench warfare from British and French advisors who had fought on Flanders' fields. On April 27, 1918, all infantry regiments at Camp Sevier were placed under quarantine in preparation for shipping out. All were anxious to leave and as Worth Stewart reported: "By the first of May the air contained as many move rumors as there are cooties in a Tommy undershirt."<sup>26</sup>

In May the time to leave Camp Sevier arrived. The 117th infantry left on May 1, with the 118th, 119th, and 120th following on the next three consecutive days. Units moved out with great rapidity. "Some days ten or fifteen trains pass thru [sic] here," Albert Smith wrote to his family, and it required "twelve miles of empty Pullmans here to move the divisions." He wrote his brother McGregor, a student at the University of Tennessee, "I had rather be a 'buck' private in the artillery than a 1st Lt. in the infantry. The old doughboy and his bayonet is the gut that is going to win this war. They are the boys with the guts." The letter included a hand-drawn schematic of a battlefield with its layers of trenches of various uses, describing how cannon were placed at the rear "20 yds. apart and each gun pit is connected by tunnels. . . . I am in the heavy artillery, 6 inch Howitzer [in] the last line of trenches. Our shells weigh one hundred and twenty seven pounds. We shoot gas, shrapnel, and high explosives." Albert predicted that the war would be over by December—an estimation that was off by only nineteen days.<sup>27</sup>

After completing state-side drilling, the division entrained to Hoboken, New Jersey. While awaiting their debarkation overseas, many soldiers went on liberty into New York City to see the sites—the statue of Liberty, the Brooklyn Bridge, Wall Street, Broadway, and Central Park. Others visited Coney Island, acting like children as they rode the enormous roller coaster or played the numerous games at the theme park. Albert Smith enjoyed his time in the Big Apple but found the women

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., February 26, 1918.

<sup>25</sup> Murphy and Thomas, 35, 47.

<sup>26</sup> Worth P. Stewart, *The History of Company "K" 117th Infantry in the Great War* (Self Published, N.D.), 12.

<sup>27</sup> Albert P. Smith to Dollie Smith, May 1, 1918, Smith Family Papers.



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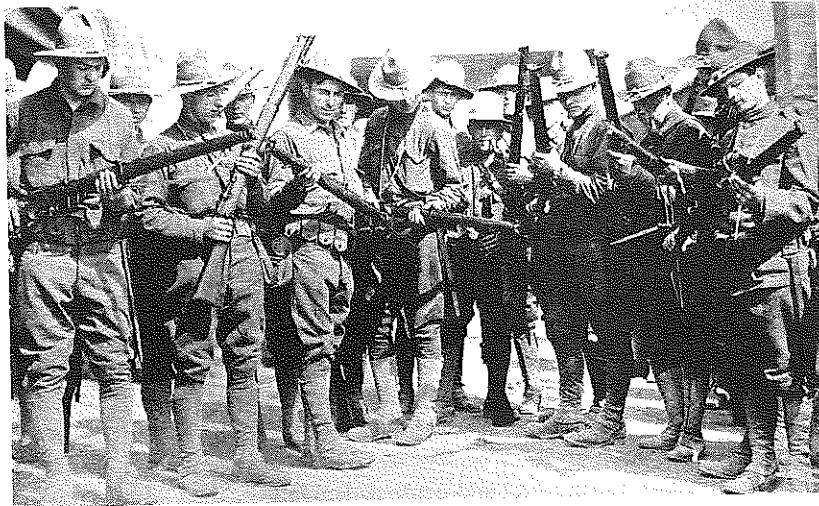
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Soldiers from the 30th Division in Calais, France, inspect their new British Enfield rifles. From Elmer A. Murphy and Robert S. Thomas, *The Thirtieth Division in the World War* (Lepanto, AR, 1936), courtesy of the Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection of the Knox County Public Library.

undesirable. "I don't care for Northern or Eastern girls their feet are too large and their voice has a harsh grating sound to me."<sup>28</sup>

From Hoboken, the 30th Division sailed to Calais, France for additional instruction from the British 39th Division, such as the use of tanks in assisting infantry attacks.<sup>29</sup> En route soldiers became acquainted with British food for the first time, fare that would be a constant source of irritation and dismay. Soldiers from the 117th Infantry exchanged their Springfield rifles for the smaller, lighter British Enfield upon reaching Calais. Additionally American campaign hats were exchanged for British "brass hats," and American puttees were replaced with British leggings. Major General E. M. Lewis headed the division while Tennessee's only general from the First World War, Lawrence Tyson of Knoxville, commanded the 55th Artillery Brigade.<sup>30</sup>

In Europe the 30th Division was attached to the American II Corps, which fought

<sup>28</sup> Albert Smith to Graeme McGregor Smith, May 31, 1918, Smith Family Papers.

<sup>29</sup> Luke Lea wrote that there were fourteen ships in the convoy from the U.S. to France: eleven troopships, one freighter carrying ammunition, a camouflaged cruise ship, and a British destroyer. Lea Diary, May 27, 1918, Lea Papers.

<sup>30</sup> John H. Cates, Company E, *117th Infantry, 30th Division in World War I* (Johnson City, TN, 1964), 31; Murphy and Thomas, 62. General Tyson lost his son, McGhee, during the war. McGhee Tyson flew for the American Aviation Pursuit Squadron and was shot down over Flanders. General Tyson found his son's body on the shore of the North Sea after the war ended.

under the command of the British army in northern France.<sup>31</sup> General Tyson and the 55th Artillery Brigade, however, were detached from the 30th Division and supported a number of other Allied units, especially the 33rd Division. The 119th Infantry of the 60th Brigade was "inspected almost immediately" by Major-General Herbert Plumer and Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig, and later by the commander of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) General John J. Pershing.<sup>32</sup>

British veterans from the 2nd Army taught the "Doughboys" (a label that gained popularity in the later days of the war) about trench warfare at Inglinghem, the first overseas training camp. British instructors drilled the Old Hickory Division in the use of machine guns and other survival tactics "taught to them in the costly school of experience" for a period of four weeks, after which the 30th Division was deployed to a relatively quiet sector in the Ypres salient. Generally, the Sammies admired their British tutors, though many Tennesseans found their infatuation with tea maddening. One soldier quipped that the Brits were guilty of "the proven crime of making marmalade—instead of fertilizer—with orange peels."<sup>33</sup> While they despaired of British mutton, tea, and marmalade, many of the Old Hickories gave "the potencies of French wines and liqueurs . . . an extensive and thorough study."<sup>34</sup>

On July 24 infantry units from the 30th Division were moved closer to the Lys-Ypres front lines near Vlamertyngh. Though designated a quiet sector, that part of the salient received routine shelling from German artillery. Worth Stewart said that the Allies promised the soldiers that their billets were "shrapnel-proof—meaning that, however easily shrapnel might get in, it could never get out."<sup>35</sup> During the shelling the 117th Infantry suffered its first casualty when Lieutenant Merritt Dunbar was struck by a shell and killed.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> The II Corps consisted of the New York 27th Division and the 30th Division. American units training with British troops were intended to be used to stop General Ludendorff's spring offensive. See Gary Mead, *The Doughboys: America and the First World War* (New York, 2000), 214. Mitch Yockelson of the National Archives is currently working on a dissertation that compares American and British commands, and examines the 30th Division's adaptability to its British leaders. His study will prove useful for decades to come.

<sup>32</sup> Coleman B. Carnaway and George A. Shuford, *History: 119th Infantry, 60th Brigade, 30th Division, U.S.A.; Operations in Belgium and France, 1917-1919* (Wilmington, NC, 1920), 9, 35. British rations were smaller than Americans were accustomed to receiving. Brigadier General George S. Simonds persuaded the English to substitute tea with coffee and to increase the quantity of food served.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 15; Stewart, 23. While in the rear soldiers had some liberty to visit nearby villages. Many were surprised to find animals stabled next to houses.

<sup>34</sup> Murphy and Thomas, 62. Public drunkenness proved problematic for a short time. Teetotalers like Luke Lea found the French proclivity for wine tantamount to barbarism. See Lea's diary entries for June 14-17 and July 29, 1918, Lea Papers.

<sup>35</sup> Stewart, 26.

<sup>36</sup> Cates, 32. Private Arthur Winters also died in the Ypres sector.

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Under cover of darkness, Tennessee and Carolina infantrymen moved even closer to the front on August 5, working their way through the ruined Belgian town of Ypres.<sup>37</sup> The destruction, resulting from three major battles in and around the town, shocked the Americans. To them, Ypres had more in common with the landscape of the moon than a Flemish city.

The Ypres trenches have a motion all their own. It is doubtful if there were ever, anywhere, since the earliest trenches dug, any such trenches as those that we occupied in front of Ypres. Because one comes to water after digging through a few inches of surface, thus making it necessary for the trenches to be above instead of below ground, and because the building of these elevated trenches is not without inconveniences, our trenches were mostly camouflaged. Even rats and cooties roaming cautiously through the various passageways were poorly protected from shrapnel by the camouflage netting behind which our soldiers crouched.<sup>38</sup>

On August 15, division headquarters received orders to relieve the 98th Brigade (British) near the Ypres-Commines Canal. Four days later they encountered their first direct enemy contact. While stationed in the canal zone, the division experienced sporadic shelling from German gunners, though units in the line were shelled routinely by German artillery. Nightly patrols proved difficult due to the tangled mass of barbed wire and crumbling, water-filled shell holes that dotted the treeless landscape. Derelict freight cars and ruins of homes and barns added to the fear since these provided excellent cover to snipers. As August drew to a close soldiers from the 60th Infantry Brigade probed German front lines, meeting stiff resistance which involved hand-to-hand fighting, while gathering essential intelligence.

While in the canal zone, the Old Hickory Division encountered gas warfare for the first time. Klaxon sirens informed Doughboys that the enemy was firing gas canisters. Sound of the alarm meant that gas masks had to be put on as quickly as possible. Some soldiers panicked, fumbling around with their kit. Gas added to the confusion of battle, making things even more disorienting. Masks seriously impaired vision; lenses easily fogged up due to their inferior design. Peripheral vision disappeared, giving the wearer a surreal sort of tunnel vision. "Yells of panic rose from some who could not find their masks and one man almost suffocated trying to get into a horse's mask."<sup>39</sup> Gas added a psychological component to the war, making soldiers

<sup>37</sup> The British refused to pronounce the town of Ypres correctly, referring to it as "Wipers." Tommies even published a trench newspaper, the *Wipers Times*. A complete run of the newspaper exists in the Imperial War Museum in London.

<sup>38</sup> Stewart, 28.

<sup>39</sup> West, 31.

fear that they could never be adequately prepared in the event of a gas attack.

In spite of the first, rather chaotic, experience with gas warfare, the 30th Division pushed forward into enemy territory. By the first of September the 119th and 120th Infantry Regiments, with the aid of British artillery, had captured all of their objectives, which included Lock Number 8 on the Ypres Canal, Lankhof Farm, and the village of Voormezele. Inflicting 3,000 enemy casualties, the foot-soldiers added 1,500 yards to the Allied lines.<sup>40</sup>

As summer turned into fall, the weather worsened considerably. Rain fell daily. The terrain, already denuded of vegetation due to years of fighting and incessant artillery, turned into a veritable sea of mud. Soldiers scrambled to get their footing. Trucks skidded off roads or simply bogged down in the gooey muck. Horses broke legs and had to be shot. Conditions demoralized troops, alarming the officers. Colonel Luke Lea described the muddy hill across from his command post, saying that it was so pitted with shell holes that it looked "like the face of a man with smallpox." Ubiquitous rain and fog limited visibility to less than 100 meters, and all that could be seen was "mud, mud, mud. It is the slipperiest, stickiest mud in the world."<sup>41</sup>

In addition to the almost daily rain, fog, mud, and cold, soldiers had to contend with inferior rations which they referred to as "Monkey Meat" and "Slum." Bathing proved almost impossible, and many Old Hickories went for as long as six weeks without a bath. The one personal hygiene regimen adhered to with near religiosity was shaving, for it was almost impossible to get a sufficient seal on a gas mask with stubble and whiskers. In addition to the constant sounds and smells of battle, Doughboys were always exposed to the elements and found themselves covered in lice. When not fighting or trying desperately to get some much needed sleep, soldiers occupied themselves with trying to rid their bodies and clothes of what they called cooties, pants rabbits, or seams squirrels.<sup>42</sup>

On September 20 the American II Corps received orders to advance to the Gouy-Nauroy sector under the command of the British 4th Army. By September 25 the combined forces (British, Australian, and American) were poised for action in the St. Quentin Canal zone. German defenses in that sector comprised three trench systems that incorporated the St. Quentin Canal and its adjacent tunnel that passed through the town of Bellicourt. Built by Napoleon's army between 1802-1810, the tunnel ran underground for three miles and had ninety-eight camouflaged exits. German engineers updated the tunnel, adding an electrical system, running water, and comfortable barracks. A narrow gauge railway ferried supplies to troops while canal boats provided transportation across the water. The opposite side of the canal

<sup>40</sup> The two regiments suffered 37 dead and 128 wounded in the advance.

<sup>41</sup> Lea Diary, September 27-October 20, 1918, Lea Papers.

<sup>42</sup> Fred Davis Baldwin, "The American Enlisted Man in World War I" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1964), 179.

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increased considerably. Rain fell daily. After two years of fighting and incessant attacks, soldiers scrambled to get their footing. The ground was in the gooey muck. Horses broke down, alarming the officers. Orders came from his command post, saying to "dig like the face of a man with a shovel." The trench was less than 100 meters, and all the mud was the slipperiest, stickiest mud in the

area. In the cold, soldiers had to contend with "Monkey Meat" and "Slum." Bathing facilities were for as long as six weeks. Soldiers adhered to with near religiosity a sufficient seal on a gas mask with the constant sounds and smells of battle, and found themselves covered in mud. They needed some much needed sleep, soldiers and their bodies and clothes of what they

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and tunnel was fortified with mounds of triangular-shaped barbed wire entanglements up to fifty-feet thick, machine-gun emplacements, and pillboxes. Roughly forty-feet wide the canal was over thirty-feet deep in places, adding to the difficulty in capturing the fortified bunkers behind it.<sup>43</sup>

Preparation for the assault improved when the British captured a schematic of the defensive positions of the infamous Hindenburg Line between Oise and Bellicourt. The plans revealed the locations of all the enemy's batteries and calibers of weapons, in addition to troop strength and deployment. On September 26 the 114th and 115th Field Artillery launched a heavy barrage against German lines. In the predawn darkness, a detachment from the 105th Engineers laid the jumping-off tape amid bursting shrapnel and steady machine-gun fire. Combined with the 5th Australian Division and the 27th "Silk Stocking" Division from New York, soldiers prepared for their assault on the Hindenburg Line. Determined Aussies were prepared to swim across the St. Quentin Canal if necessary, and were equipped with small life preservers and siege ladders.<sup>44</sup>

Their combined efforts helped turn the tide of the war, smashing through the German defenses, making it possible to defeat the Kaiser's army. Their objective, on paper at least, was simple—penetrate the bulge in the line where it curved in front of the tunnel and proceed 4,000 yards behind the lines. There they were to create a firebase which would allow the Australians to leapfrog beyond the Old Hickory Division, opening a secure avenue to the enemy's rear. As Worth Stewart put it, "[W]e were to go through the gate protected by a barrage and swing back on the Germans from the rear, hemming them in between us and the ditch they had figured on as a wall of protection."<sup>45</sup>

At 4:30 a.m., Sunday, September 29, 1918, Sammies, Tommies, and Aussies checked their gear, somberly wrote last wills, read quietly, smoked, and waited in the foggy predawn gloom for the signal to attack. The British served all the soldiers a tumbler of rum moments before the charge.<sup>46</sup> At 5:30 the artillery opened fire. In the cacophony, infantrymen poised to go forward into the pea-soup fog, made murkier by roiling dust and smoke created by the artillery barrage. "[A] person could not see at a distance greater than five yards," Coleman Carnway wrote, reflecting upon the advance on Bellicourt and the St. Quentin Canal. Fog, smoke, dirt, and noise created confusion on a massive scale. "No one, except with the aid of a compass, could keep the proper direction, consequently the Companies became very

<sup>43</sup> Stewart, 39; Cates, 39; Mead, 302; Murphy and Thomas, 93. By the time of the battle, most of the soldiers in the 30th Division wore British uniforms; their American uniforms had long since worn out.

<sup>44</sup> Murphy and Thomas, 94; Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I* (Madison, WI, 1986), 171, 286-287. There were four lines of defenses devised by the Germans—Hindenburg Line, Gieslher Stellung, Kreimhilde Stellung, and the Freya Stellung.

<sup>45</sup> Stewart, 40.

<sup>46</sup> Berry, 216.

much mixed and scattered."<sup>47</sup> Worth Stewart said that the Doughboys emerged from their defensive positions and descended into a ravine filled with smoke. "Within five minutes after entering the valley we had lost our way."<sup>48</sup> At 5:50 the infantry continued its confused lurch forward. There were supposed to be thirty-four British Mark V tanks to lead them, but in the smoke, shell, and confusion, a contingent of the advance set off too early. Lacking the protection offered by tanks, infantrymen stumbled and groped to find their way in the smoke and fog. Units lost touch with each other and men assembled into mixed up groups of differing platoons, goaded into action by determined leaders who pushed on toward the enemy. The cacophony of roaring guns made communication practically impossible. Many Americans found themselves shoulder-to-shoulder with their Australian allies and fought under their direction during the two days of the battle.

While Allied troops pushed onward through the fog and smoke, several lunged through a gap in the enemy line created by the artillery. Unfortunately, most of those troops were killed, wounded, or captured because members of the American 27th Division to their left could not keep pace with the advance. Meeting stiff resistance the 27th was halted in its tracks, leaving the left flank of the 30th Division vulnerable. Additionally troops from the 119th Infantry Regiment had outrun their support units and breached the Hindenburg Line at about 7:30 a.m., far ahead of schedule. In their dash forward, they outran several machine-gun emplacements without destroying them. Now, with no support, they were sitting ducks surrounded by the enemy.<sup>49</sup> In the confusion that followed, Sergeant Joseph B. Adkinson of Egypt (now Atoka), Tennessee, took action. In the words of his Medal of Honor citation, "When murderous machine-gun fire at a range of fifty yards had made it impossible for his platoon to advance, and had caused the platoon to take cover, Sgt. Adkinson alone, with the greatest intrepidity, rushed across the fifty yards of open ground directly into the face of the hostile machine gun *kicked the gun* from the parapet into the enemy trench, and at the point of the bayonet captured the three men manning the gun. The gallantry and quick decision of this soldier enabled the platoon to resume its advance."<sup>50</sup> By 7:30 a.m. a considerable portion of the 30th Division had punched through the no-longer impregnable Hindenburg Line.

Adkinson was not the only Tennessean to respond to the crisis. Sergeant Milo Lemert of Crossville clambered over the top in an attempt to silence a machine-gun emplacement that hammered away at the exposed flank of the 119th. In the face of heavy fire he rushed it single-handedly, killing the entire crew with grenades. Rather

<sup>47</sup> Carnway and Shuford, 46.

<sup>48</sup> Stewart, 40; *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe* (Washington, D.C., 1938), 373-393.

<sup>49</sup> Murphy and Thomas, 102; Shipley Thomas, *The History of the A.E.F.* (Nashville, 2000 [1920]), 269.

<sup>50</sup> *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe*, 379; James B. Jones, Jr., "Tennessee's World War I Heroes," *The Courier* 27 (October 1988): 5.

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<sup>51</sup> There is a memorial to

<sup>52</sup> Stewart, 44-45.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 47. The Old Hi





with the Australians either at their side or not far behind them.<sup>54</sup>

Frank Simonds wrote of the successful attack on the Hindenburg Line that:

This day and those which immediately follow are the most splendid in the history of the British army, and a modest share in the achievement belongs to the American 27th and 30th divisions with [General Henry] Rawlinson, the former from New York, the latter composed of southerners mainly from Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina. No unit of Lee's army of northern Virginia fought with more distinction or success than these sons of the New South.<sup>55</sup>

Likewise, General Sir Douglas Haig, commander of the Allied forces, remarked that the "effect of the victory upon subsequent course of the campaign was decisive," leading to the final rout of German forces in November.<sup>56</sup>

By the time the battle ended, the 30th Division suffered roughly 8,400 casualties, though they captured significant amounts of military hardware, ammunition, and nearly 10,000 prisoners of war. Few of the exhausted soldiers in the line felt like celebrating. Breaching the Hindenburg Line merely opened the door to more hard fighting as the Germans regrouped. The last days of the war were far from easy as the enemy stiffened its resolve, intent on making the Allies work and bleed for every inch of territory.

After the fighting of September 29-31, the 30th Division rotated to the rear to rest. Two days later they were called back into action to relieve the Australians who had leap-frogged ahead of them, pushing their way into Bellicourt and beyond. As they moved forward, "a dismal nasty rain set in, blurring the edge of the landscape," making it more difficult to maneuver in the new and unknown territory directly behind the German fortifications. Sammies tried to stay low, moving forward through communication trenches in a half-crouch. German artillery opened up, adding to their discomfort. The terrain "had been fairly plowed by the terrible [Allied support] barrage of that morning, and under the load of pack, extra ammunition, grenades, and rifle with fixed bayonet, walking was anything but pleasant." As Old Hickories continued northwest behind the fortifications into open ground near Bellicourt, they took refuge in waterlogged shell holes during the barrage.<sup>57</sup>

To the chagrin of the 117th Infantry, while in the rear they were ordered to

<sup>54</sup> Australians troops impressed the men from Tennessee, especially Worth Stewart: "If any soldiers could beat Americans it was the Australians. They wouldn't even wear a helmet." Cates, 44.

<sup>55</sup> Frank Simonds, *History of the World War* (Garden City, NY, 1920), 5:250.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Murphy and Thomas, 107.

<sup>57</sup> Stewart, 42-46.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 51-52.

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exchange their light Lewis machine guns with the Australians. During the interven-  
ing days after breaching the Hindenburg Line, the Tennesseans took the time to  
clean, oil, and repair their weapons. As Worth Stewart explained, "the prospect of  
exchanging for some [machine guns] that had been through heavy service and could  
not possibly be in good condition was not at all pleasing. And this was to be the time  
of all times when the Lewis gun would count for or against us."<sup>58</sup>

The Sammies of the 30th Division returned to the front, gearing up to participate  
in the Battle of Montbrehain. Following their Australian guide, on October 5 sol-  
diers from the 117th waded through a tangle of mud, barbed wire, and defunct tele-  
phone cables, taking positions on either side of a bridge on the road to Nauroy.  
Before the sun rose on October 6, 1918, German artillery opened up on them. The  
result was devastating. Twenty-one soldiers lay dead or wounded in the predawn  
murk. Unknown to most of the soldiers in the second platoon, Sergeant John Hunt  
suffered wounds from the barrage. He marshaled his troops, keeping order and  
morale until he collapsed that evening from loss of blood. Only then did the soldiers  
in his command know the lengths to which he had gone to keep his men together.<sup>59</sup>

Throughout the battle, Corpsman Johnny Myers attended the dead and wound-  
ed with calm and poise. At the command of Captain Amiel Brinkley, Corporal  
Grover Hilliard and Private Merl Doty moved across the road to help. Then Odell  
Lane and William Byrd chose to assist in the detail. In full view of snipers and  
machine gunners, they risked their lives running across the open road to assist Myers  
in caring for the wounded. Like Sergeant Hunt, Myers was wounded—shrapnel  
ripped one of his legs below the knee. Only after the wounded had been attended  
to did Myers request a bandage for himself.<sup>60</sup>

For most of the 117th, the day passed slowly. Pinned down by snipers and  
machine gunners, they sat and waited for something to happen. Waiting "drove us  
to our deepest darkest corners," for it allowed their imaginations to run wild.  
Anxiety was punctuated by random rifle and machine-gun rounds. As darkness  
descended, the Germans, who had all day to calculate the position of their foes,  
launched another artillery barrage. The first shells hit, wounding Willie Weston and  
Calvin Aslinger who died before he could be evacuated to the rear. As stretcher bear-  
ers carried his broken body away, Aslinger used all of his effort to shout to Captain  
Brinkley, "I can't be with you this time, sir. Wish I could. Anyhow, I wish you the  
best of luck."<sup>61</sup>

Punctuating the moonless cover of darkness, Very Lights (bright magnesium flares)  
illuminated the shell-scarred battlefield, allowing reinforcements and supplies—

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 51-52.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 52.

especially much needed water and ammunition—to come up from the rear. During efforts to resupply, the 117th received orders that an assault would be launched the next day. Scouting details were dispatched to probe the German position and provide appropriate headings to Allied artillery. Doughboys took turns at sentry duty, allowing each man to get a few hours of sleep.<sup>62</sup>

At 3 a.m. on October 7, 1918, dog-tired soldiers were roused from their slumber. Ordered to turn in their blankets, they donned trench coats, a light pack, rations, and checked their weapons. Each man received 200 rounds of rifle ammunition, a handful of grenades, and two canteens filled with water. Gas masks were examined by feel in the dark, placed in their canvas pouches and slung around their necks. During the preparation, German artillery sent the soldiers their own wake-up call, wounding four more of the 117th's infantrymen.<sup>63</sup>

By 4 a.m. the soldiers were moving into position for their assault. In the meantime the Germans stepped up their artillery barrage, wounding several more Old Hickories. Enfilading fire forced them to take cover wherever possible. Rather than retreat, Captain Brinkley and Lieutenant Wyman displayed conspicuous courage, running forward, yelling for their men to follow. The initial surge pushed roughly 150 yards ahead until a well-placed artillery shell halted the advance, killing or wounding every man in the center, including Captain Brinkley and several non-commissioned officers.

In spite of wounds which mangled his face, Captain Brinkley tried to rally his troops. Nearly blinded by his own blood that streamed down into his eyes, Brinkley collapsed, ceding command and his compass to Sergeant Marshall Dudderar. While the 117th struggled to regroup, German machine guns again opened up. Sweeping their weapons left to right, they mowed down the Tennesseans and Carolinians who, once again, scrambled for cover. Some, like Sergeant Dudderar, crawled forward toward the enemy. Suddenly a machine gun round ripped through his flesh. Lieutenant Wyman scrambled within earshot to ask how badly he had been hit, only to witness the sergeant receive a mortal wound. As the deadly German machine guns and artillery continued, the ranks of the 117th dwindled. "By noon there was no longer any K Company, or L, or M, or I companies. Here and there all along the line little scattered groups crouched in shell holes. . . . Late in the day hunger and thirst forced most of the men to search the packs and canteens of their dead comrades for rations and water."<sup>64</sup>

Sergeant Edward R. Talley of Russellville, Tennessee, was one of those men from the 117th pinned down by withering enemy fire on October 7, 1918, near Ponchoux. Machine-gun fire kicked up the terrain around soldiers of the 117th Infantry; several cried out in agony as bullets ripped through flesh and bone. Orders

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 55.

to take out the machine-guns, a number of infantrymen, who were killed in their efforts. Sergeant Talley took the initiative. He rushed the nest in the rear of the enemy machine-gun. The Germans attempted to bring him back with well-placed rifle fire.

In addition to the initiative on October 7 had been a day of darkness. With darkness came the front-line troops moved closer to the enemy. Davis went to the rear to flank them, and returned to the front behind them. The roar of machine-guns wounded and struggled for survival.

Though October 8, 1918, is a day York marched into history, it is also for two other citizens of Russellville. Private Calvin J. Ward of Company D of the 117th Infantry was preparing to advance on the enemy attack. The push was stopped upon Company D. Karn's deliberate action against the enemy sniping three gunners. A private surrendered and Company D was pinned down.

General Pershing personally pinned the medals on the chest of Calvin Ward, whose name is on more medals than the celebration of Honor, Silver Star, the Purple Heart. York won only three American medals, the *Croix de Guerre*, and the distinction of being a hero of the war charged.<sup>66</sup>

The 55th Field Artillery

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 53-54.

<sup>66</sup> Bob Hurley, "Heroes Remembered: But He is Mostly Forgotten." In *World War*, he was a changed man when he enlisted. He was dismissed from

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to take out the machine-gun emplacement resulted in the wounding and deaths of a number of infantrymen. Undeterred after witnessing the death of several comrades who were killed in their futile attempt to put the machine gun out of action, Sergeant Talley took the initiative and attacked the position. Armed only with a rifle, he rushed the nest in the face of intense enemy fire, killing or wounding at least six of the enemy machine-gun crew and taking the gun out of commission. When Germans attempted to bring another gun and ammunition forward, he drove them back with well-placed rifle rounds. He received the Medal of Honor in 1919.

In addition to the incessant shelling and machine-gun fire of the Germans, October 7 had been a day of mist, rain, bone chilling wind, and very little sunshine. With darkness came the firing of Verey Lights to illuminate the battlefield. German troops moved closer to the Doughboys who huddled in the darkness. Private Ernest Davis went to the rear to inform headquarters that enemy troops were trying to flank them, and returned with orders to fall back in the vicinity of the sunken road behind them. The roar of cannon punctuated the cold night, as men gave care to the wounded and struggled for warmth and rest.<sup>65</sup>

Though October 8, 1918, is best remembered as the date when Corporal Alvin York marched into history with 132 prisoners in tow, that same day proved fateful for two other citizens of Tennessee—Sergeant James E. Karnes of Arlington and Private Calvin J. Ward of Morristown. Karnes, a non-commissioned officer from Company D of the 117th Infantry, and his unit were entrenched near Estrees, preparing to advance on German lines. At 5:10 a.m. a barrage signaled the order to attack. The push was stymied when German machine gunners focused deadly fire upon Company D. Karnes ordered Ward to accompany him, and the two men took deliberate action against the enemy gunners. They succeeded in silencing the nest by sniping three gunners. As a result of their efforts, seven German machine gunners surrendered and Company D continued its advance.

General Pershing personally awarded Karnes and Ward the Medal of Honor. After pinning the medals on their chests, the general stepped back and saluted them. Calvin Ward, whose name sounds eerily similar to Alvin York, actually won more medals than the celebrated York. The U.S. Army awarded Private Ward the Medal of Honor, Silver Star, the Distinguished Service Cross, and two Purple Hearts, while York won only three American citations. York received five foreign citations, including the *Croix de Guerre*, but Ward won six. Calvin Ward, however, also has the dubious distinction of being the only Medal of Honor winner to be dishonorably discharged.<sup>66</sup>

The 55th Field Artillery, though a part of the 30th Division, never fought with its

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 53-54.

<sup>66</sup> Bob Hurley, "Heroes Remembered: Pvt. Calvin J. Ward Won More Medals than Sgt. Alvin C. York, But He is Mostly Forgotten," *Greeneville Sun*, May 23, 1997. When Ward returned home from the First World War, he was a changed man and began drinking heavily. Unable to return to civilian life, he re-enlisted. He was dismissed from service in 1930 after hitting a commanding officer.

own unit once it arrived in France.<sup>67</sup> Various assigned to the 89th, 37th, and 33rd divisions, the 55th earned its share of laurels, fighting on various active fronts without being relieved from August 26 to November 11, 1918. On September 12 the 55th Field Artillery launched its first concerted artillery barrage in the St. Mihiel salient. Roughly two minutes before 1 a.m., heavy guns in the rear began firing, launching one of the heaviest bombardments in the war. The primary means of communication between the infantry in the front and the artillery in the rear was the use of field telephones. Unfortunately phones rarely could be heard ringing during a barrage, nor could the sound of human voices carry distinctly along the fragile wires. As a result, the artillery was heavily dependent upon spotters like Albert Perrine Smith of Cookeville, Tennessee, who traveled back and forth between the front and the rear, risking life and limb in the process.<sup>68</sup>

At 5 a.m. combined Allied infantry went forward, assisted by a rolling barrage, bayonets glistening in the flare of the Verey Lights leading the way across "No Man's Land." Rain turned the landscape into slippery mud, making the advance difficult. Shell holes quickly filled with water. Running, lurching, slipping, falling forward, American Sammies sank up to their waists in some parts of the salient. Mud, fog, smoke, and rain compounded the misery, fear, and danger.

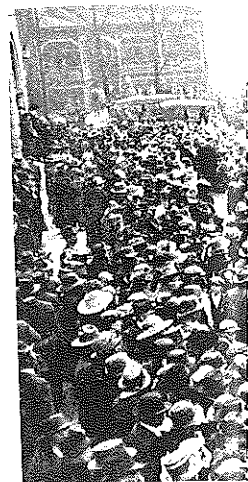
As the troops slowly advanced, some artillery pieces had to be shoved forward to prevent killing Allied soldiers. Horses had to be hitched to the heavy pieces. Red hot barrels, turning the ever present rain to steam, threatened to blister the flesh of horses and men as they struggled to put guns into new positions. Additionally, as the guns moved forward, less time was taken in finding secure positions for the weapons. Many began sinking into the muddy quagmire or listed to the left or right after firing a number of rounds, making it difficult to fire them accurately or move them to better positions.<sup>69</sup>

Luke Lea wrote in his diary after the war that the 55th Artillery Brigade was the only unit of its size to fight in the three great American offensives of the war—St. Mihiel, the Meuse-Argonne, and the drive across the Woivre Plain. They participated in the capture of the ominous, heavily fortified Montfaucon, and Albert Smith declared to his family that he pulled the lanyard on his artillery at 10:59:38 on November 11, 1918, sending one of the last Allied shells across "No Man's Land." In the months directly following the war several troops from the 55th participated in the occupation of Germany, returning home in May of the following year.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> West, 31. On October 9, members of the 2nd Battalion of the 118th Infantry encountered German bicycle troops, many of whom abandoned their wheels and tried to flee on foot. A running skirmish emerged and the Doughboys captured 300 bicycles and assorted troops. See Murphy and Thomas, 114.

<sup>68</sup> Smith had trained on a Harley-Davidson motorcycle; when he arrived in France, however, he found that he would carry out his sporting activities on horseback. Over the course of the war, he had a number of horses shot out from under him.

<sup>69</sup> West, 42.



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<sup>70</sup> Lea Diary, 1922, Lea

<sup>71</sup> West, 28.

<sup>72</sup> Birdwell, 12, 114; C

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The people of Knoxville treat the soldiers of the 30th Division to a "home-cooked" meal. The tables are set up on Walnut Street. St. John's Episcopal Church is just beyond the left of the photograph, and the Park House is visible at the upper left. From Thomas B. Collins, et al., *With the 114th Machine Gun Battalion* (Nashville, 1933), courtesy of the Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection of the Knox County Public Library.

The 30th Division fought proudly and suffered significant casualties, not all of which were human. Often overlooked in the story of the war, Tennessee provided thousands of horses and mules to the war effort. In August the Old Hickory Division had 1,150 horses and mules; some were used by scouts and others were used as draft animals to pull the limbers carrying the artillery of the 55th Artillery Brigade. Horses that had once been excitable and full of life "were pitiful scarecrows by the 10th of October."<sup>71</sup> By November only 175 remained alive. Horses died from shrapnel, gas, and machine-gun fire. Others, exhausted, simply laid down in the mud and died. It took eighteen teams of horses to move each artillery piece, and the division's horses fared worse than the Doughboys. It was not until November 8, 1918, that Caterpillar tractors replaced the dwindling ranks of some of Tennessee's most important forgotten heroes. In spite of their loss, John Cates noted, "It can be stated here that the meat of freshly killed horses was sometimes ground with the hard cereal bread [hardtack] and made into horseburgers."<sup>72</sup>

As should be expected, not everyone acted honorably during the war. Some Doughboys went AWOL; others consorted with French prostitutes, contracted

<sup>70</sup> Lea Diary, 1922, Lea Papers; Albert Smith to "Aunt Cecil," December 6, 1918, Smith Family Papers.

<sup>71</sup> West, 28.

<sup>72</sup> Birdwell, 12, 114; Cates, 35.

venereal diseases, and were dishonorably discharged. A few committed serious crimes. On July 19, 1918, Private Charles R. Payne shot and killed Corporal C. I. Knott after Payne lost his money—and his temper—while playing craps.<sup>73</sup>

During the period after the armistice as soldiers waited to be shipped back home, some resorted to lawlessness. Public drunkenness, fighting, gambling, and petty crimes punctuated the boring hours waiting to leave. This led General S. L. Faison to tender an order to increase military discipline. It stated in part, "Are the men who broke the Hindenburg Line and drove the enemy twenty miles going to allow the glory and fame there achieved to be snatched from them by a few men who are devoid of pride and decency?" The general persuaded soldiers to divulge any knowledge they had of the rowdies over to the proper authorities and protect the good reputation of the Old Hickory Division.<sup>74</sup>

All in all, most Tennesseans who answered the call of duty did their jobs and went home without recognition.<sup>75</sup> But in many ways they were no longer the same. Many changes were subtle. Men wore wristwatches instead of pocket watches. They went clean shaven all the time. They wore T-shirts and jockey shorts instead of their old union suits. They talked about souvenirs they picked up while abroad instead of mementos. Many picked up the habit of smoking during the war because the YMCA gave cigarettes away to soldiers. Some chose new careers with skills learned during the war and turned their backs on farming. For some, the war defined the rest of their lives. Harry Berry and Rutledge Smith became known publicly as "Colonel Berry" and "Major Smith," even after they returned to civilian lives. For others, like Calvin Ward, who enjoyed the camaraderie of military life and the excitement of battle, the war led to a military career that was cut short by alcoholism and insubordination. For Albert Smith, who also found the war perversely exhilarating, adjustment to peacetime life in Tennessee was difficult and he suffered from nightmares for the rest of his life. The psychological toll of the war turned many veterans into pacifists in the interwar years.

There were other changes as well. Luke Lea gained fame when he tried to kidnap the Kaiser, but he played a more important role with Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., in helping establish the American Legion. Lawrence Tyson returned to Tennessee and was elected to the United States Congress where he became a proponent of child labor laws. Alvin York focused his attentions upon improving education in

<sup>73</sup> West, 29. Lea Diary, July 19-22, 1918, Lea Papers.

<sup>74</sup> Quoted in Murphy and Thomas, 132.

<sup>75</sup> Captain Edward Buford, Jr., of Nashville earned fame in the skies above the Western Front as a member of Captain Eddie Rickenbacker's First Pursuit Group, better known as the "Hat-in-the-Ring" Squadron. The only Tennessean to earn the distinction of being a flying ace, Buford encountered pilots from Baron Manfred von Richtoffen's celebrated "Flying Circus," and was credited with personally downing five German aircraft. Though he did not receive the Congressional Medal of Honor, Buford was awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honor, the *Croix de Guerre*, the Distinguished Service Cross, and the Decoration of Kings of the Legion of Honor for his prowess above the lines.

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<sup>76</sup> Luke Lea (William T. Quarterly 20 (September 1919-1941 (Boston, 1995). *Natured Riot: The Birth of the Governors of Tennessee* (Cretia Owen and the Old 63 (Summer 1999): 12. Spruill Wheeler, ed., *Vo Nation* (Knoxville, 1995).

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Tennessee. Veterans of the First World War established the War Memorial Museum and Auditorium in Nashville, which acted as the first public venue for the Grand Ole Opry. The war to end all wars led to the creation of the Tennessee State Police, charged with ferreting out Bolshevik cells in the Volunteer State. The war played a key role in breaking down traditional gender roles as thousands of women went to work for the war effort in myriad ways. Club women collected scrap cloth for bandages while other women toiled in munitions plants or labored on farms to provide food for the war machine. Women's roles in the war effort led to a showdown over the Susan B. Anthony Amendment in Tennessee in 1920, resulting in Harry Burn of Niota casting the deciding vote that extended suffrage rights to all women in the United States. The war and the men who fought it ushered in the 20th century and the manifold changes to come.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Luke Lea (William T. Alderson, ed.), "The Attempt to Capture the Kaiser," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 20 (September 1961): 222-261; William Pencak, *For God and Country: The American Legion, 1919-1941* (Boston, 1989), 2-106; Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers*, 87-130; Charles K. Wolfe, *A Good Natured Riot: The Birth of the Grand Ole Opry* (Nashville, 1999), 23, 30; Stephen V. Ash, ed., *Messages of the Governors of Tennessee, 1907-1921* (Nashville, 1990), 10:592, 657-658; Debbie McConnell, "Lou Cretia Owen and the Old Hickory Munitions Plant During World War I," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 63 (Summer 1999): 128-139; A. Elizabeth Taylor, "Tennessee: The Thirty-Sixth State," in Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, ed., *Votes for Women: The Women Suffrage Movement in Tennessee, the South, and the Nation* (Knoxville, 1995), 52-70.