

THAT OTHER WAR

by

FREDERICK CLARENCE STILSON 1889 - 1974

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## THAT OTHER WAR

Fifty years ago today, I stood behind a battery of French 75's watching the gunners pump shells into the German lines. It was about 10:30 A.M., and we were preparing the bridges to cross the trenches when the Germans were dislodged from their defensive positions by our infantry regiments. The barrage was heavy and the noise deafening. My men stood ready to follow the infantry "over the top" to throw the one track timber structures over the depressions so that the artillery could cross to new positions. There they could better train their guns on the retreating enemy.

I had had a rough night. I had unrolled my bedroll in the tower of a ruined church nearby and crawled in after removing my boots. I pulled the flap up over my head, and tried to get some sleep. I knew at that time we were to go forward in support of the 4th U.S. Division as Engineer auxiliary troops, and we knew from previous experience what that meant. It was raining, and the tower had no roof, so it just had to drain off me somehow.

Morning brought a lull in the rainfall, and, by the time we had swallowed some hot coffee and eaten a meager mess, the rain had stopped, and the sun started to show itself. We moved our equipment forward by truck as far as the artillery locations and awaited further orders.

At about the time mentioned above, a Y.M.C.A. flivver (Ford) came dashing forward throwing out copies of the Paris edition of the New York Herald telling us that the armistice had been signed and was to go into effect at 11:00 A.M. that morning. None of us believed it! We had heard too many rumors of an armistice to put much credit on what was in the papers, which we received occasionally. I mentioned it to the Captain of the battery. He said he had received no orders to "Cease firing."

Shortly after this, a messenger came forward from headquarters with the news that we were to cease firing at 11:00 A.M. that day. We couldn't believe it even then, but orders are orders. The boys in the battery had piles of shells beside each gun, and they decided to get rid of as many as possible before 11:00. I had never heard such a racket in my life before. Each gun crew was trying to outdo the others, some 23 to 27 shots a minute until the pieces were smoking hot. The normal fire was about 17 shots a minute.

At 11:05 A.M. "Cease fire," was ordered, and the silence was oppressive. We just sat down on what dry ground we could find and looked at each other. We couldn't believe it had happened. I still remember that day as though it was yester-



Trunks used by Lt. F.C. Stilson overseas during W.W.I.

day. No one thought to celebrate, they were too stunned. We didn't unwind until that night, and then the fireworks started, star shells, Very pistols, rifles, etc. Everyone tried to shoot away their ammunition. There was no booze available.

## I

In the beginning the war was, and I was not a part of it. In July of 1914, the assassination of the Archduke of Austria and his wife in the province of Bosnia of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire triggered the beginning of the First World War. In the latter part of August, 1914, Austria declared war on Serbia, Russia on Austria, Germany on Russia, then France and England on Germany and Austria. Italy came in later on the side of the Allies, and also Turkey on the side of the Entente. (Austria and Germany) So the die was cast and Europe was in for a real blood letting.

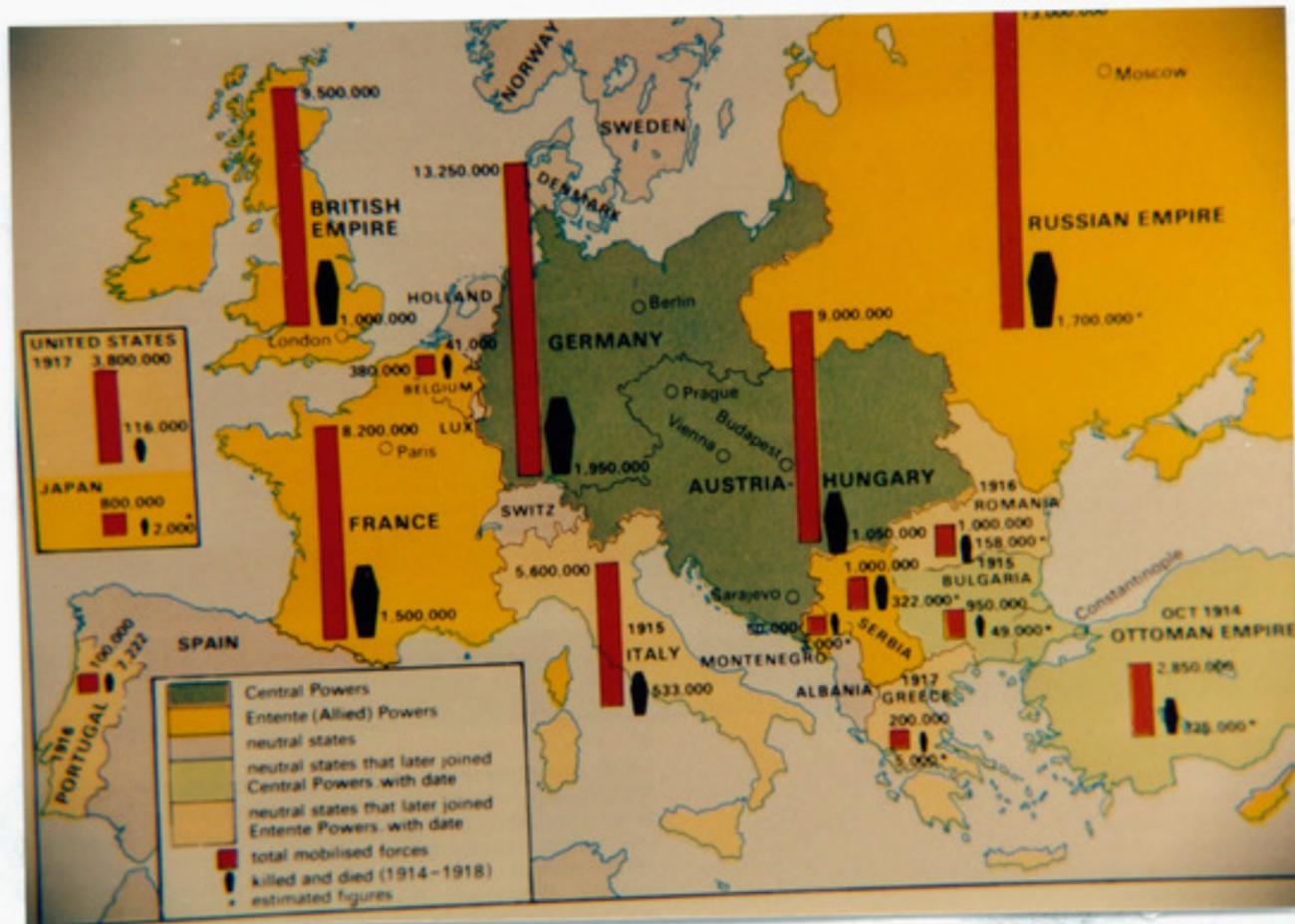
Time went by and gradually a stalemate ensued on the Western front in France, Belgium and Italy. Long lines of trucks extended from the North Sea in Belgium down across Northeastern France to the Swiss border. The Italians were stopped in the Austrian Alps.

Gradually the ire of the American government was aroused in the sinking of our ships by the German subs, and finally when the liner Lusitania was sunk with the loss of some 100 American lives in the Irish Sea, the country boiled over. A year or so later, we, having severed diplomatic relations with Germany previously, declared war on the Axis powers on the 6th of April 1917.

## II

At the time that war was declared, I was employed as an engineer by the Interstate Commerce Commission, Division of Valuation of the U.S. Government. We were working out of the Central District Office in Chicago. I was with a field crew on the main lines of the New York Central Railway working from Gary, Indiana east towards La Port, Indiana.

I was "taking track" on the line, and, after the declaration of war, the National Guard was immediately mobilized. I ran into them doing guard duty along the railway, especially where bridge structures were along the line. We were stopped before crossing the bridges and made to show an identification. They were afraid of sabotage, as some had occurred even before war had been declared.



Europe at war, 1914 - 1917

I knew I had to go. I had registered for the draft, had been in the Illinois National Guard, and was an officer in the Washington State College Corps of Cadets while attending that institution. I wrote to several officers I knew, two in the regular army; my cousin Earl Chambers (West Point), Lieutenant P.J. Hennesy, who was the military instructor at the college and my former captain of Company "C", 6th Illinois Infantry. I asked them for recommendations to the First Officer's Training Corps. On receiving their replies, I immediately applied for admission to the training corps through the 6th Corps office in Chicago. I was ordered to report for physical examination in the early part of May, 1917, and was successful in passing the examination.

After returning to the job at La Port, Indiana, I received orders to report to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, north of Chicago, to undergo training as a First Lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army. I packed my suitcase, said goodbye to the crew and left for Chicago on May 15, 1917.

### III

I reported to the commanding officer at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, where I was sworn into the military service as a candidate for a commission as an officer of the Army of the United States. Again I had to go through a complete physical examination, take shots for typhoid, paratyphoid, and smallpox, as well as be tested for sight, hearing, voice, etc., which were important as an officer of the Army.

I was assigned to a company of candidates, some 200 of us as I remember. We were the Wisconsin, Michigan unit of the provisional regiment, which was being assembled from all over the central states. To my surprise when I saw the Illinois unit, I met several fellows who were in high school at the same time that I was. They were trying out for commissions in the Infantry. There was Ralph Noble, Herb Miller (our former class president) and several others whose names I do not recall from the Galesburg, Ill., area. Ralph had come back from California, where he had been teaching and coaching at San Diego High School. Bert Miller had been with the telephone company in New York City. We had a gab fest in the barracks as to who had been what and where. I was able to hold my own with them.

With my company, we were issued uniforms, blankets, mess kits, etc., and assigned barracks on the second floor of the main building on the post. The instructors were officers and non-commissioned officers of the regular service. We were instructed in the school of the soldier, the squad, section and platoon; then formed into companies and drilled as company,



Main barracks Fort Sheridan, Ill., May 1917



Bridge on the road to the rifle range, Fort Sheridan

battalion, and a full regiment. As I had considerable previous military experience, I found myself as an acting sergeant and the night guide of the company. We were given a pile of books to study and memorize, such as the Infantry Drill regulations, Manual of Guard Duty, Military Courtesy, Manual of Courts Martial, etc., as well as numerous pamphlets to read. All our time in the evening was taken up with the study of these books. They wanted to make West Pointers out of us in three short months.

The mornings began at about 5:30 A.M. with reveille, breakfast, policing up the barracks, which meant making our beds per army regulations and cleaning up the place. At 7:00 A.M. we "fell in" for roll call, sick call, etc., and got ready for the day's work. We usually had formation right after reveille before mess call. The entire morning was spent in drilling in Infantry tactics. We were armed with the 30-30 Springfield rifle, bayonet, belt, etc., so we hopped to it. It was hard at first, but we gradually toughened up so that later on we went on hikes locally, marches and sham battle practice. Very few of our group were eliminated. Most of them were engineers of various grades, some contractors and some just young business men who were graduate engineers. All were tough.

We spent our afternoons in classes or on field demonstrations conducted by the instructors. I do not remember anything particular happening at this post. After five weeks of intensive work and study, two companies of us entrained for Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to begin our military engineering training at that post.

During my five weeks at Fort Sheridan, I made two weekend trips down to see Essie at Peoria, Illinois, as I was entitled to a weekend pass every other weekend. We discussed our marriage plans and set our date at about August 15th, as soon as I was commissioned and could get my 15 day leave before being assigned to duty with some regiment. We enjoyed our weekends together going up to Galesburg to my folks too. I met people on the street who stopped us and shook hands as though I was a long lost son or brother. The uniform seemed to impress people, or so I thought. War was a new thing to them. All they remembered was the appearance of the G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic) veterans of the Civil War. Even the Spanish-American War Veterans (1898) had faded out of sight by this time.



*Administration Building, Fort  
Leavenworth, Kans. Summer of '17*

Administration Building, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1917



*Hospital (Right) Drill field (Left) Fort Leavenworth  
Kans. Summer 1917.*

Hospital (right), Drill Field (left)  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Summer 1917

#### IV

We left on the morning of the 20th of June, 1917, on a Pullman train over the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul and Great Western Railroads. The train was parked at the loading station on the Fort Sheridan reservation, so all we had to do was climb aboard and make ourselves comfortable for the day and night. The use of Pullman cars was rather unusual as most transport was by chair cars, as I found out later on.

About 65 men per car was the usual capacity; three men to a Pullman seat, two in one, and one facing the other two. We carried our equipment with us, including our baggage, (one suitcase for me). The rest was on our backs, including our arms. Some of the men already had commissions as Lieutenants and Captains. I was only a candidate for a commission, so I drew the upper berth. To kill time, most of the crew engaged in card games or just read their text books or talked. I was one of the latter.

The trip to Fort Leavenworth took all day and night. We had had breakfast (mess) before we left Sheridan. We were given a luncheon by the Chamber of Commerce at Des Moines, Iowa. We marched from the train to their building downtown. We reached Fort Leavenworth sometime the next evening of June 21st. We were fed, assigned to our barracks, and, after formation, prepared to get down to business.

Our unit was the 8th Company of the 10th Provisional Training Regiment. (Michigan, Wisconsin). We had the last two story barracks in a long row on the north side of the quadrangle, east end. After that was open country and drill ground.

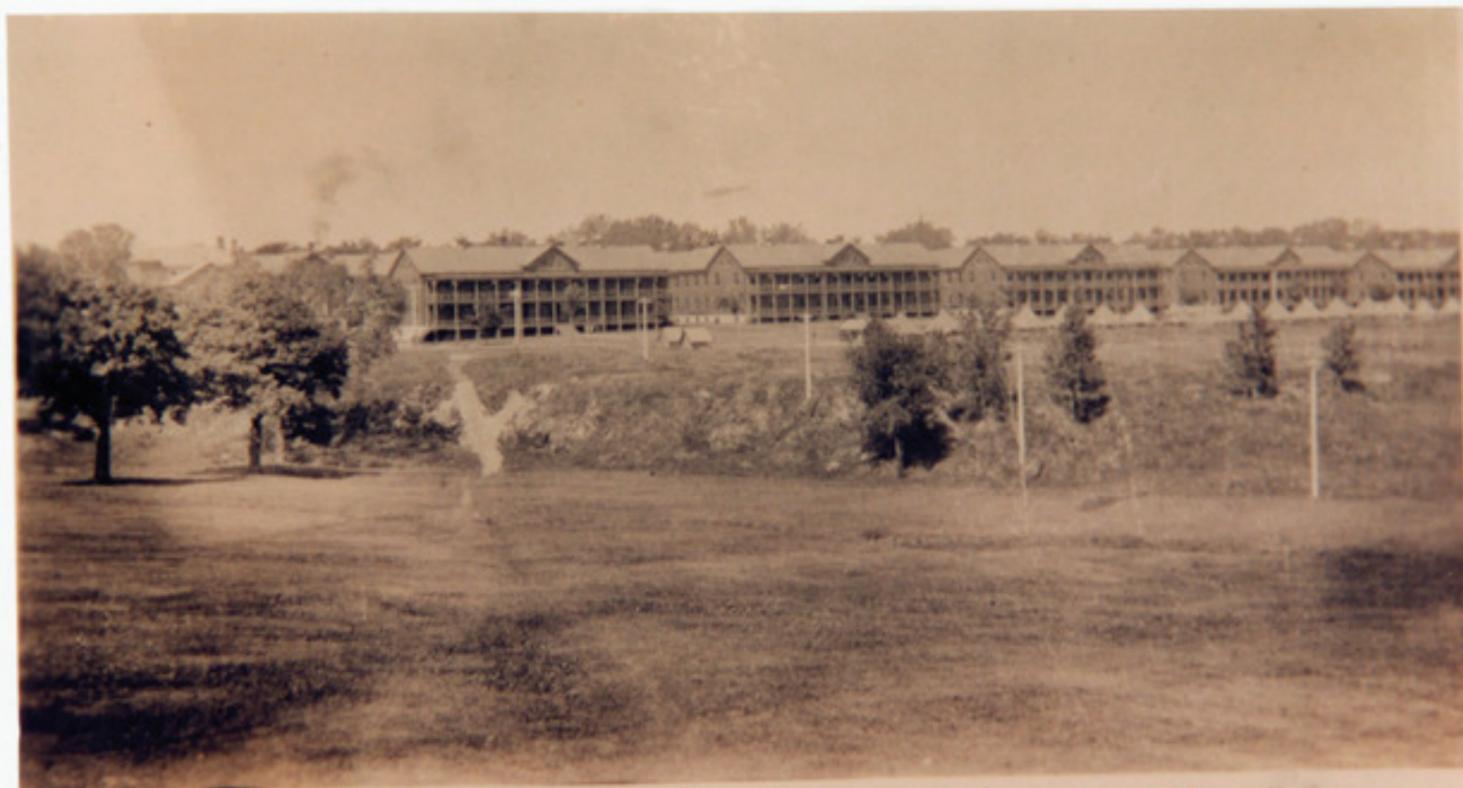
I was assigned a cot on the first floor, and, as luck would have it, the fellow next to me was a graduate of Washington State College, and we got right together. We had places by one of the windows looking onto the quadrangle and could get a fair breeze in the evening after the hot days that ensued during July and August.

The entire regiment had to march to mess across the quadrangle to a gigantic mess hall, gym and armory where we were assigned places at long tables. Ours was near an entrance so we got in first and out first. The food was prepared by contractors, and, during the seven weeks we were there, the food was not very good, and sometimes was downright rotten. Being on contract to the government, the men couldn't do much about it, but there was many a breakfast that all I could eat was oatmeal mush with a slice of bread and coffee to wash it down.



ENGINEER COMPANY, 10TH PROVISIONAL TRAINING REGIMENT.  
(Michigan, Wisconsin)

Engineer Company, 10th Provisional Training  
Regiment (Michigan, Wisconsin)



*Men's Barracks, Fort Leavenworth  
Kans. Summer, 1917*

Men's Barracks, Fort Leavenworth, Kans  
Summer 1917

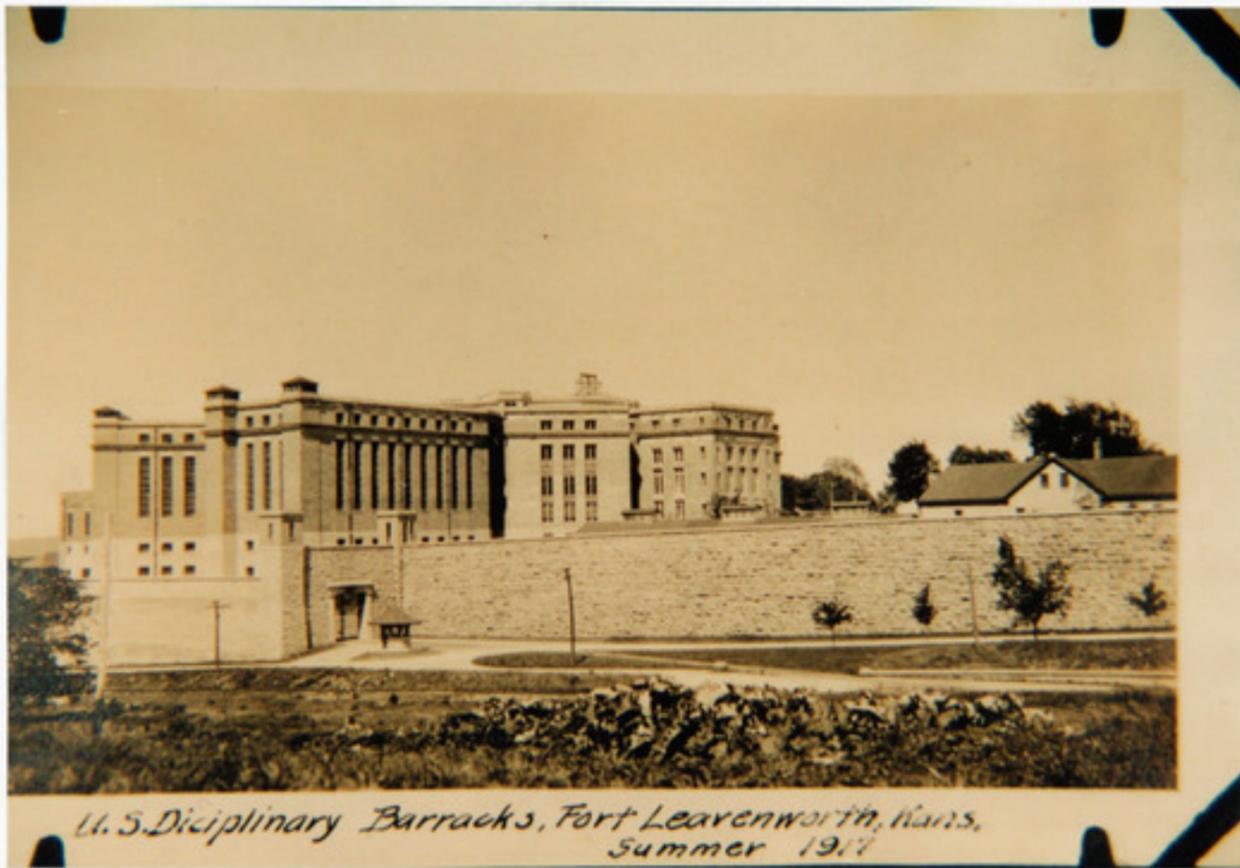
We were given a guided tour of the military penitentiary and also the Federal penitentiary during our stay in Leavenworth to impress us with the responsibilities of our job as Army officers, in case we should stray from the straight and narrow path, such as making away with government equipment, purloining government money, which we would be entrusted with and disobeying the orders of our superiors. The interiors of these prisons were pretty grim, and some of the characters we saw therein didn't look too happy. We took the lessons to heart, and I never heard of any of our group trying to get away with anything. I was entrusted at times with as much as \$26,000 in cash, (Company funds) and about a half million dollars worth of government equipment for which I was both responsible and accountable to the U.S. Government, Department of the Army.

Fort Leavenworth was a pleasant post and an old timer from the days of early settlement of Kansas during the Indian fights and the Civil War. Most of the buildings and barracks were old, and the post was the school for Army Officers in refresher courses, being the headquarters of the Command and Staff School of all the branches of the Army from Infantry to Artillery and Engineers. We got a taste of this while we were there in training. The instructors were West Pointers of Captain or better rank, and were thorough in their instruction and discipline.

I got mine a couple of times when I stepped out of line and had to police the barracks and grounds around our building, being confined to the post a couple of week ends for some minor infractions of the rules. Once I became sick in formation from some of the rotten food we were having in the mess, and Captain Godfrey, our company commander, sent me to the post dispensary where I was given "C.C. pills" and sent back to duty. Our punishment was generally picking up cigarette butts and bits of paper from the front lawn of the barracks, or doing menial work inside, besides our regular assignments. I didn't lose very much time off though. I made several trips by street car to Kansas City, Mo., where I spent week ends, and tried to catch up on my eating and recreation. I bought Essie's and my wedding rings there and had them engraved inside as we were to be married as soon as I was released from the camp to return to Illinois for my two week furlough. This was extended from the 11th of August until the 6th of Sept. when I was ordered East to my first assignment, the 23rd U.S. Engineers.

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We were engaged in infantry drill and tactics during the mornings and also some class work and lectures. In the after-



*U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, Fort Leavenworth, Kans.  
Summer 1917*

U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas



Federal Penitentiary, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

noons, it was take to the fields and dig trenches of all types in use on the Western front, as that was where we were supposed to serve. The front in Europe had been stabilized for almost four years, so we used the field fortifications and defense manual which was still in vogue since the Civil War. The pictures on page 16 - 17 show some of the work in progress.

The afternoons were hot, and by the time we came into camp, we were ready for a shower and short rest before marching to evening mess. Prior to that we usually had evening dress parade which completed the days efforts. After mess, study until taps at 10:30 P.M. When we still had studying to do, some of us would sneak down to the latrines in the basement and sit on the stools to do some of our reading as no lights were permitted in the barracks after 10:30 P.M. I often had to do that in order to keep up with the class work.

We had to draw our tools from the quartermaster supply outfit and sign for them. On returning, we would check in and return the tools; mostly picks, shovels and dirt removing tools were used.

In building the trenches, we first skimmed off the sod and piled it forward for a parapet or firing rest for the rifles. We then dug in for about a three foot width and depth to some six feet, leaving a shelf in front to stand on, or a firing step, which allowed us to rest our guns on the parapet. The loose dirt was added to the front in front of the sod embankment or used to fill sand bags for the revetment.

Sometimes we added a trench shelter in the rear to cover the men from shrapnel fire. We also constructed the trenches with traverses, which allowed 8 men, or a squad of infantry, to stand forward with a cutback or traverse to protect the squads on each side in case of a direct hit on the trench. This would protect the lives of the men in the other sections from the flying shell fragments. A good many lives were saved in this manner. However the eight or nine men in the section that was hit weren't so well off as most of them would get it.

Another job we had to do was to clear a field of fire of from 100 to 200 yards in front of the trenches, so that the enemy couldn't sneak up on us. This required a lot of brush cutting which was used in the construction of gabions, fascines, and abatis for the bomb proofs and advance defense in front of the trenches as shown on page 18. We also made wooden chevaux de frise for blocking of roads out of the logs and timber available, as well as the lighter material used for roofing bomb proofs in the rear of the lines. We also constructed barbed wire entanglements and various other types of defenses to stop the enemy charges before they reached our lines.

On one occasion on the Western front, our battalion manned the third line of entrenchments, which were almost a mile in



*Skinning off the sod ready for 1917  
entrenching, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas*

Skinning off the sod ready for entrenching



Trench system showing traverses to protect against  
enfilading gun fire



*Lt. Brayton Lt. Anderson  
System of Trenches showing Trench Shelter against  
Shrapnel, Fort Leavenworth, Kan. E.R.O.T.C. - Summer 1917*

System of trenches showing trench shelter against  
shrapnel



Occupying the trenches



Squad constructing gabions and fascines



Types of construction for abatis



Squad constructing wooden chevaux de frise



Showing bomb proof constructed with gabions, sod poles and fascines



Wire chevaux de frise and barb-wire entanglements



Trench system showing shrapnel shelter, sod revetment and parapet, also sand bag revetment

the rear of the front line of trenches in April of 1918. The Germans broke through in the battle of Seicheprey. We had to clear out the brush in front of these trenches, because they hadn't been manned for several years.

We spent several days on the assembling and construction of pontoon bridges. There were two types, the knock down or canvas boat with a wooden frame and the heavy wooden boats which were in the regular bridge train hauled to the job. The views on pages 22 and 23 show the men learning to construct the light or canvas bridge and also the heavy or wooden boat type. The latter probably hadn't changed since the Civil War. The newer type, or canvas boat, was lighter and easier to portage around. Both types were carried on the bridge train composed of trucks holding the boats, or wagons, for the material such as the canvas boats, and usually hauled by horses or mules.

The canvas boats consisted of a knock down frame which was put together on the spot, laid over the canvas, which was spread out on the ground and then brought up the sides and lashed to the gunwales with ropes. One boat was pushed out and beams were laid out on the boats so that the planking could be laid on these and lashed down. To do all this under fire was quite a trick. It was done by the engineers during the second battle of the Marne over that river on the attack against the Germans in the Summer of 1918. Our Company "A" 23rd Engineers were in that battle. However, they didn't build the bridge, just filled up the shell holes in the roads. I understand they lost several men in that battle. This I cannot verify. I wasn't there.

The heavier boats were just unloaded from their trucks and shoved into the water. An approach piling was used as the first step from the shore, and then the beams and planking were laid to the first boat. These boats were pushed forward as rapidly as possible, and the bridge completed as shown on page 22. Their capacity was enough to enable field artillery, both light and heavy, as well as the wagon trains and light trucks to cross. However, being vulnerable to shell fire, they were easily sunk. The infantry had to cross first either by small boats or a walk bridge. Our outfit built one on one occasion during the drives. This was necessary to secure a bridgehead. The infantry had to drive the enemy back beyond rifle firing range in order to enable us to build a crossing.

We were also instructed in the use of high explosives, such as dynamite, triton (use of T.N.T) and other methods of destroying roads, railroads or buildings in the advance of troop movements made by the enemy. We were taught to blow down trees to block roads and railroads, to blast large crevices in embankments, blow bridges and destroy rails on the railroads, as



*setting up "knock down" pontoon boats preparatory to launching, Ft. Leavenworth, Kans. Summer 1917*

Setting up "knock down" pontoon boats preparatory to launching.



*E.R.O.T.C. constructing pontoon bridge of "knock-*

Constructing a pontoon bridge of "knockdown" across lake at Fort Leavenworth



*Canvass boat outfit and crew ready for assembling  
Fort Leavenworth, Kans. Summer 1917*

Canvass boat outfit and crew ready for assembling



*E.R.G.T.C.  
Completing bridge across lake  
at Ft. Leavenworth, Kans.*

Completing bridge across lake



*E.P.O.T.C. Class in demolition with complete equipment. Ft. Leavenworth*

Class in demolition with complete equipment



Effect of two blocks of triton on 1' tree

well as dynamite buildings blocking the field of fire, or preventing our infantry to advance. Our regiment did some of this during the war, but it was mostly detonating the German mines in the roads or across the lines, or defusing them and withdrawing the charges. One block of triton could cut a tree as shown on page 24, and the group is shown with all the equipment used in one of the pictures. The outfit consisted, beside the explosives, of the detonating caps, the wires to the electric detonator, battery powered, also fuses for use without the detonator in case the blow had to be made with matches.

In our studies and practical application of explosives, we were introduced to the mule as a pack animal. Four mules carried the complete demolition outfit, explosives, detonators, and the other paraphernalia used in destruction. Page 26 shows the animals loaded for transport, and the results of some of our tests on I beams and rails to wreck bridges and railroads.

On the 4th of July, 1917, we "laid off" work and study and engaged in games consisting of track and field events; tugs of war, both on foot and mounted; combat, both on some one's shoulders and also on horses. Our company didn't do so well in some of the events, but excelled in the canvas boat building and the wall scaling. I took part in the latter event. We were first in the two events. One of the boys sprained his ankle but stood up long enough to get credit, then collapsed. All 8 engineering companies competed in these events. Ours, the 8th, had two firsts and a few seconds. We all had fun anyway. Pages 27, 28, 29 show most of the contests underway.

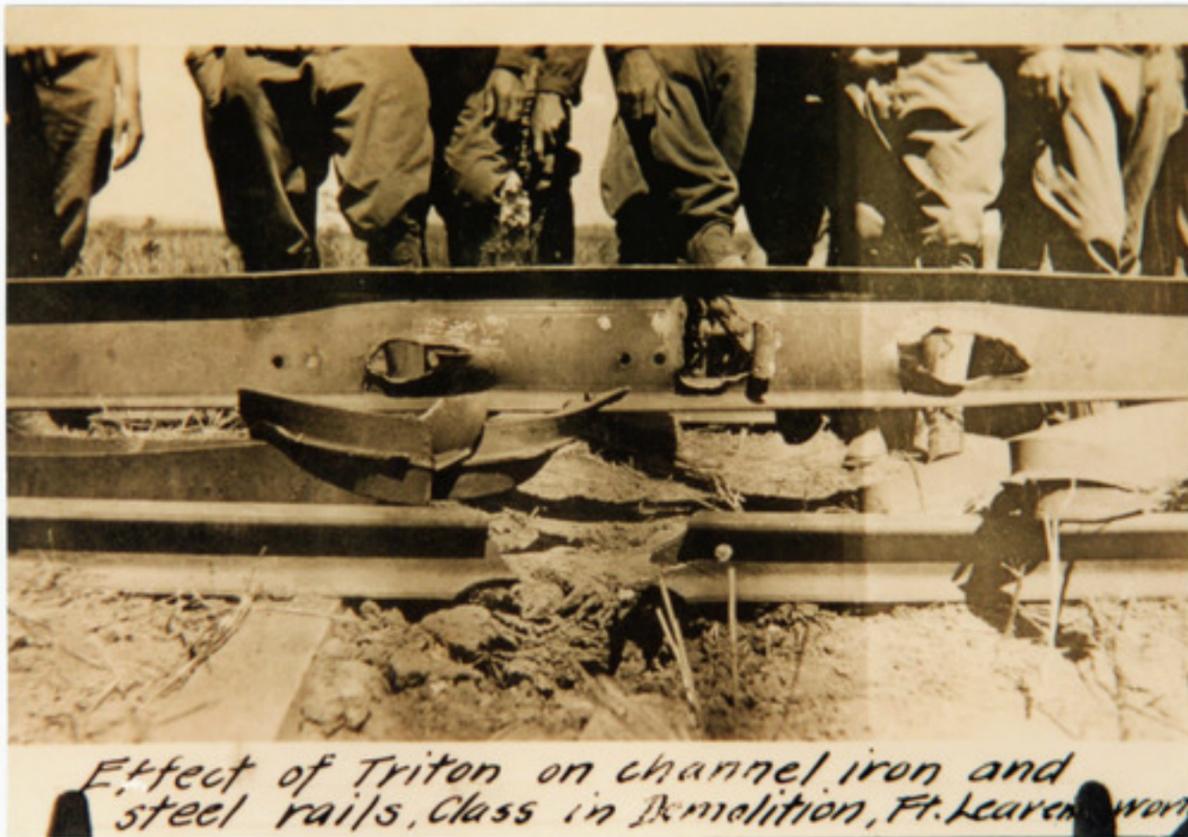
We were also trained in topographic mapping, and spent several afternoons in the field with plane table and pedometer mapping certain areas of the military reservation. We didn't have to do any of this in France as fine contour maps were furnished us by the French Army, and we captured some from the Germans in the latter part of the war as well as obtaining them after the Armistice.

We spent quite a bit of time on the rifle and pistol ranges in order to qualify as marksmen or better. Bayonet practice also came in for its share of attention. They expected us not only as engineers, but also as infantry, to back up attacks by the enemy. This happened only once in my experience in Europe when our battalion backed up the 26th Division in our engagement on the Western Front.

We also went on maneuvers along the Missouri River, where we attacked the heights back of the camp. The entire regiment took part, and we attacked through the woods and up the slopes of the river bank. These exercises took a couple of days. Our "enemy" was a skeleton force with bands on their hats indicating the location of the defenders. We had to endure critiques after the "battle" telling us what we did wrong.



Mules packed with demolition outfit



*Effect of Triton on channel iron and steel rails, Class in Demolition, Ft. Leavenworth*

Effect of triton on channel iron and steel rails



Shoulder mounted combat, 4th of July field day sports



Opposing teams in action at tug of war



Mounted tug of war team in action



Pontoon boat contest, won by my 8th Company



*Wall scaling contest won by 8th Co. E.R.O.T.C. Ft. Leaven-*

Wall scaling contest won by 8th Co. E.R.O.T.C.



*"The last man over" Wall scaling contest at Fort  
Leavenworth, Kansas, 4th of July, 1917*

"The last man over" wall scaling contest



*Field mapping with plane table  
and pedometer.*

Field mapping with plane table and pedometer



*8th Co. E.R.O.T.C. at rifle practice on the 300 yd. line at Ft. Leavenworth, Kans. Summer of 1917*

8th Co. E.R.O.T.C. at rifle practice on the 300 yd. line



The targets from the 200yd. line  
Ft Leavenworth, Kans.

The targets from the 200 yd. firing line



DUMMY FOR BAYONET PRACTICE

The drilling was a considerable part of the morning and evening program. Page 33 shows us in company drill and marching to and from our formations. Saturday morning was usually inspection by the commander of our company, Captain Godfrey. We had to be in tip top shape or be penalized, clean rifles, equipment and correct dress, no sloppy clothes. On one occasion we stood at attention so long in the heat that three men in the company collapsed and fainted. The pictures on pages 34 and 35 show us the formations, inspection and the evening parade just before the sunset gun, when the post flag was lowered. Most of us got a chance to show our ability at command and even were allowed to execute commands of platoons, company and the battalion. I usually had platoon drill, once or twice company, but not until I got with the 23rd Engineers did I exercise command of a battalion. We practised voice commands in the field also.

In bayonet practice, we were taught to go through barbed wire entanglements and over and under obstacles. We would use the bangalore torpedoes to blow up the wire and other obstructions, and then charge the trenches with "bayonets fixed." On one of these exercises, I stumbled over the top of the trench (we were supposed to leap over and stab as we went over) and fell forward dropping my rifle which went butt first in the trench. I fell on the bayonet which pierced my jacket on one side. A little more to the left and I would have "got it" in the chest. It was a close call. That would have ended the war for me for good and maybe my life.

6

Our training ended August 11, 1917, and those of us who didn't have commissions already received ours on the 14th of August. There was no ceremony, as most had left at that time. During the two months at Leavenworth, those of us who could play musical instruments formed a regimental orchestra. I happened to play the mandolin since my college days, so got in on that. We gave a concert a few evenings before we all left the post, which was attended by most of the "brass" and their wives and families. We spent considerable spare time in practice. This group played both popular and classical music. There were about 75 in the orchestra with a conductor and an arranger, all volunteers.

I left camp on the 11th of August, took the Burlington over night train for Galesburg from Kansas City, Mo. I arrived home the next morning and made preparations to go down to Edwards, Illinois, to Essie's folks, as we were to be married on the 15th of August 1917. I had previously bought both of



Column of squads going out for company close order drill



A good line, passing reviewing officer



Manual of Arms, coming to the order



"Port Arms! Inspection Arms!" 8th Co. E.R.O.T.C.  
preparatory to dismissal from drill



*"Dismissed" The end of the drill period, Ft. Leavenworth, Kans. '17*

"Dismissed!" The end of the drill period



*Regimental Parade 10th Provisional Regiment E.R.O.T.C. Ft. Leavenworth, Kans. Aug. 1917 Companies passing in review*

Regimental Parade, 10th Provisional Regiment E.R.O.T.C.  
Companies passing in review

our wedding rings and my uniform in Kansas City. I went to Edwards the next day, and on the 15th we were married in the Universalist church in Peoria, which Essie's aunts attended. Her brother, Tony, went with me to obtain the license at the courthouse. My brothers and Mother came down on the morning train from Galesburg, and we all got that same train into town.

At 10:00 A.M. we were married by Dr. Carpenter, the Universalist minister, and, surprising as it may seem due to the haste and my having come from camp, the church was half full of relatives and friends. Tony and Nell Montgomery, Essie's pal, stood up with us. I was in uniform, as I was commissioned a 1st Lieutenant of Engineers that same day, and inducted into the armed forces. I told Essie that I had met her in uniform, married her in uniform, and she would probably bury me in uniform. No chance now!

After the wedding, we drove around Peoria and then to the wedding breakfast at Block and Kales department store in their dining room, the best place in town at that time. The orchestra played "Poor Butterfly," and all got a kick out of it. We left Peoria on the Rock Island Railroad for Chicago and my two weeks leave for our honeymoon at 1:00 P.M. Art, my brother, jumped off the steps of the parlor car on to the porter's foot, and Essie forgot to throw her bouquet to the crowd at the depot. She left it on the train when we debarked in Chicago. We had reservations at the LaSalle Hotel, and, as it was evening, we changed and went up to their roof garden to celebrate. There we met at least a dozen other newly made officers with their brides, and we all got together for dinner and the dancing. We had a special table for all of us. It was some night!

The next day, we left for Klinger Lake, Michigan, where I had rented a cottage for two weeks. This is told about in part II in the other book, so I won't dwell on it here.

We returned to Chicago to the Kaiserhoff Hotel about September 1st or 2nd, where I received my orders forwarded from home to proceed to Camp Meade, Maryland, near Annapolis, and report to the commanding officer of the 23rd Engineers. We got our reservations and sleeper on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and left the next afternoon. Essie got car sick in the train, and I had to get the porter to make up our berth so she could lie down. To her the trip was miserable.

We landed in Annapolis, Maryland the next day and went to the hotel. There we met the George J. Sleights, Lieutenant and Mrs., and we became pals immediately. George and I had to report to camp, which was about 18 miles west of town on the electric interurban line. We checked in, and in the meantime, Emily and Essie set out to hunt for an apartment. They found one about two blocks from the Naval Academy and right

# Society

## A Wedding in Prospect.

A visitor in the city Sunday and today was Fred C. Stilson, son of Mrs. Mary J. Stilson. Mr. Stilson has been in the training camp for engineers at Ft. Leavenworth, and it is understood has been commissioned a First lieutenant of civil engineers, division B. There is a pleasant social event in connection with his visit. Accompanying him to the city was Miss Essie E. Edwards of Edwards, to whom he will be married in Peoria at ten o'clock Wednesday forenoon. Miss Edwards is a young lady of pleasing personality and charm, and on the occasions of her visits here has impressed all by her womanliness. The wedding in Peoria will be very quiet and simple and will be witnessed by Miss Janet Strehlow, cousin of Miss Edwards, Miss Nellie Montgomery, Anthony Edwards, sister of Miss Edwards, and Arthur Stilson, brother of Mr. Stilson.

After the ceremony the couple will proceed to Chicago where they will spend the remainder of the brief furlough of Lieut. Stilson. The groom-to-be is a Galesburg boy, having grown up here and received his education in the city schools and in the University of the state of Washington, where he took military training. He afterwards took up civil engineering and for two years has been member of a surveying party engaged in making a valuation of the railroads under the direction of the Interstate commerce commission. An indefatigable student, he recently successfully passed the examination that put him under civil service.

His many friends here will congratulate him on winning one so well qualified to be his help-meet as Miss Edwards.

The Lieutenant does not yet know where he will be assigned to duty, but is ready to go wherever he is placed.

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camp at Fort Leavenworth, will be assigned to command units of the Engineers regiments that will form a part of each of the sixteen national army divisions.

Lieutenant Stilson's commission is that of construction engineer, and he has not yet been notified of the point to which he will be assigned. It is possible that the construction division may be kept busy in this country on government military works for a while.

Lieutenant Stilson is the son of Mrs. Mary J. Stilson of North Broad street.

Another Knox county boy to get an appointment as First Lieutenant is George P. Weber of Knoxville, who also comes in for warm congratulations from his friends.

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across from St. John's College campus, a second floor flat with two bedrooms, kitchen and living room. The girls decided to combine housekeeping, and so they rented it, and it became our temporary home for the time we were at Camp Meade. "Em" and "Es," as they became called, bought and stocked food in the pantry, and we were permitted to buy from the Naval Academy commissary at greatly reduced prices. The pictures on page 38 show us in front and along side the apartment. George and Em had been married the same time we were.

During our stay in Annapolis, we used to come in for the weekends, and sometimes took trips either to Washington, D.C. or Baltimore, Md. In the former place we saw the House in session at the Capitol building, and in the latter attended the Zigfield follies in one of their theaters. In Washington, one night, we attended a musical comedy in one of the big theaters and saw President and Mrs. Wilson in their box. The orchestra played the national anthem and "Hail to the Chief," and we all stood at attention and saluted. It was quite a thrill. We also saw much of these two cities, including the White House and the State, War, and Navy buildings.

I had never received my pay for my training camp, \$300, so I had to go there and wrangle for it. Finally, about 3 P.M., I got my order on the Treasury Department and hustled over to their building. They had just closed, so I ran to a bank across the street with a Major in the same fix. We got to the bank just as they were closing. They were not going to let us in, but finally the manager did and, after considerable wrangling, he cashed our warrants on the Treasury. We were broke, as I hadn't collected either my first month's salary or my travel pay from Kansas City to Annapolis. So we had money again, but not for long.

While in this apartment house, Essie had all her clothes and some of her shoes and jewelry stolen. We entered our front door as the thief, a colored girl, left via the transom in the closet. There were Naval officers and their wives living there, and this negro girl worked as a maid for the couple on the upstairs floor above us. The lady upstairs suspected the girl, as she was wearing a pair of Essie's clocked stockings, and she got her to come to the door as Essie came up the stairs. The girl knew she was caught and ran back into the apartment, jumped into the dumb waiter and rode it down to the first floor, where she jumped on the outside and started running down the street towards town. Meanwhile, the Naval officer's wife called the police, and we, or Essie and Em and the rest, started down the street chasing the girl. The police and some spectators joined in, and it became a Mac Sennett comedy. They later found that she was one of a gang of thieves that were



"Ess" and Fred



"Em" and George

assembling jewelry, clothes and money to go to New York City. The officers took the girls to the shanty on the outskirts of town, and in the garret were all the stolen clothes and valuables belonging to a dozen different people. Essie refused to accept the return of any of the things as the place was filthy, so she had to step out and buy all new clothes and underthings, as well as stockings. She made an affidavit on the losses which was used at the trial. She was back in Illinois when that came off, and I was overseas.

7

Some weekends George and I had to be on duty at camp, and so the girls came out either on Saturday or Sunday and had dinner with us in the officer's mess. The Lieutenants ate in one mess, the Captains in another and the field officers, Majors or above, in a special one. We all had to contribute to the mess fund which was handled by one of the officers of each mess. I was always being billed for my part, sometimes twice, and had a time straightening it out.

Our first 15 days at the camp were spent in the boundary survey of the entire cantonment. Our bunch, consisting of all officers, worked as a large field party as no enlisted men had arrived to begin to organize the battalion. So they put us to work as surveyors. We changed jobs each day on the party. One day I would be running transit, the next I would work as a chainman. In the latter guise, I was crossing a stone wall one afternoon into a pasture which contained a bunch of sheep. Some one yelled at me, and I turned around just in time to see the old ram heading for me full steam. I ran and dove over the wall to safety to the merriment of the whole crew. We had to run a traverse around this field to get the distance across it.

About September 15th, the men started to arrive from other camps. The 23rd was a specialist regiment for the building and maintenance of roads and highways. They advertised for men of experience from all over the United States, and they began to enlist according to their specialty, whether it was roads, mining, machinery or just surveying. They were all taken whether they knew anything about the military or not. It was up to the 90 day wonders (us) to organize them into squads, platoons, companies, etc., and teach them the military end of it. After we got overseas, we junked most of the military except Sunday inspection.

We had 126 men arrive from Camp Devens, Mass., in the third week in September, then we broke off boundary surveys and started to make soldiers out of the new arrivals. We had to



The "four of us." Officer's quarters, Camp Meade, Md.



Staff officers and Company B, 23rd Engineers

obtain quarters in the barracks, make mess arrangements, organize the men into squads, platoons, etc., and appoint temporary non-commissioned officers. However, we were lucky to have quite a few sergeants and some corporals come to us, and one or two were from the regular establishment, for which we were thankful. Most of our mornings from 7 A.M. till noon mess were spent on the drill field teaching all the things that we were taught in officers training camp.

The first groups of men to come in were assigned to Companies A, C, and D of the 23rd Engineers. The men we had received from Camp Devens, Mass., formerly from the 26th Engineers, and also some men from other camps, were used to form Company "B," to which I was made executive officer next to the Captain, whose name was Holland. He, Captain Holland, was later removed and given another assignment. In fact, before we left for France, I was the only officer left with Company "B" and was to remain so during the length of the war. On page 42 are shown most of the original officers and men in the company during October 1917. However, most of the officers and some of the men were transferred to other companies and also to make a cadre for the 27th and 28th Engineers, who were also forming in this camp. One regiment was a mining outfit, the other a quarry outfit to get out rock.

We went to work with the men and got them into shape to make a fairly well drilled unit. All morning from 7 A.M. until mess call at 12 noon, we drilled from the school of the soldier, the squad, the platoon (two sections of two squads each) and the company. My job was drillmaster most of the time. I also had charge of the office and headquarters group consisting of the First Sergeant, a line sergeant, office clerk and stenographer, as well as a corporal in charge of sick call for any man that needed that attention, and there were plenty of them too.

We completed our drills and formations in October 1917, and then united with the rest of the battalion for field maneuvers and battalion drill. Once I was the only senior officer that afternoon, and the other lieutenants from "A" and "C" Companies wanted me to conduct the drill. This called for an officer of the rank of Major or senior Captain. No Captains were present, and the Major was with the Colonel on organization work, so I was elected. I worked all the afternoon and didn't make any mistakes. The entire outfit was with me so that helped.

The Colonel of the regiment offered \$100 prize money to the best drilled company once when Newton D. Baker, the Secretary of War, was present on an inspection tour. We were well drilled, but I used one command in the drilling of the company, using platoons not given in the Manual for Infantry Drill, and



Company "B", 23rd Engineers, October 1917



Company "B", 23rd Engineers on competitive drill  
before Secretary of War Baker

and we lost first place on that account. Was my face red, but later that same maneuver was added to the manual due to the size of the companies of 250 men each, which used to be the size of a Civil War Battalion. So I added a new command. We lost the \$100, but I got in the new drill manual anyway. I was forgiven by the men! Anyway we tried.

We had to take turns in the regiment and battalion as officer of the day, and of the guard. We used the band in the latter, and once I had the job with a detachment of Company "B". We had a green sergeant in charge of the guard, and he misinterpreted the command and brought the guard detachment around at right angles to the band, which was already in position. They should have been parallel and to the right of the band. This was wrong, and the adjutant, a regular army Major, had to straighten them out. I was dumbfounded, as I was in command of the guard and gave the orders which went wrong. I was publicly reprimanded by the Major at officer's call that evening. It hurt, and, afterwards, I was careful to properly instruct the Sergeant of the Guard.

In fact guard mount almost took the place of dress parade. Our drill ground wouldn't allow enough room to maneuver two battalions let alone one. The full regiment consisted of 4 Engineer battalions of 3 companies each, 5 wagon companies, 10 trench companies, a regimental headquarters company and the Medical Corps attached to us. The total number of men was about 6950 according to the tables of organization.

8

About the middle of November, 1917, we packed up our gear and made a two day march to the firing ranges of the Naval Academy at Annapolis, Md. The march down was made in cold weather, and we slept out all night in a pasture. I unrolled my bed roll under the ration wagon, which carried the food and such supplies as we needed for the march. We built fires and huddled around them most of the night. Some men went down into a nearby ravine and rolled up in their blankets under piles of fallen leaves. Even in my bed roll, I was cold under the ration wagon. We ate a hasty breakfast and landed in Annapolis that afternoon. The distance was about 25 miles. It was our first march under full packs with rifle and bayonet.

At the camp, after the Navy barged us across Chesapeake Bay, we were housed in tents, but the nights were cold. We were messed by the Navy and the food was fair. It was fine for me, as I could cross over to the Naval Academy every evening and spend the night with Essie in our apartment. The other officers of the company didn't have their wives with



Annapolis. Md. Co "B" 23rd Engrs in  
at rifle range U.S.N.A.

Co. "B", 23rd Engineers in camp at rifle range



Annapolis. Md. Co B 23rd Engrs - company

The company street, Co. "B" 23rd Engineers



Annapolis Md - Co "B" 23rd Engrs. at  
mess rifle range - U.S.N.A.

Co. "B", 23rd Engineers at mess



Co. "B" 23rd Engineers washing mess kits



Annapolis - Md. - Co. "B" 23rd Engrs on the

Co. "B" 23rd Engineers on the 500 yard range U.S.N.A.,



Annapolis - Md. - Co. "B" 23rd Engrs on  
25-44 Pistol range U.S.N.A.

Co. "B" 23rd Engineers on 25 yard pistol range



Annapolis - Md. Co "B" 23rd Engrs.  
on the 200 + 500 yd ranges U.S.N.A.

200 - 500 yard range



Annapolis - Md. Co "B" 23rd Engrs. shooting  
at 1000 yds. rifle range U.S.N.A.

1,000 yard range

them, or they were unmarried. I had to cross on the 7 A.M. Naval ferry to the firing range, spend the day there and then return with the Navy personnel to Annapolis. As we lived only 2 blocks from the Academy grounds, I didn't have far to walk to reach home.

The firing courses covered rifles and pistols. All the non-coms and officers were armed with the latter, the 45 Colt automatic; the men with the Springfield 30-30 rifle. The ranges for rifle practice were 200, 300, 400, 600 and 1,000 yards; for the pistols, 25 and 50 yards. We all took the training anyway. The Naval instructors were Navy experts. We messed with the men for breakfast and lunch. At night, I was usually home, although I spent a night or two in camp. The training lasted about 10 days. Then we packed up and marched back to Camp Meade again.

A portion of the Company was dispatched to Glenburnie, Md., to construct a permanent Engineer training camp, and the rest of us were transferred to Laurel, Md., where we pitched tents, built barracks, mess halls, etc., at the race track. The rest of the 1st Battalion joined us there, and we stayed there over the holidays training and working. I was made the Commander of the Guard, and, as there was considerable "rum running" into camp, it was up to us to stop it, as no liquor was to be sold within five miles of a military camp. I had a sergeant and a couple of Corporals assigned with me. One night we caught a young negro with a suit case of whiskey in half pints. We took him to the guard house and questioned him. He blurted out the name and address of his supplier, and we went into the town of Laurel and got the guy. However, we had no visible evidence against him, so he was set free. He was white.

I attended Masonic lodge in Laurel with some 125 of our men who were Masons, and I am glad I did. They got me out of several bad situations later on when overseas. A Mason is supposed to help his brother when in trouble. Speaking of Masons, I had taken the three degrees in Masonry in Galesburg, Ill., during one Fall and the next Spring vacation from the Interstate Commerce job, so I was a Blue Lodge Mason, and could attend lodges anywhere in the world. I attended Army lodges in France and also French lodges. The experience was interesting and good for me. In Paris, I witnessed a third degree given to some 124 candidates in our Army, and also saw how the French conducted their lodges. The Germans also were Masons, but I never had a chance there after the Armistice, although I met Germans later who were Masons.



Co. "B" 23rd Engineers on the march from Annapolis  
to Camp Meade, Md.



Ten minute rest



Camp at Glenburnie, Md. Constructed by Co. "B"  
23rd Engineers



The camp at Laurel, Md., before departing for Hoboken  
January 1918

At Christmas time, I took Essie back to Edwards to her folks, as I knew we would leave in a few weeks for France. It was supposed to be a secret. We Lieutenants lived up to it and didn't even tell our wives. However, some of the other wives of the higher officers knew about it and were at the train when we left Laurel for Hoboken to embark for France.

I obtained a seven days leave to take Essie home. Travel was heavy, and we practically had to stand up part way to Pittsburgh before we finally could get a reservation in the chair car. We were up almost all night. We got into Chicago the next morning and caught the Rock Island for Peoria, arrived there and went out to Edwards on the Burlington. We spent Christmas with the folks, and, right afterwards we left again for Chicago. We got there and went out to the Great Lakes Naval Training Station where Essie's brother, Tony, was in training. We saw him, and, while there, Essie slipped and sprained her ankle. I took her to the Naval dispensary, and the Doc taped it up. We had to go back to the hotel in Chicago, and the next day I had to leave her in the care of a porter, she in a wheel chair, while I raced to the other depot, two blocks away, to get my train back to camp in Maryland. It was a dreary and tearful parting. I didn't know for several months how she got home, but she did. On the train back, I had the last seat in the last car at the back of the train. The conductor sat with me occasionally and consoled me. We talked of religion. He was a bible student. It helped me recover my composure.

9

On my return to camp, I was reassigned back to my old company. There were a new bunch of officers now from the 2nd officers training camp. A new Captain, Baker, was in command of Company "B". The rest of the officers were new Lieutenants, Hampton, Felt, Carpenter and Cooper, the latter thoroughly disliked by the men. We were assigned a platoon of 54 men each, making 5 of them. I had the 1st platoon. I usually had to do the military honors. On our final review before departure, I gave a wrong command, and all the others knew it and did the opposite, but Cooper's platoon. (He had no use for me.) This was soon straightened out, but this time I wasn't given a tongue lashing like in Camp Meade. We continued our work and training, and, on the 18th of January, 1918, we entrained for Hoboken and to our transport, which was to carry us to France.

Each of the Lieutenants had a car full of men, and we had to post guards at each end of the car with orders to let no one off enroute to New York. We went through Baltimore, Philadelphia, up New Jersey to Hoboken, an all night trip, three

men to two seats and approximately 65 men in a car. There were several baggage cars with our equipment in them, and each man carried his own pack, mess kit, rifle, cartridge belt and bayonet. We detrained the next morning and were fed on the dock. We marched aboard the "Huron", the old German liner, "Frederick der Grosse", which had been seized by the Government when we declared war in April of 1917.

We were on the "Huron" for three days before she got orders to join a convoy of four ships leaving New York for France. We could see the skyline, but no one was allowed to go over except one or two officers who got our dollars changed to francs. The convoy consisted of several troop ships and a cruiser as an escort. We pulled out January 21st and set sail for Europe. The ship shown in the picture on page 53 was the S.S. Malory of the United Fruit Line. She carried cargo as well as troops. There were 4,000 men on our ship alone. Their bunks were in tiers of three between decks, and the men packed in like rats in a cage. There were a lot of seasick men too.

On the trip over, I had to serve as officer of the day a couple of times and make the rounds every so often. One night I found a bunch of the men and some of the sailors in a crap game down in the hold near the stern of the ship. I asked them what they were doing, and they said, "Oh, we got a little game going." It was against orders, but I turned my back on them and just said, "Well, have fun," and went on my way inspecting where it was really necessary.

Some of our men were posted along the sides of the ship as look outs for German submarines. I had to check on them to see that they were on the job. They were! My last night on duty, we went through a heavy storm crossing the Bay of Biscay between Spain and France. We were trying to avoid submarines, so went out of the usual track for ships. Most of that night I spent on the bridge with the ship's executive officer. We pitched up and down and rolled as the waves lashed over the lower deck. Ropes were strung between the forward part of the ship, so the men could get to their station at the six inch guns mounted there, as well as the forward look out station at the mast head. If one was washed overboard, he was lost.

We also had lifeboat drill twice a day, as well as life rafts. We, that is, my platoon, were assigned to a string of life rafts on the upper deck. If torpedoed, we got the rafts overboard. As there were eight men assigned to a raft, it took at least six rafts to a platoon. You jumped into the water and clung to the life raft until picked up by destroyers.

Several funny incidents happened on the trip over. The men got their mess kits filled at the ship's galley, and then came on deck to have chow. Sometimes the ship pitched so that they slipped and slid across the deck. In one case, one of the Corporals sat right down in his mess kit, food and all,



Looking across the Hudson to New York City from Hoboken



The S.S. Malory

and slid clear across the deck into the rail. Another time, during a storm, some one had opened a porthole for air down below and a wave hit the side of the ship and the water poured in on the men. A certain Corporal thought the ship was sinking and yelled, "Corporals first!", and headed for the porthole, got stuck in it, and was thoroughly drenched. They had to pull him out feet first. He never got over being kidded about it the entire war. He was known as "Porthole Manning!"

The officers were in staterooms, four to a stateroom in four bunks. I had an upper bunk as usual. You had to strap yourself in and brace yourself against the motion of the ship. There were two wash racks with basins in the room we were in, and the night of the big storm, the ship pitched so that the racks broke loose; the trunks under the bunks slid back and forth and a general chaotic condition ensued besides sea water coming in through the gangway. We didn't get much sleep that night.

A day or so still out from port, we were met by ten or eleven destroyers who surrounded us and darted back and forth to catch any lurking subs. We had one scare on the way over. One night one of the lookouts thought he saw a periscope a thousand yards or so away and headed for us. The alarm was sounded. All took their stations, and the two six inch guns, one fore, one aft on our ship, started firing. It proved to be a false alarm, but it gave us cold chills to think of being dumped in the Atlantic Ocean in the middle of January.

We were escorted into the harbor of Brest, France, and dropped anchor as there were no quays to accommodate such a large ship. This was February 3, 1918. We disembarked the next day. We were lightered ashore by barges together with our baggage. Our Company was the color company, and we had the battalion flag. It was my responsibility to see that it got ashore. It was cased and racked up underneath the upper deck. I forgot it, and was dressed down by the Major, and was sent back to the ship with a detail to check on all baggage and equipment. The men were housed in warehouses along the shore and railroad. The officers, except those on duty, went to the hotels or the Y.M.C.A. quarters. Some of us got hotel rooms. I tried to get a bath. I hadn't had one since I left the States. I went to the "Y", and they had a shower of sorts, no hot water, so I took it cold and got into a clean suit of underwear that I carried in my kit bag.

I had stood the entire trip without getting seasick. The officers messed in the regular ship's dining room, so maybe that was the reason. After we dropped anchor, I went into the ship's "head". The smell made me deathly sick, and I threw up all over the place. It took calm water to do that to me.



Pvt. Wehrman  
Bugler Jackson  
S. S. Huron Jan 1

Members of Co. "B" on board the U.S.S. Huron



1st Bn. - Cos A, B, Co. Wagon 1 and 2 and Truck 1 and 2 Landed Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>  
Town and Harbor of Brest, France - Feb. 1918

Town and harbor of Brest, France

In our hotel rooms, we cleaned up and asked the management where we could find a restaurant. One of the officers spoke excellent French. We were directed down the street, where we found the place and had an excellent dinner; nine courses, including soup, entree (fish), fowl (chicken) etc., with the appropriate wines, all for about five or six francs, about a dollar in our money. We were tired, so we went back to the hotel and got into bed.

I slept soundly and was awakened by a clomp-clomp outside the window. I got up, (we were on the third floor) and looked out the window. All the women were on their way to work wearing the wooden shoes which made the noise on the cobblestone street. They were all dressed in black. Their men were either dead or away at the war that we had come over to help them with. It was rather a sobering sight to me. I learned afterwards that these women and old men manned the factories, the port and other industries in the city. We had breakfast and returned to the docks and the train that was to take us down to St. Nazaire, France, which was the base port assigned the U.S. by the French.

Apparently some one of our group misunderstood the time of departure from Brest, and we landed at the railroad yards to find our train loaded and waiting for the few of us who were missing. We were "bawled out" by the Major, who wanted to know, "Where the hell we were!", and for delaying their departure. We climbed aboard the train and steamed out of the yards.

The French troop trains consisted of box cars, really small, which would hold 40 men each or 8 horses, called the "40 and 8", or "40 hommes et 8 chevaux." These became celebrated after the war as, when the American Legion was formed, their fun organization was called the "40 & 8." The enlisted personnel were housed in these cars and the officers in a 3rd class carriage which consisted of compartments which contained 8 men each and were entered from the outside. Eight Lieutenants were in one of these compartments. They had wooden benches and shelves above for baggage. The eight seats were separated by arms, so that one couldn't lie down, but had to sit up. I ended up getting into the upper baggage shelf that night, and used my musette bag as a pillow. It was so narrow, I had to lie on my side and brace myself against the motion of the train.

We left Brest around noon, and as the French trains went from station to station on orders for clearance, we didn't go very fast. It took us that afternoon and all night to travel to St. Nazaire where we were to be stationed. I don't think the distance was much over 150 miles.

Towards evening, we stopped at a small French town, and the men filed off to stretch their legs. Across from the depot was a French grog shop selling wine, beer and hard liquor. Some of the guys from our company went over and heisted a keg of cognac and cask of wine (vin rouge), which they brought back to the train. Every one, oh! not all, but most of them, emptied their canteens and filled them with a mixture of water, wine and cognac brandy. Most of the outfit became pretty well lit before the night was over. I was given a swig or two by one of the officers who got in on the deal. As the liquor was stolen, we of Company "B" were blamed later on as thieves and were pestered by the French until we finally took up a collection and paid the bill.

The next morning, we pulled into St. Nazaire about 7 A.M. The Battalion unloaded, and a more sorry bunch of soldiers you never saw. Most of the men staggered around and looked sloppy and sleepless, tired more than drunk. We formed up beside the tracks and marched through the town to the amusement of the French and other American troops stationed there. One truck came by with a bunch of negroes in it from a stevedore battalion. One leaned out and hollered at us, "When you all get out to camp, they'll take them guns away from you and give you a kick." We marched to Camp No. 1 and were assigned barracks, the wooden Belgian with oiled paper windows, dirt floors etc. We were too down and out to look very smart either. Somehow we got breakfast, and then went to work organizing our living quarters. They had to construct double tier bunks to hold four men. The bunks had slatted bottoms, and one filled a sack with straw, put it on the bunk, and then made a bed with his blankets. The Belgian barracks were already built. One was used for a kitchen and mess hall, the rest for sleeping quarters. As time went on, we gradually improved the situation with better material and equipment. On page 58 is shown a bungalow built by German prisoners under the supervision of Company "B".

The barracks consisted of a frame work covered with tarpaper. They were not very warm, and usually had one Sibly stove in the center of the building. As an officer, I was assigned a metal cot and space in the officer's barracks. All of us had to sleep in this one building. We reported to the Colonel of the Engineers (railway). Their commander at the time was Colonel Charles G. Dawes, who later became Vice President under Coolidge in his second term, he (Dawes) of the celebrated underslung pipe.

Shortly after we had arrived in St. Nazaire, Battalion Headquarters, Companies "A" and "C" were ordered to the front which was being formed under the direction of the French. They went to Toul, France, and then on up in the vicinity of Rauger, aphonti(?) Mont Sec, which was held by the Germans.



Bungalow built by German prisoners of war



Wagoneer Fred R. Belknap standing in front of a Belgian barrack

Company "B" was split into three detachments. The first detachment, with headquarters under Captain Baker and myself, remained at St. Nazaire under the direction of Major Lee of the Army Roads Service. The second detachment, under the command of Lieutenants Felt and Carpenter, were sent to Bordeaux, France, to help in the construction of wharves, railroad yards and roads in that area for the use of the incoming American troops. The third detachment, under Lieutenants Hampton and Cooper, were sent to Nevers, France, in the advanced section, where they served under various units in road, light railway and air field construction.

Our detachment changed location, got better quarters as we remained under the direct command of the 17th Engineers. However, detachments were sent to Montoire (on railroad work), to Saveney (on construction of a dam for the base hospital's water supply there), to Camp No. 3 to help in building a large motor supply and repair base, and the rest remained under Captain Baker at Headquarters near Camp No. 1. Some were attached as guards to the Provost Marshal's office in St Nazaire. I was detached and assigned to the Depot Engineer, a Captain I knew in training camp, as his assistant with a small detachment of "B" men to check on the unloading of ships at the quays in the inner harbor. We had to take the ship's manifests or lading bills and find out how much material was aboard for light railways (60 centimeter gauge) and roads. This included all machinery, locomotives, trackage etc., used by the regiments at the front. Two men were assigned to each vessel checking the material as it was unloaded, and after we had consolidated our data, I telegraphed to a General Jadwin, who commanded the advanced section S.O.S. (Services of Supply). We lived close to town in order to do this work. This went on 7 days a week. The Captain of Company "B" tried to get me to take Sunday morning inspection, the only military assembly we had, but I had to refuse, being on detached service. He never forgave me for that, and long afterwards, when I saw him in San Francisco in 1921, he twitted me about it. I apologized for it, but, at that time, I was loaded with work.

On the pier, where I had my office, I was often visited by the V.I.P.'s of the military or naval establishment. There I met Franklin D. Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and later President), and several other Admirals and Generals who came around on inspection. We, the Captain and I, used to take his Cadillac and drive to Nantes up the Loire River, some 40 kilometers away, to have dinner and a bottle of wine at the hotel there. I ate my first mess of snails. They were baked in cracker crumbs and tasted something like shrimp. It was the easiest life I had over there.

In the officer's barracks, we used to sit around the Sibly stove and discuss the war, and how it should be won. The Lieutenants were usually the loudest. Once in a while, Col. Dawes would chime in with a dry remark and squelch us. He was a darn good commanding officer, and, later, when he became Vice President in Coolidge's administration, I guess he did a good job. He always had that upside down pipe in his mouth. Later he was promoted to Brigadier General and assigned to Paris as the U.S. purchasing agent for the Armed Forces.

One of his officers became engaged to a French woman, and, after a special dispensation, they were married in a formal military wedding in the local cathedral, a very pretty ceremony. Most of the officers who knew him attended. I do not know what happened to him afterwards. Most of the officers and some of the men, I never saw again during my tour of duty in France.

11

There was a dirigible base at St. Nazaire, and these large cigar shaped balloons used to fly out over the outer harbor and the ocean to try and spot German submarines as the cargo ships came in. They would relay the messages to the destroyers stationed there.

In going out to camp, I used to pass hundreds of crates of supplies along the bluff of the outer harbor. These crates housed motor cars, machinery and other supplies destined for the allied armies, but, at the time I saw them, the crates were broken open, parts stolen, and some of the machinery just rusting into uselessness; the price of over supplying the Army by the purchasing departments in the United States. We used to crab about it in the barracks, but it didn't do any good.

St. Nazaire consisted of an outer harbor and an inner harbor, which was reached through locks, where the ships were warped in and raised to a level some 20' or 25' higher. There they were towed to the quays and placed along side for unloading. The immense cranes were there on their trucks, and, next to them, the railway sidings and yards. The cranes unloaded the ship's holds and transferred their loads directly to the flat and gondola cars on the sidings. The trains were then made up and the material shipped out to the advanced section of the Services of Supply. We had to check on all material of a certain nature unloaded at this time. Negro Battalions of stevedores handled the unloading. There were usually ten to twelve ships being unloaded at one time. There were others waiting at anchor in the outer harbor. We had a time keeping up with the traffic.

The inner harbor was the mouth of the Loire River coming down from Nantes, 25 miles up the line. Along this stream



Squad of Co. "B" on Provost duty



American dirigible, U.S. Navy, St. Nazaire

were quite a few chateaux of the more wealthy citizens. I had the opportunity of working with and billeting with one of them, who was a Lieutenant of the French Engineers stationed at St. Nazaire. He had served two years at the front, was wounded, and returned here to supervise the rail terminal. I spent many an evening with him and his family trying to learn French, and he, English from our English-French and French-English grammars. We used to go out in the railroad yards and around the docks Sundays, and he would explain in French and I in English what each term meant for the equipment. He had a lovely wife and a fine young son. They owned one of the chateaux along the river, and he asked me, before I left there for the front, to visit them on my first "permission" (leave). I never got to do it. Their evening dinners were wonderful in comparison to the officer's mess in camp.

Company "B" men were scattered between Camps No. 1, 2 and 3, as well as on detached service elsewhere in the vicinity. Camp No. 1, the large cantonment, was the assembly point for arriving troops, as well as the headquarters of the 17th Engineers (Railroad). I watched regiments come and go here. I remember in particular the 15th New York Infantry from New York City. They were a National Guard Regiment of colored troops. Some of the officers were white, but most black. They were a well drilled outfit, and I saw them pass in review one afternoon on the camp parade ground just before they left for the front. They were a smart outfit, and executed the maneuver with precision and snap. It was an inspiring sight.

We built the parking areas and roads into Camp No. 2, which was the Motor Transport Corps headquarters. We used both steam (French) and gas road rollers for compacting the pavement. In France most of the roads were waterbound macadam, a layer of 8" to 12" of telford (large rock) on this crushed rock and finally the screenings, or fine rock and dust, which was watered and rolled to compact it into a firm surface. Tank trucks were used in watering down the rock, which was a limestone and bound together like cement. However, up at the front, we found that it only took a few days for the roads to be pocked and knocked out, and it took constant maintenance to keep them usable. Our men operated the machinery and supervised the construction of these camps.

Camp No. 3 became our final resting place, as long as we were in St. Nazaire. Captain Baker commanded the detachment, and I was on detached duty with a few of the men in town most of the time. By March, most of the Battalion was gone and most of Company "B". The detachments were so divided up that a certain number of technical men, mechanics, machine and truck operators, powder men (explosive experts), engine men (steam), and others, office men and draftsmen, were assigned to each



*10 Ton Austin Roller Camp No 2. St N. aire*

10 ton Austin roller



Steam tractor

group, so they could tackle anything they were asked to do by the organizations they were attached to.

While at Camp No. 3, we had it pretty good for Engineer troops; good quarters, good mess, and bathing facilities. We were not so fortunate in some other assignments. French women did the laundry for a couple of francs a bundle. The heavy work was done by either civilian labor or by German prisoners. The latter were very cooperative. We had our own barber, tailor and shoe man to keep us up on our appearance. They were paid in addition to their army pay, so they liked their jobs. Each officer had a "stricker", or one of the men that looked after their beds and clothes. They were also paid extra by the officer in question. That was all they had to do, so they had time to do things for themselves. My particular "valet" later became my side car driver after my motorcycle accident up at the front, and later a sergeant staying in the regular army.

While in St. Nazaire one weekend, my French Lieutenant friend invited me to go to his cousin's beach home on the Atlantic ocean in a resort town further up the line from us. We travelled by train to this place one morning (a Sunday), stayed all day with the two women at their home, had a wonderful dinner, and came home that night. Most of the houses were of brick or stone and were right on the beach. It was still too cold to go in, but I enjoyed the trip as I could get away from Army life for a day or so. The French resort towns are different from ours. All the houses are two or three storied and join each other, so it is one continuous line of buildings. The beach was a beautiful stretch of sand, and there were bath houses along the way to change in. I found this to be true along the Mediterranean Sea, as well as the South Atlantic near Spain. There were amusements there too, as well as kiosks (stands) for the sale of refreshments.

In the first part of March 1918, the second detachment of Company "B", under Lieutenants Felt and Carpenter, entrained for Bordeaux, France, on the South Atlantic coast. This port was know as Base Section No. 2, and was on the Gironde River near the outlet into the Atlantic Ocean. Most of the road work, some dock construction and railroad work was turned over to this detachment. The river was wide, and all ocean going ships came in here to unload troops and supplies. The port lacked accommodations for the heavy traffic forced upon it, so we had to enlarge it. Most of the work, or labor force, was comprised of people from French Indo-China, or what is now the Viet Nams, north and south, Cambodia and Laos, former French colonies.

This port was used mostly for the landing of troops and their equipment, as also was the Port of Brest, where we landed first. Many an American division came through here,



French Washerwomen from  
American Troop



Private Joe Sarthau and  
his French Friend

French washerwomen



Noon Mess Major Transport Camp #2 St. Nazaire

Noon mess, Motor Camp No. 2



*1000 Gal Mack Sprinkler in Action - 23rd May*

1,000 gallon Mack Sprinkler in action



*General view Camp #3 St. Nazaire France.*

General view of Camp No. 3, St. Nazaire, France



Fun in the barracks, Co. "B" Camp No. 3



Interior of barracks before Sunday inspection



Company barber, Private H.H. Haynes in his shop



Saddler Griot and Private O'Brien in their shoe shop



First Sergeant Rosenthal and the Company Clerk, Sergeant Allen, at work in the office



Company tailor, Private Roy L. Thompson in his shop



Capt. Shirley Baker  
Commanding Co. "B"



Lt. F.C. Stilson



Lt. Wright L. Felt.  
C.O. 2nd Det.



Corp. Thomas and sidecar



Outdoor mess



1 day's mail from the "States"



Bordeaux, unloading crushed rock for roads

thence on up across France to the front. Our engineers practically rebuilt the French railways to carry the heavy American locomotives and boxcars, as we had to have our own transport. The length of our locomotives and boxcars required the reconstruction of sidings, strengthening of bridges and culverts to enable the larger equipment to negotiate the switches, which, at some places, were too short and could cause a derailment. At St. Nazaire, for instance, we built an entire new railroad yard at Montoire, between St. Nazaire and Nantes. It was music to our ears to hear the deep throated whistle of the big American locomotives that could pull from 50 to 100 cars at a time, where the small French equipment could only pull about 20 in a train. The engines and cars were unloaded from the ships by the giant cranes, which could lift 150 tons at one setting. They would hoist them off the ship's decks and drop them right on the rails along side of the quay. I used to watch them do it, and it was quite a sight. I saw one of these first long trains, loaded with equipment of war, pull out of St. Nazaire during the Winter of 1917-18.

In April of 1918, I had a short leave to visit Bordeaux and vicinity. There was a lull in our work, and so two different detachments were given leave to visit the French Alps, where we had a leave area, and I went to Paris, thence to Bordeaux. At the time I was there in Bordeaux, all the construction was done, and our people had left to rejoin the Battalion at the front in the Toul sector.

The pictures on pages 73 to 76 are mostly of Bordeaux and vicinity. I crossed the "Pont Napoleon" bridge while there. The pictures of the city and its environs were taken by the photographer who was with the 2nd Detachment. I saw most of this on my trip, as I stayed all night at a hotel on the square where the large monument is shown.

Our people were quartered at San Sulpice, a suburb of Bordeaux, and our group is shown in the pictures on pages 78-79.

On the first of May, 1918, Detachments 1 and 2 were ordered to proceed to the front and rejoin the rest of the First Battalion, which was stationed in the Toul Sector at Mene-La-Tour, which was north of Toul, France. We were to be attached to the 26th Division, which held the lines in front of Mont Sec occupied by the Germans.

We travelled to the front in the usual box cars and third class carriages. We rejoined the 2nd Detachment at Nevers with the 3rd already there. We were equipped with gas masks, steel helmets and the rest of our paraphernalia at Greves, the advanced section base of supply. We detrained there, and were



"Pont Napoleon" across the Girond to Bordeaux



Monument to the Girondes - Bordeaux



Cathedral - Bordeaux



*"Street Scene" - Bordeaux-France*

"Street scene" - Bordeaux



*Push Cart Tactics in Bordeaux*

Push cart tactics in Bordeaux



*Old City Gate, Bordeaux*

Old city gate - Bordeaux



Medieval city gate - Bordeaux



Y.M.C.A. for the American Expeditionary Force, Bordeaux



French Indo-Chinese troops, Bordeaux



German prisoners of war, Bordeaux



*Sunday Inspection, 2nd Detach.*

Sunday inspection, 2nd Detachment - San Sulpice



Detachment of Co "B" ready for "road work"



Church, 800 years old - San Sulpice.



Old church near San Sulpice



Village of San Sulpice. Not barbed wire entanglements but a vineyard.



Town "somewhere in France" snapped from train enroute  
to Toul



Rail head - Toul Sector

instructed in the use of the gas mask by some of the personnel stationed there for that purpose. We lived on field rations most of the trip until we got to the front. It took about 3 days and wasn't an easy ride. We did get hot coffee as we carried a field kitchen with us, and, when the train stopped, we lined up with our aluminum cups to get a fill or a refill as the case might be. I had read about "hard tack" in the Civil War, but this was the first time I had ever tried to eat it; a tough, dry, thick cracker in square boxes, one to a man, and a can of corned beef. I had to soak mine in the black coffee, before I could chew it.

We arrived in Toul about the morning of the third day, and unloaded in the railroad yards. One of our truck companies was there, and we were trucked out to Mene-La-Tour, where we were sent on to Battalion Headquarters at Rangeval. Here we were assigned French barracks in the woods as shown in the pictures on page 82. Most of the quarters were concealed by the woods, but some had to be camouflaged by artificial means to prevent the German fliers from spotting them from the air. They did spot Company "C"s barracks several miles from us and lobbed four or five heavy shells on to them, blew up the mess hall and spoiled the noon lunch. All the cooks and helpers were outside watching a "dog fight" between an American and German plane. No one was hurt. The main body of the Company was out on road and railroad repair. This happened just at noon.

We were not shelled directly in our location, but the Germans sent over an occasional bomber with a few 50 and 100 pound bombs. They missed us by a couple of hundred yards one night, and we all rushed out of our quarters and got under the railroad culvert near our unloading platforms. I got wet to my knees standing in the ditch until it was over. The German planes were only capable of carrying a couple or three of these bombs. They were triplanes built for that purpose. Several times we were bombed, mostly at night or in the morning. We were not hit. The officers all were quartered at the headquarters barracks across from the regular barracks. The Battalion had its offices in the front of this building. The road and railroad sidings were in front of us. We always knew when the planes were coming. We knew the drone of the "Bosche" engines. First an explosion a mile away, then closer, then they would drop one about every quarter of a mile. As soon as they came close enough, we would head for the railroad culvert.

The Rangeval camp consisted of a number of portable French barracks set up in the woods or forest of that name, and were really tar paper shacks with framing over them. They were not warm, but it being about the first of May, the weather was



Co. "B" men in front of quarters at the French Toul Sector, Rangeval, May 1918



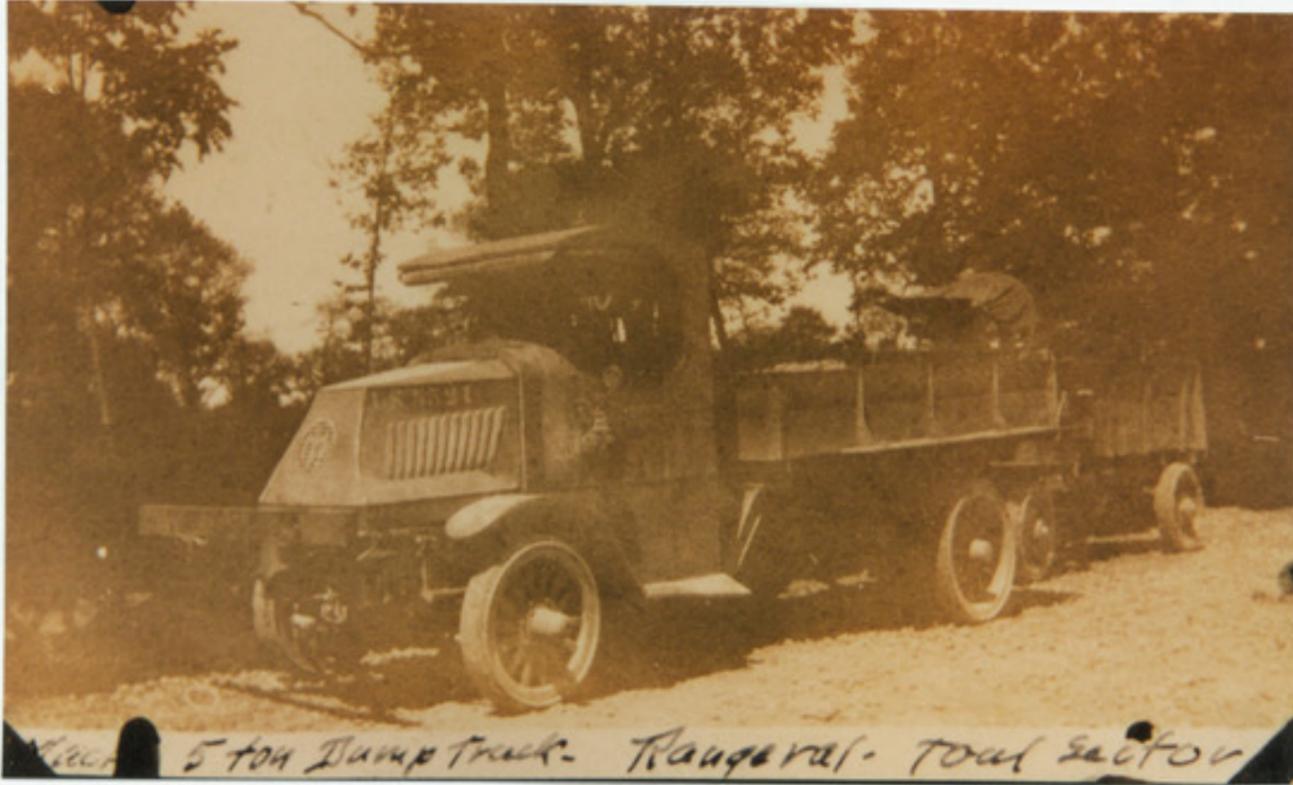
Camouflaged Y.M.C.A. hut, Rangeval, Toul Sector

warming up. We were stationed here to build new and repair old roads damaged by the war, and to construct a rail head for the unloading of standard railroad cars, and to transfer their loads into either 60 centimeter gage rail cars or into trucks. The standard rails were on both sides of the paved area with a narrow gauge line on the outside and the truck parking area inside, so that both methods of transfer could be used at the same time. The rails were in when we got there, so we laid the pavement for the parking area inside the tracks or between the two tracks so that the entire area could be used at once.

A track was extended on into the woods in the form of a letter "S" on which the huge naval guns, mounted on railroad trucks could be brought into position for firing at the enemy. There were also two 9.7" guns (heavy artillery) in a fixed position about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile away. I have stood behind these guns when they were fired and watched the shell leave the muzzle. You could see it a second or so in flight before it was blotted out by the smoke and flame from the gun. One had to plug his ears from the concussion. The gunners had cotton in their ears.

The 60 centimeter gauge lines ran across the country right up to the main line of trenches. They were used for transporting material, such as shells, for the light artillery, infantry ammunition and equipment and rations. The trucks used (also mule drawn dump wagons) for bulky materials such as rock and timber for the repair of roads and bridges. Both means of transport were used and mostly at night, as the Germans held all the high ground and could spot a truck 10 miles away. The front line consisted of several lines of trenches, or groups of the same, connected by communication trenches, and these sometimes were from a mile to two miles deep. The communications lines came up to these. Every hill was fortified with redoubt and pill boxes, from which machine guns could rake both forward and at the sides. The 75's or field guns were back behind the line of trenches, and these were protected by sand bag revetments and bunkers. All lines were protected by barb wire entanglements.

Our company operated the roadrollers, tank wagons, trucks and mule drawn wagons, (the latter by the attached wagon company) as well as worked the roads leading up to the rail head, and then forward to our own defense lines held by the 26th Division. We were occasionally subjected to shell firing and the use of gas shells. On exploding, the area was filled with gas, and a few whiffs could knock one out, sometimes for good. One day a truck came through our camp with wounded and gassed men of the 26th Division. They usually stopped there for a cup of coffee or a sandwich. One fellow jumped off a truck, and when he hit the ground, his lungs collapsed, and he died



5 ton Dump truck. Ranger - Total sector

5 ton dump truck



F-11 Truck. Ammunition. Dodge 700

Ammunition truck



Laying telford base for cutoff through woods



Rangeval Dump, Toul Sector



Showing gas proof slicker coat with mask in the alert position.



Gas mask carried over shoulders at all times within 12 mile limit.



Gas mask on and ready for gas attack. Helmet in place.



Gas mask in position on chest for instant use, 3 mile limit



Co. "B" baggage arrives at the front.



Rounding up the Chinese labor.



A close shave in a quiet sector.



Rescued after a close shave at the front.

instantly. He had been gassed, and his lungs simply deteriorated. Most of them had to be careful until they got to the hospital. Most of the wounded were ambulatory and didn't require an ambulance.

The German lines and batteries on Mont Sec were usually responsible for all this as the hill looked over every part of the valley we occupied, and, any movement in the day time like a truck, train or body of marching men, drew fire. It wasn't until we captured this redoubt during the battle of St. Mihiel that we were secure from observation and their big guns.

We used to watch the planes go over and get into dog fights with the German planes over the lines. Occasionally one would be shot down. They would circle, fly upside down, do loops and Immelman turns to either get advantage of their antagonist or to escape his machine gun fire. One crashed not far from our camp, and his plane burned. There were also observation balloons along the front, sent up on cables with a man in them with a parachute. The opposing planes tried to shoot them down. The observer in the balloon usually took to his parachute to save his life. The incendiary bullets usually set the balloon on fire. As soon as the observer saw a plane coming, he would signal to be taken down. They were usually up about 1,000 feet in the air. The balloons were used to spot our artillery fire or to observe the movements of the enemy. They were good in daytime, but not at night. Quite a few of our balloon men lost their lives in this hazardous occupation. The planes would come in in the sun and dive at the balloons. There were five or six balloons in our area about a mile or so apart.

As I have stated before, most of our road repair work at the front had to be done at night or in the early morning hours. The work of this nature, right between us and the firing line, was extremely hazardous. I went out one afternoon to make a reconnaissance between two villages right at the front lines. I went in a motorcycle sidecar with a Sergeant driving it. In the first village, I left him, and with my field note book I started over a road to the next village, which was right in the front line of trenches. I had a map given me that was in error, as the lines were much closer than shown on the map. I was within some 600 yards or less from the German lines. It was late afternoon, bright sunlight, and I guess all were asleep on the other side or a sniper bullet would have winged me easily. I breezed along taking notes, estimating the yardage necessary to fill the shell holes in the road. I reached the next village, and the sentries stopped me and told me I was a fool to expose myself in that way. He was right as I found out the next night.

On this particular occasion, I was in command of a group of volunteers to go out with the wagon train loaded with rock and surface material to fill the holes. The ration and ammunition trucks were unable to go this far forward without the road. We left camp at dusk, the wagon train, my volunteers, about one platoon of some 50 men divided 6 to 8 to a wagon. A Captain commanded the wagon train of dump wagons. I was furnished a horse to ride, although I didn't want it, as I knew I could ride on one of the loads and handle the work better on foot.

We reached Brussay, the first town in the lines around 10 P.M. I had the Captain halt the train, while I rode forward to make a reconnaissance. The guard stopped me at the end of the town, and told me that one of our patrols was out there in no man's land, and one man had just been shot. Just then the stretcher bearers came in bringing the wounded man. I was told "Don't go out there on that horse, or you'll draw enemy fire for sure!"

I returned to the Captain and gave him the story. He insisted that I ride the horse out where we were to work. I remonstrated with him that it was a foolish thing to do, as we were going out a wagon at a time to unload starting at the edge of the village. He ordered me to ride, and I had to obey orders. In the meantime, we heard firing going on forward. He was afraid the infantry would steal the horse. I turned around, left orders for the first wagon and crew to come to the edge of the village and wait until I went out to look the situation over. I rode past the sentry and out into the open. The road to be repaired went down the hill from the village, across the plain, and up into the next village, which was right in our lines. It was pretty well pock marked, as I had observed the day before. The sentry warned me, but I dug my heels into the horse. (I was not wearing regular riding boots but laced engineer boots with no spurs). It was the fastest ride I ever took crossing that flat to the next village. I leaned over the side opposite the enemy, and I came dashing up to the sentry post at the rear of the village, was challenged, ordered to dismount and give the countersign. I had forgotten it in the excitement. I told the soldier who I was and our outfit, and what we were to do. He recognized the outfit, and said, "Oh, yes, you are one of them 23rd Engineers who are always around making trouble. You had better tie your horse to a tree here in this orchard and go back on foot." His advice was well taken. I hiked back to the other hill for the first load to come on. I had made such a clatter going across, that I was surprised they didn't fire on me from the opposite trenches. It was a bright moonlight night, too good for even a moving target. They wouldn't waste a shell on a lone rider, so

I must have been safe.

I contacted my Sergeant, and the first wagon and unload crew came forward. Each man carried his rifle, bayonet, as well as pick or shovel. The wagon came forward, dumped its load in the shell hole, or along side, and immediately returned to the village. The five or six men on the load shoveled the rock in the hole, tamped it, and covered it with the rock. As soon as the work was finished, the men returned to the village. In the meantime, the next load came forward, was dumped, and men on that load placed the rock, tamped it, and returned to the village.

This work kept up for several hours, or until about 3 A.M. I kept moving from hole to hole as the work progressed towards the forward village. The noise of the dump on the wagons as they released the rock (the mule skinner had to do that) was such that I thought sure the Germans would hear it and start shelling us. The last load neared the outer village and had just dumped its load. The men had tamped it in place, when the Germans woke up. They started firing their 77's. but the shells went over us and into the trenches behind us. I ordered the men into the wagon and told the skinner to "Get the hell out of there!" I started for my horse, when I heard a clatter and a lot of yelling and screaming. I thought, "My God, those men have been hit!" I ran back, but the skinner, in the excitement, had pulled the dump lever after the men were in, and the mules ran away scattering the men, tools and equipment along the road. I got there, and then both our batteries and theirs let loose. I ordered all to lie flat in the drainage ditches along side the road, while I checked on possible injuries. Only one man was hurt, being cut on the side of his face with the sight of his rifle. No broken bones, and no one run over. I ordered them back to the village as the firing was over and beyond us. The shoosh of those shells and their detonations and explosion was terrific to me. The sight was a regular Fourth of July pageant. Flashes and explosions were both before and behind me. I ran back for my horse, got on him, dug in my heels, and won the Kentucky Derby from Bouconville to Brussey.

I rejoined the wagon train headed back for our camp. They didn't wait for me, as I ordered them to go on. I finally caught up with them as they had only gone a mile or so, and we rode back into camp about daylight. The firing diminished after we left the area. It was a night to remember. I did not tell the Captain what I had done with the horse. He probably thought I sat on him all the time the work was going on. He's dead and gone now!



Hill 308 "Mont Sec" inside the German lines  
taken the second day of the St. Miheil drive.



Ready for work - Rangeval

On page 91 is shown the road leading to hill #308, "Mont Sec", and, as previously mentioned, held by the Germans. One night our group had to make some repairs on this road. As it was under complete observation by the enemy, we had to work it on a dark night. Trucks were used to haul the material, even though the noise might provoke enemy fire. I was not with this group that night. Some other officer drew that command.

The truck train proceeded out late after dark running without lights. Each truck, besides the driver and swamper, carried enough men on the load to handle the rock after it was unloaded. The trucks were Mack dump trucks and could be unloaded by the driver automatically. The same method was used as in our operation, starting at the rear and working towards the front. As each truck unloaded at the site of the shell holes, it was turned around and run back out of the way. The men spread the rock, tamped it in the holes, reboarded the truck and headed back to camp.

As the trucks got farther forward, the more danger of attracting enemy shell fire. The last truck load was dumped and turned around, when the enemy came to life. The men finished their job as the shells started coming over. The back-firing of this truck is probably what aroused the enemy. This had always been a quiet front due to their observation from Mont Sec, so they were surprised at the activity that night. The driver put the truck into high gear and "beat it" to the rear, being chased home by shells exploding from 100 to 300 feet in his rear. The Germans raised their sights each salvo. All got back safe. No one was hurt, but the road was ruined.

The troops of the 26th Division (New England National Guard) would come and go on the roads through and parallel to our camp. They marched on foot, not hauled in trucks. A few would often drop out of line and get a snack and cup of coffee at our mess hall. Ten days, or two weeks in the line, one battalion at a time, and they came back for a rest or one regiment replacing another. I never could keep track of them. They were badly mauled in the Seichprey affair just before we got there. Our battalion occupied the mid line of trenches behind them in that battle, but the German Infantry didn't get back that far. We had to clear the field of fire as the trenches had been abandoned four years before, since it was a quiet front. Most of the severe fighting was in the western portion of France and in Belgium.

We officers were quartered in the Battalion Headquarters building. In the bunk (cot) beside my own was a Major Carl Wirshing from Los Angeles. We got pretty well acquainted during my stay there, and a warm friendship ensued. He was the liaison officer between the French Army Commander and ourselves

on the road work, as we were still under French Army (Corps) command in this area. The 1st American Army command had not been formed at that time.

I met Carl later in life in Los Angeles, and Essie and I called on him at his home in West Los Angeles. Carl and I belonged to a couple of engineering societies in Los Angeles, and one night at a banquet of one of these organizations, he made a speech and introduced me as one of the first American engineer officers to lead a group of men into no man's land to repair roads on the Western front. He also told what had happened there. He asked me to stand up and be counted. It was rather embarrassing, as I didn't know I was a first in this work.

I was arguing one night in the barracks with our adjutant, Captain P.J. Watson, (later Major and Battalion Commander) about our chances of survival. The life of an engineer in the trenches was estimated to last only 9 days, (English figures) and he exploded and said, "What the hell, you can't live forever." So I quit the argument.

If there was any "spare time" left after work, the men spent it in cards, dice or outdoor sports such as baseball, hiking around the area where we were stationed. One day we all went swimming in a nearby lake on the edge of the woods. We had been in a while, when the "Bosche" spotted us from a plane, and the artillery on Mont Sec shelled us. It was late afternoon, but the missiles went wide, and no one got hurt. However, we got out of there fast, and when we went out again, we did it towards sun down, when there were no planes flying over us. Of course, we went in "in the nude" as no one had a bathing suit in his kit bag, and there were no women anywhere near this area. I doubt if it would have made any difference anyway, as the French were not so delicate as the American females were.

Speaking of shelling, usually the Germans were very methodical about shelling our positions. Co. "A" operated a rock quarry at Royaumeix several miles from our camp. The Germans would lob a salvo or two into this quarry at 10 A.M. and at 3 P.M. every day we were there. The men quit work at 9:45 A.M. (coffee break) and began at 10:15 A.M., and did likewise in the afternoon. No one got hurt, and I think the Germans did this on purpose. Not even the machinery was damaged nor a truck hit. Any other time of the day, and a bunch of men would have been killed or wounded. Times changed later when the First Army was formed. When this happened, all hell broke loose. We then wore the First Army red and white patch on our shoulders. We wore several types of patches, Advanced Section S.O.S., First Battalion 23rd patch, the First Army patch, and, finally, "B" Company had the 2nd Army patch. It kept the tailor shop busy changing insignia on the uniforms, we changed location so much.

Life at the front ran on usually as I have stated above. The officers had their own mess in their quarters, with wine and extras. We had to pay for them, of course, besides the regular charge. The men ate in their mess hall, and, with the company fund, we bought lots of extras from the French peasants. What we didn't buy, some stole from the Quartermaster when we got our ten day allowance of rations. There was one platoon in the outfit known as the "40 thieves", and they lived up to their name. I won't name the Sergeant. He had been a bank cashier in civil life. They sure knew how to secure plenty to eat.

Sundays were just like any other day, although we let all rest who didn't have guard duty or other operations at that time to carry out. There was no chaplain with us, although Father Cotter, the Regimental Chaplain, came around later when the bulk of the Regiment got over in March or April. Any one who wanted to attend services, we'd furnish transportation to the nearest chapel or church. Very few did.

The four pictures of myself on page 86 show what we had to wear and carry depending how close we were to the front lines. All equipment had to be on the person when we were within 12 miles of the front lines or within artillery range. The heavy guns could fire from 12 to 15 miles. The gas shells were what we feared the most. Several types of gas were used by the Germans; fosgene and other deteriorating gases, which collapsed the lungs or burned the body. Four of our people were hurt that way on a parallel road, when they worked during the daylight. Several shells were lobbed over in their vicinity, and they got burned. We carried two masks, the French, flat, and the English, as shown on my chest and in position. We had gas drill fifteen minutes each day at formation. This kept up until the Armistice in November, 1918.

On the 28th of May, 1918, two detachments of Co. "B" were ordered to proceed by train to Breuvannes, Haute Marne, in the advanced section, Services of Supply, to repair and rebuild roads knocked out by the troops and their supply trains that had been in training there. This was a disappointment to us, as we were just getting used to life at the "Front", and we had expected to be used as a complete Battalion with our supply train. However, orders were orders, and we had to obey.

This area was quite a few miles from the front and was "safe", except for possible bombing. This never happened while we were there during June and July. We arrived at our destination on the 29th of May and were assigned an old Marine barracks consisting of three buildings and a mess hall.

It took us until after June 1st to get organized in the new sector, get our equipment together, trucks, tank truck,



Co. "B" 23rd Engrs. arriving at.  
Breuvannes, Haute Marne

Co. "B" 23rd Engineers arriving at Breuvannes



Co. "B" 23rd Engrs Detraining  
at Breuvannes H. M.

Co. "B" 23rd Engineers detraining at Breuvannes



*Main St. Breuvannes, H.M.*

Main street - Breuvannes



*Hdqts. Co. B. 23rd Engrs. Breuvannes, H.M.*

Headquarters Co. "B" 23rd Engineers, Breuvannes



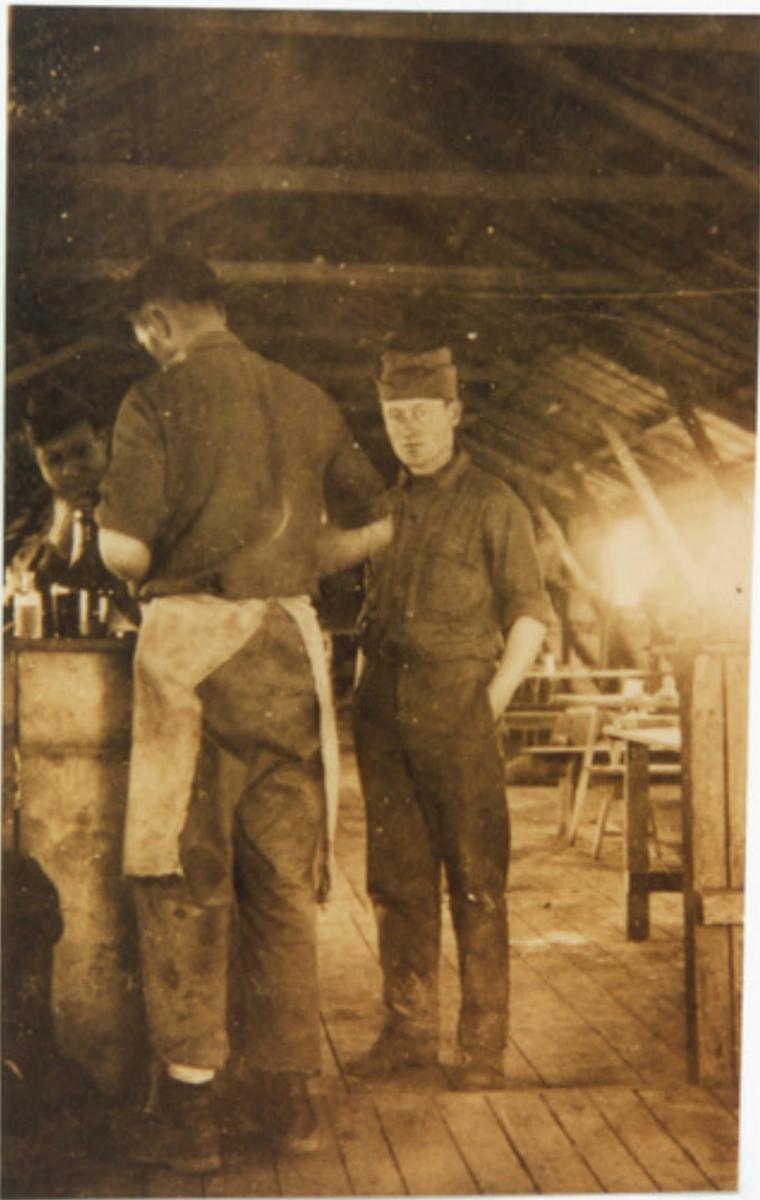
*The Main St. of the Villiage*

The main street of the village



*Breuvannes H.M. Street leading past Co. B. Barracks*

Street leading past Co. "B" barracks, Breuvannes



Co. "B" Kitchen.  
The "cooks" at work



Lt. G. Sleight      Lt. F.C. Stilson  
C.O. Detachment    C.O. Co. "B"  
at Bazoilles



*Outdoor Mess, 1st Detachment Co. B.*

Outdoor mess, 1st Detachment, Co. "B"

road rollers, and rock crusher (portable). The area had been used by the 1st Marine Brigade, who distinguished themselves at Belleau Wood during the 2nd battle of the Marne, and also by several National Guard Divisions as a training and practice area.

The town of Breauvannes was a small place on the East railroad from Paris to Nancy. We had considerable to do with this line later on, as all our supplies, rations, material and machinery came in over it, and was side tracked there for unloading. The people were friendly and helpful, and Lieutenant Carpenter and myself were billeted in the house of the Mayor of the town. We often took our meals with them, and, in return, furnished them with our white bread and, often fresh meat. Ordinarily we messed with the company in our mess hall. We had a table by ourselves and ate the same food as the rank and file.

Ours was the 1st Detachment. The Second Detachment, under Lieutenant Felt, was sent to a neighboring village called "Chaumont-La-Ville" where they undertook the same tasks that we did. I believe that the Third Detachment went to Abainville, the headquarters of the 22nd Engineers, and were assigned or attached to that Regiment (light railways) for general road and railroad (60 cm gauge) maintenance and repair. They were under the command of Lieutenants Hampton and Cooper. They made a wonderful reputation there, and received a citation from Colonel Robertson, the Commander of the 22nd Engineers.

As Memorial day came on May 30th, we decided to parade and conduct a memorial service to the few Americans and French buried in the local cemetery. We formed up, marched to the cemetery, and I had to read the memorial service, lacking a chaplain. (We never had one until we went home) We had the firing squad, and, after the service, it fired three volleys over the lone Marine's grave, and then paraded back to our barracks for the rest of the day off. The French turned out to a woman. (All men were in service, except the officials and the oldsters.) They celebrated with us, and wine flowed freely.

Lieutenant George J. Sleight had a detachment of Co. "A" at Bazoilles, not far from us, and we got together occasionally. The weather turned out beautifully here, and we enjoyed it to the fullest. The men messed outdoors. Carpenter and I started to ride motorcycles around the country in our spare time and also on the job. These had side cars also, but we left them off, which proved an error in my case, as I will relate later on.

The different noncommissioned officers were experienced men and could handle most any sort of job. Several of them went to Officer's training school at Chaumont, and some became commissioned officers outranking me. For instance, Sergeant Nordstrom graduated and eventually wore Captain's bars.

He was not reassigned to our regiment but went elsewhere. He was a contractor in civil life.

Sergeant Parziale, who handled the mess for Co. "B" Headquarters Detachment, was a registered architect of New York State. In World War II, he had charge of revamping a lot of plush hotels in Miami, Florida, for the returning wounded service men. In civil life, he designed school and public buildings, also large structures.

Sergeant Rosenthal, the First Sergeant, came to us in Camp Meade, Maryland. I immediately made him "top kick". He worked out fine during the war. Sergeant First Class Dierks was a bank official from Nebraska, and could handle almost anything put upon him. Sergeant Kaough, the supply department, could get us whatever we needed. There were other good noncoms, such as Sergeants Walker (in charge of the quarry), Ashby B. Paul, gas mask specialist, (he was sent to Longres, France, for training as an instructor in this work), Nordstrom (in charge of the crushing plant), Dameran, civil engineer, in charge of road construction and repair, Hires, First Class from the regular army, and a God send to me in handling the organizational set up, Allen, office, personnel etc., and many others of various ranks. About 1/3 of the men were college graduates and experienced in various engineering lines. Some should have been commissioned officers as high as the rank of Major. One such was the former superintendent of roads from the State of Maryland. He was ordered home to Maryland as soon as the war was over. His Congressman and Senator from that state requested it through the War Department. I was a pigmy along side them. It was only my ego and knowledge of the military service that kept me ahead.

While we were at Breuvannes, we organized, wrote and staged a musical extravaganza called "Lost in the Trenches" to amuse the outfit and the French villagers. The play was written and staged by Corporal Waterfield and one or two others. I worked in the orchestra as a mandolin player. Two of the men took the part of Captain Baker and myself and proceeded to give us "the works". It was funny, and everyone got a bang out of it. The program is included in this album.

We had to haul our water from the village well. It also had to be chlorinated to kill the germs. It was generally placed in the large canvas bags with spigots all around the bottom. It tasted vile, and so we watered the wine with it to make it taste better. We finally dug our own well between the barracks, and had to use even that with the chlorination.

Every day we were required to have gas mask drill for at least 15 minutes. Either I, or Sergeant Paul, the instructor, conducted it. Paul also checked the masks to see that they were in proper order.



T H E A T R E

D U

"G E N I E"

Nord Est Cor- Rue de MaNure and Boulevard de la Trine

SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE

A One Act Farce

Given By

Company B - 23rd Engineers

American Expeditionary Forces

JUNE 1918

E N T I T L E D

"LOST IN THE TRENCHES"

OR

"IF THE BOCHE DON'T GET US, COGNAC WILL"

S T A F F

General Manager  
Stage Manager  
Asst. Stage Manager

Stage Wood Butcher  
Stage Electrician  
Secretary  
Illustrator  
Costumer

Chaperone  
Pianist

Scene: Dugout in the Lorraine Forest, just before dawn of  
the day after pay day.

Lieut. F. C. Stilson "Everyones Friend"  
Corp. J.S.Warterfield "The Cognac King"  
Harry A. Nagle "Who would like to be a  
shave tail for reasons"  
Fred A. Wallace "One of the Texas Howlers"  
Carl B. Swanson "Who Loves LP's"  
Sgt. Ed L. Allen "\$17.50 and Costs"  
John I. Copp "The Major's Right Hand Man"  
Sgt. Joseph W. Kaough "With the Assistance  
of Uncle Sam"  
1st Sgt. Gilbert C. Rosenthal "Shake a Leg"  
Irving J. Blattert "Marine City - Nuf Sed"

C A S T O F C H A R A C T E R S

Lewis C. Bulley	Cognac has convinced him that he would rather fight than work.
George H. Maisak	Eating glass has shortened his life, so he might as well feel the same.
Harry A. Nagle	Court-martialed to die in No Man's Land.
Maurice B. Younger	Same Sentence. Remember what he did on the floor?
Frederick Jackson	Tin Horn Soldier.
Corp. Merth Thomas	The Morman.
Thomas Garofalo	"Belly Robber"
James D. McGhie	Scotch from "Minnesota"
Anthony J. Hook	Cockney "Strong with old women for reasons"
William R. Dolan	Some "Gas" Artist.
Leo F. Smith	Company Nightengale.
Herman O. Poland	Mouth Organ Kid.

Piano and Properties - Furnished by the three thieves.



Sergeant Parziale  
(Mess)

Sergeant Rosenthal  
(1st Sergeant)

Sgt 1st Cl  
Dierks

Sergeant  
Kaough  
(Supply)



Cast of "Lost in the Trenches" produced by Co. "B"



*One of the Co. Blacksmith's getting over a "Cognac stop".*

One of the Company Blacksmiths getting over a "Cognac stop".



*The Co. Tailor, Roy Thompson trying out a French Flier.*

The Company tailor, Roy Thompson, trying out a French Flier



Pvt Anthony J. Hook as Lieut. in "Lost in the Trenches."



Waggoner Jim McGhie poses as the "Cap"



Sergeant Ed Allen "et al"



Pvt. Wehrmann divides with Sergeant Allen



*Water had to be hauled from the wells in the village to the Barracks in Barrels.*

Water had to be hauled from the wells in the village to the barracks in barrels.



*Detail on "water supply" Co B Men digging well between Barracks.*

Detail on "water supply". Co. "B" men digging well between barracks.



"15 minutes a day" on gas drill. This was obligatory on every officer and soldier in the command.



Sergeant Ashley B. Paul. Sergeant Paul was sent to Gas SCHOOL at Longres, France, and, on his return, was gas instructor for Company "B".

My principle job in this area was to travel around the area inspecting the work on the roads. Most of the time we had machinery to do it, but the quarrying was done by hand with pick and shovel, and the larger rocks in the piles along the roads were broken up with small hammers. You placed a rock upon a rock and broke it into small pieces like the crusher did. However we got away from this as much as possible.

Before Lieutenant Carpenter came over to us, I went over to Liffol-le-Grand where he was with Lieutenant Felt and the Second Detachment, and we called on a Frenchman, who was furnishing us with some supplies. (For a price, of course) I was introduced to a clear liquid called Oi-de-vie, which was a hard clear liquor distilled from peaches, or peach stones, I'm not sure which. I was passed a tumbler full of the stuff, and I started to drink it down like water. A big swallow and I was coughing and choking like an amateur drinker. The stuff was 95% pure alcohol. They got a big kick out of it. It is something like the Mexican tequila. It has to be taken in small doses, or sipped to get any enjoyment out of it. I never did.

On pages 111 and 112 are shown some of the equipment used on the French railways. The car riding on top of the other one on page 111 was put there by one of our powerful locomotives, which they were using on this line. Most of the freight cars were short and didn't have air brakes as in the States. They were coupled together with the bumpers touching, chains and hooks furnishing the give and take of the train. Hand brakes were used as shown in the pictures for switching on to sidings. The "Est" Railway, which ran through the village was a perfectly maintained line. The regular passenger trains, or high speed trains, all had the usual equipment, air brakes and all.

During Company "B"s stay in Breuvannes, the 37th Division was in the area training for the coming offensive at the St Miheil salient. At this time, I met and became acquainted with a General Neville, who had come back on leave to this area after the second battle of the Marne. He commanded the Marine Brigade during the battles of Belleau Wood and Chateau Thierry. He returned to visit people he was billeted with in this area. Being a General, he had some pretty nice quarters. Breuvannes was the headquarters of his Brigade. He told me all about those engagements.

The 37th Division boys were around with their armament and very busy practicing for the coming events. Pictures on page 113 show them working with their machine guns. The shirt waist factory shown on page 114 employed most of the women and girls of the town, and I guess they had quite an output from what the men told me.

The Second Detachment, under Lieutenant Felt, was housed on and taken care of by the citizens of the town of Chaumont-la-ville. They were billeted there, and did the same work that



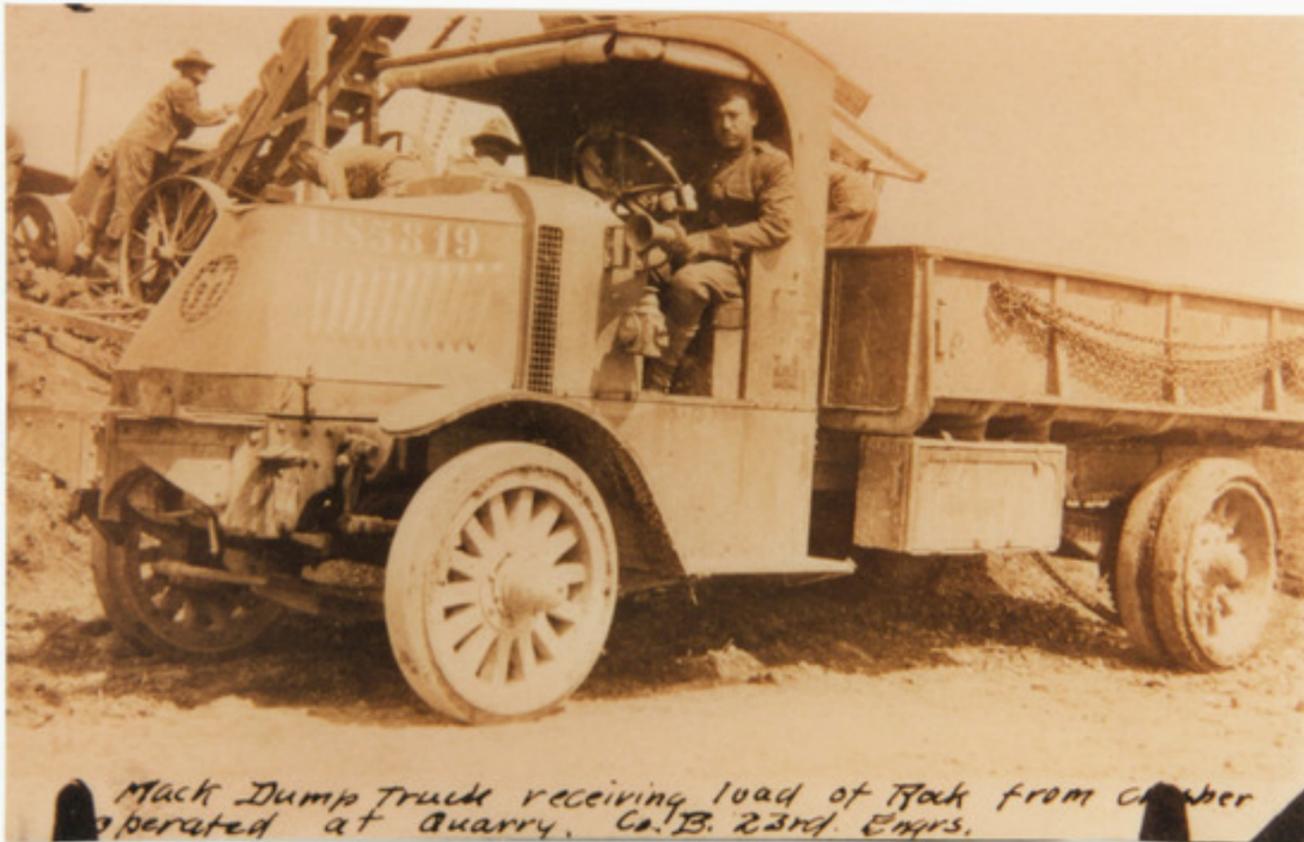
*Showing Surface Quarrying by Co. B. 23rd Engineers  
Rock Quarried on level below was thrown on shelf and then to Truck*

The quarry detail getting out the rock.



*The Quarry detail getting out the rock.*

Showing surface quarrying by Co. "B". Rock quarried on level below was thrown on shelf and then into truck.



Mack Dump Truck receiving load of Rock from crusher.  
operated at Quarry, Co. B. 23rd Engrs.



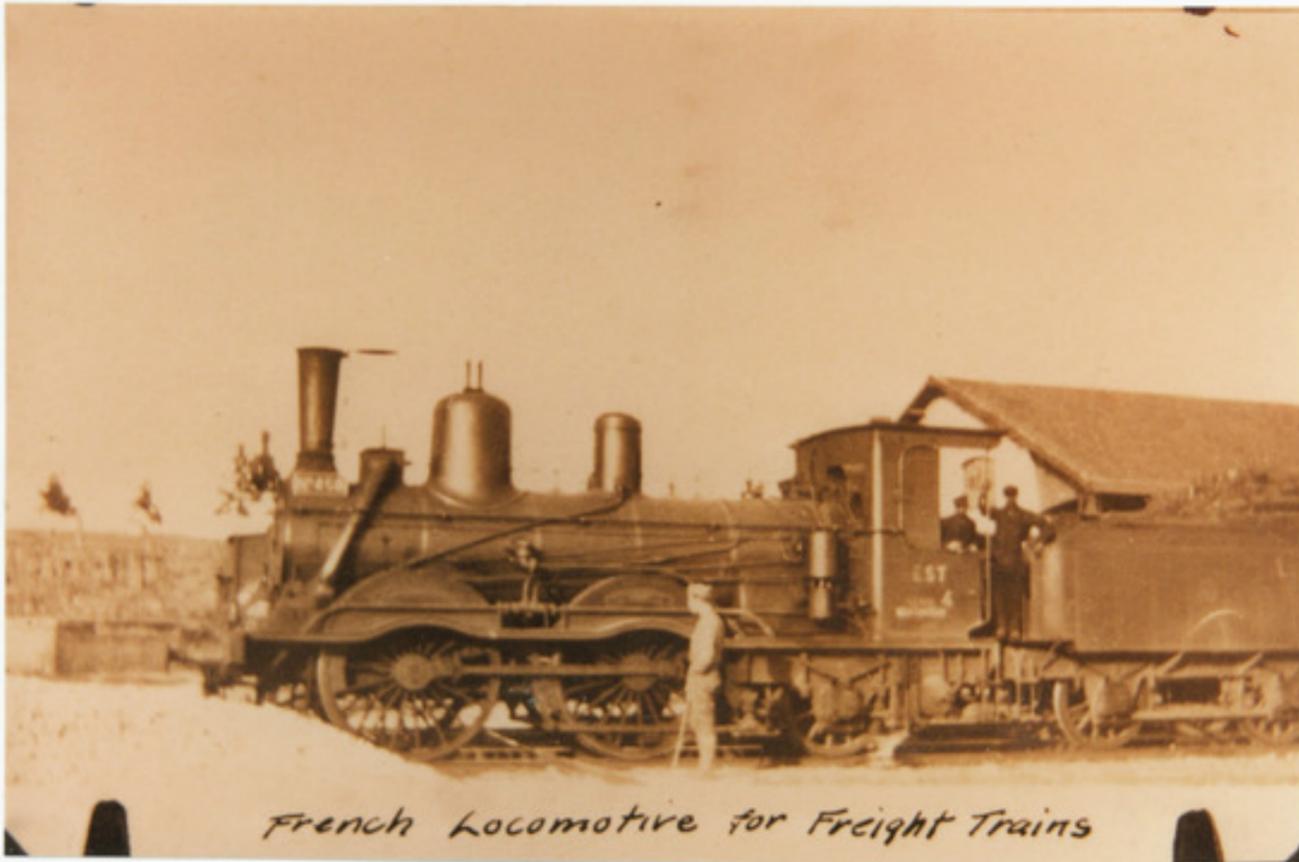
Hand power "rock crusher" rock used for "patching"



Sgt. Nordstrom in charge of mobile crushing plant.



Showing tractor and crusher in operation.



*French Locomotive for Freight Trains*

French locomotive for freight trains



*Those American Locomotives sure "Treat 'em Rough!"*

Those American locomotives sure "treat 'em rough!"



*Our firewood was shipped in from a nearby forest loaded on our trucks and hauled to the barracks*

Our firewood was shipped in from a nearby forest, loaded on our trucks and hauled to the barracks.



*Hand brakes used on French R.R. Cars*

Hand brakes used on French railroad cars



*Breunnes, H.M., Light Machine Gun outfit of*

Light machine gun outfit of the 37th Division



*Packing up the Light Machine Gun outfit*

Packing up the light machine gun outfit



Shirt waist factory



Mess hall, Chaumont-la-ville

we were doing around Breuvannes. Pages 116 and 117 show views of the village and the surrounding country. Chaumont-la-ville was only a few kilometers from our station.

At Damblain Vosges was a military railway terminal where all the railroad artillery and the lesser types of field guns were housed on sidings, or, if brought back from the front, awaited repairs. The French had repair shops there and took care of all types of artillery, as well as sending forward new guns as requested. We saw lots of this material shipped out as well as being brought back from the front.

15

It was during July that we were granted leaves to go on seven to fourteen day passes to the rest areas. Ours was at Aix-la-Baines, or, as the men called it, Aches and Pains. Aix-la-Baines was in the French Alps. We got a chance to send about one-fifth of the outfit on leave twice during our stay there. Then the order was rescinded, as we were about to be ordered elsewhere.

I took advantage of this leave proposition and requested leave to visit Southwestern France at Bordeaux, Biarritz and vicinity. This was granted, and I took off by way of Paris to Bordeaux and the French South Atlantic coast. In Paris, I was allowed 24 hours, and I stayed the limit leaving the next afternoon on the express vestibule train for Bordeaux. This was a first class train with compartments and dining cars. As a military man, I was allowed 1/4 fare, so my transportation didn't cost too much. However, the meals on the diner did. I had to have sugar and bread ration tickets, which I obtained at the Provost-Marshall's office in Paris, where I got my leave papers stamped.

At dinner that evening on the diner, I met a French civilian. He sat opposite me at the table, and we struck up a conversation. I could get along with my poor French, and he was very considerate. During the meal, I asked the waiter for a glass of water. They didn't serve water, but there were two decanters of red and white wine on the table. The Frenchman exploded and told me that water was only good to put under bridges. He poured some water in a glass and filled the rest with red wine. He said that the wine killed the germs in the water. He was right. So I did likewise. We got along fine, and I ate a hearty meal.

The compartment I was assigned to had four passengers in it, including myself. We let the shelves down from above and pulled out the seats and could stretch out full length with a blanket and pillow to sleep. All I carried with me, besides the clothes I wore, was a musette bag. (Small canvas bag with a strap to go over my shoulder). I slept all right and woke up the next



2nd Detachment's crusher plant in Chaumont-la-ville



Looking across the Meuse Valley from Chaumont



*Airing the bed/sacks Co. B. 2nd.  
Detach. Chaumont-La-Ville*

Airing the bed sacks. Co."B", 2nd Detachment

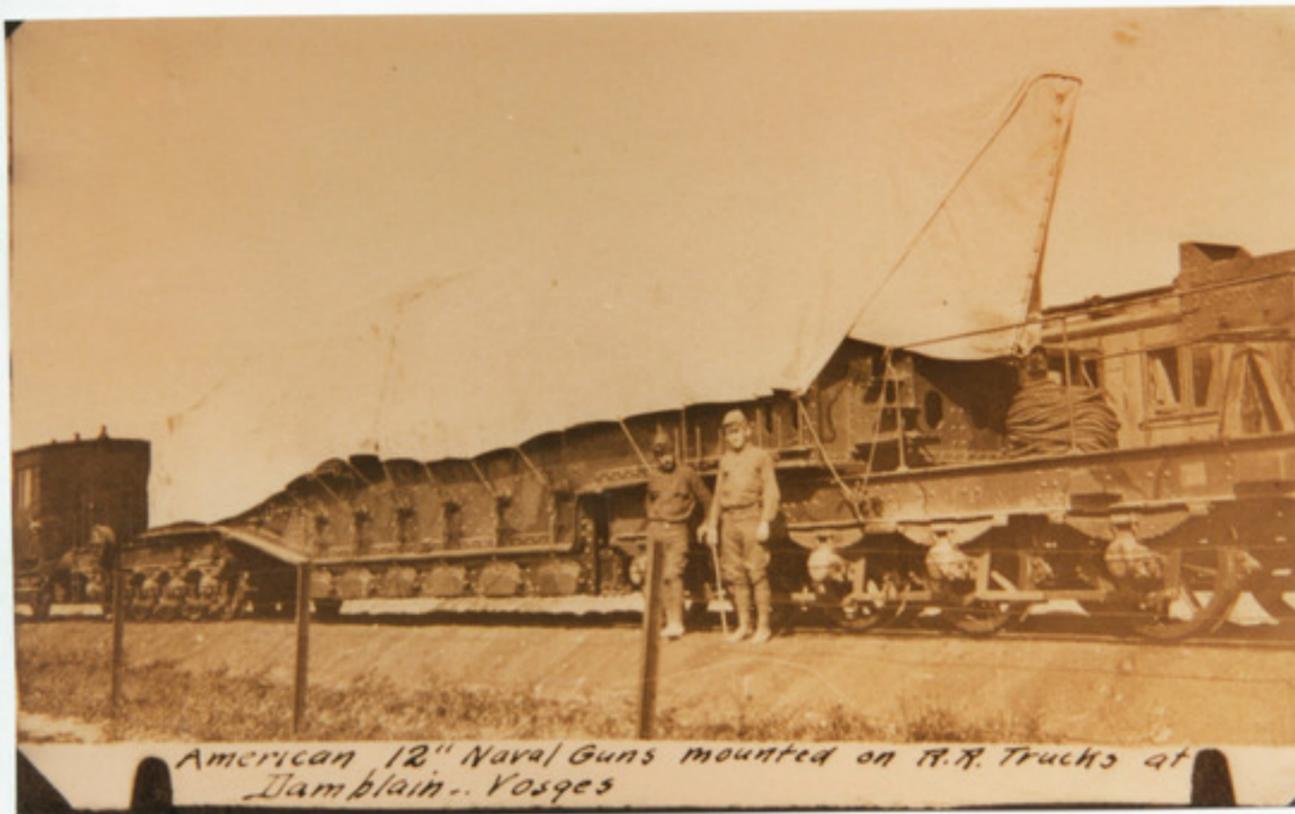


*Sunday visitors being entertained  
with the 2nd Detach. Phonograph.*

Sunday visitors being entertained with the  
2nd Detachment phonograph



French railway artillery (howitzer) at  
Damblain-Vosges



American 12" Naval guns mounted on R.R. trucks  
at Damblain-Vosges

morning very much refreshed as we pulled into Bordeaux.

I checked in with the Provost-Marshall, got my permission stamped and put up at a hotel on the square with the large monument. I started out to see the town, went to some dress shops and lingerie places, bought Essie some silk stockings and silk underwear, which was cheap according to prices in the States. I had dinner in a fine restaurant near the hotel, met other servicemen, and we exchanged greetings, strolled around during the evening, then went back to the hotel and turned in.

The next morning, I caught the local train for Biarritz, a watering place on the Atlantic ocean about 40 kilometers north of the Spanish border, arrived some time near noon, and went to a hotel near by the Red Cross for a rest area and recuperation home for wounded veterans from the front. Part of them were like myself uninjured but there on leave.

Most of the "inmates" were English, Australian and Canadian officers when I was there. I was the only American in the lot. However, there were a Y.M.C.A. man and woman there who were down there for the same reason that I was, exhaustion. There was a public dining room, but I didn't always take my meals there. Usually breakfast (English), sometimes lunch, but never dinner. I had nothing in common with the other officers there except with some of the Canadians from the far West. The two Y.M.C.A. people and I teamed up for a series of trips around the country. I got a chance to swim in the Atlantic, as they had fine beaches there, being a resort town, and I ate at the fine restaurants in and outside the town. Prices were low for service men of any nationality. The hotel rates were really low. I ate the first artichokes I ever had in a small place up on the bluff overlooking the ocean. Some of the bunch from the hotel were with me.

I took a train trip down to St. Jean de Luz, another resort town, and went on to the Spanish border at Hendaye. There I walked to the international bridge, and started across towards the Spanish border. I was stopped by the guards, being in uniform, and they wanted to know my business there. I showed my permission and passport, and they turned me back, so I didn't get to step on Spanish soil. The after effects of that affair I felt later on another trip.

A day or so after, the three of us decided to go to Lourdes at the foot of the Pyrenees mountains, which are the boundary between France and Spain. We left from Bayonne on a first class train and had a compartment. Evidently I had been shadowed by the French Secret Service for, as we neared Pau, two men entered the compartment, showed their badges, and asked me to come to the smoking compartment. There they tried to tear me apart, searched my musette bag, took my wallet and passport also, questioned my leave with the dates stamped on it. The pass said "to Biarritz and vicinity." I was to be placed under



French-Spanish frontier at Hendaye with French and Spanish  
Border guards



*HENDAYE — Vue générale de Hendaye-Plage. — LI.*

General view of Hendaye

arrest for being out of the area and trying to cross into Spain.

Finally the Y.M.C.A. people came to my rescue and convinced the detectives that "vicinity" meant anywhere within a hundred miles or so of my base, Biarritz. They returned my stuff and apologized for their intrusion. So we landed at Lourdes that afternoon and got rooms in a pension (a rooming house) for the night. The next day we went to see the celebrated "Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto," where St. Bernadette had her vision. We got in the crowd of pilgrims, walked down the path to the cave grotto, bought a candle, lit it, made a donation, stuck the candle on the metal Christmas tree, bent and kissed the feet (?) of the statue of the Virgin Mary, and then saw the immense pile of crutches and artificial limbs heaped up outside, thrown there by people who drank the waters and went away cured. We drank too, but didn't get "cured." The priest gave us his blessing, and we went up on top of the hill to see the Basilica, or church, dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes.

The Basilica sets on the top of the cleft over the grotto and consists of about three stories in height. The bottom is hollowed out of the rock and is a burial chapel with niches for caskets like our mausoleums. There is a small chapel at the end of this cavern. We blundered into a funeral service, and had to sneak out. The second floor is for services and is beautifully decorated, but the main church is above this and is built in the usual gothic style with a transept, nave and little side chapels. The great beams of the roof were covered with the banners and pennants of former dukes, barons and knights, donated by their descendants. These hung in profusion from the large cross beams supporting the ceiling. We spent some time looking all these relics over.

We had lunch, then caught the electric train south to the town of Luz. This was a spectacular ride, as we were going up a steep canyon, and the railroad line just seemed to cling to the side of the cliff. Lots of curves in this line, single track too. We arrived at Luz late in the afternoon, hired a car to drive us up the steep road to a small village in the heart of the mountains. Then we hiked 4½ miles up grade to the Cirque de Gavarnie, where we put up at the inn for the night.

This hotel is situated in the top of the mountain directly across from the falls of Gavarnie, which is like the Bridal Veil falls of Yosemite Park, only it is much larger and deeper. We watched the sunset in the falls, and it was beautiful, had a good dinner in the inn, and then sat on the veranda out over the gorge and watched the moon come up over the crest of the Pyrenees. It was a sight I will never forget. The dark gorge below us, the bright ribbon of the falls, and the moonlight shining on the snow capped peaks. We were only a few miles from the Spanish border here, but one couldn't get across the gorge.



Luz



Saint Saufeur - general view

Next morning we watched the sun come up over the same peaks and finally shine on the falls. We had breakfast, and then hiked back to town. We were the only guests at the inn that night. The proprietor and his wife treated us royally. I had a small room looking out over the gorge, but it was cold even in the month of August. We were up some 11,000 feet or more.

At the village, we were hauled back to the electric line, thence down to Lourdes, where we caught the afternoon train back to Bayonne. It was time for me to pack up and leave for the war again. So, with a musette bag full of postcard books, pictures and dirty underwear, I took the train back to Bordeaux, from there to Paris, then to Breuvannes and my camp and my duties.

16

Arriving at camp, I found that Captain Parker had been promoted to Major and assigned to the newly formed First American Army as Assistant Army Roads Officer. I was placed in command of Company "B", and Lieutenant Carpenter was assigned to me as assistant. The other men had returned from their leaves, and then orders came through that no more permissions would be granted. So there were quite a few disappointed men. Several of the non-coms were taken out and sent to officer's training camp at Largres, not far from us. So we had to appoint new temporary non-coms to replace the men who went away. We didn't get confirmation on some of these, as we were so far from headquarters that they forgot about us.

We were allowed to buy fresh meat from the French Farmers, and so I arranged to purchase a steer for beef every other day, half a beef to each detachment. We contracted for forty altogether. The party we dealt with lived in the next town and had a large farm where he raised cattle and had his own slaughterhouse. He was so pleased that he invited Joe Sarthane, our French chef (he was an American and our chief cook) and myself over to a Sunday dinner. I hooked on the side car to the motorcycle, and away we went! We got there around two o'clock, and, after a glass of wine or two, we sat down to dinner. The meal was served in about 11 courses, hors d'oeuvres, soup, entree, main course, salad, dessert etc., each served with the appropriate type of wine. The French people were good at that. The meal lasted some 2½ hours, and ended with a glass of liquor. There was fish (entree), chicken or beef roast, all the side dishes, such as olives, pickles, vegetables etc., and, for dessert, cheese with French pastry. Joe and I gorged ourselves. We hadn't had a meal like that in months. We ended up sitting around the table sipping cognac brandy. By the time the sun was ready to disappear behind the hills, we were pretty well lit.

We started home from the village up another steep hill on a single track road. We got about half way up when a French hayrick loaded with fodder started down the road. I was going so fast that I couldn't avoid a close shave, and it was! I pulled out on the berm and went around that wagon on two wheels. Poor Joe, he was scared stiff the rest of the way home. It was a miracle that we didn't go over the bank. We got back to camp before dark, however, and Joe didn't want to ride with me again. It was quite exhilarating for me, but I was really "lit" that evening.

Joe had been a chef at the Hotel St. Francis in San Francisco and had enlisted in the 23rd Engineers out there. We made him head chef, and he handled the job for the 1st Detachment. He could make canned salmon or canned corn beef into something tasty. He did most of the cooking for the officer's mess where we had one. Years later in Springfield, Illinois, I ran into him at the Chicago and Alton station, when I was with the Illinois State Highway as Assistant Engineer of Design. He was in charge of an extra gang on the railroad. Major Watson, the former battalion commander, got him the job. Watson was General Manager of the railroad at that time. Joe twitted me about our fast ride on that day. I often heard from him afterwards, until we came back out West.

Our meat man invited some of the group to go boar hunting back in the wooded hills. Some of the officers tried it, but I don't think they got any game. It was a dangerous sport, as when a wild boar charges you, you either kill him outright or get out of his way fast.

On the Fourth of July, we organized a baseball team and went to the mountain resort of Vittel, a hot springs in the Vosges mountains not too far from us. Felt organized the team. There were two professional ball players; one, who had played in the majors, and one for the Los Angeles Angels of the Coast League. They were sore that one of them didn't manage the team. I finally had to call Felt off to keep peace. He had also played professional ball in a minor league down in Texas. He was a graduate of Texas A. and M.

It was finally straightened out and the team organized. We did some practicing, and a game was scheduled with a sanitary outfit stationed at Vittel. The hotel, casino, buildings, etc., had been turned over to the Americans for convalescing servicemen. I took half a dozen truck loads down to the game. It was a hot one, and we lost 7 to 5. Afterwards, we all had drinks at the seltzer water stands in the place. The waters were supposed to be healing. We got back to camp without incident, but had to make occasional stops to rid ourselves of the mineral water.



1 BIARRITZ. — Vue générale sur Plage. — LL.

General view of Biarritz



119 BIARRITZ. — L'Église Sainte-Eugénie et l'Hôtel d'Angleterre. — LL.

Saint Eugenie's church and the English hotel, Biarritz



The road to Gavarnie



Hotel du Cirque et le Cirque, Gavarnie



28 LOURDES. — La Basilique. — Vue plongeante. — LL.

The Basilica at Lourdes



61 LOURDES. — La Grotte. — LL.

The Grotto at Lourdes with the castaway crutches etc.



*The start for the Boar Hunt  
at Chaumont-La-Ville.*

The start for the boar hunt



*Vittel, Vosges July 4, 1918 Co. B. at Bat. Lt. Felt acting as  
umpire. Note the French War Widows in the foreground*

Co. "B" at bat, July 4, 1918, Vittel, Vosges  
Lt. Felt acting as umpire

During our stay in Breuvannes, we were called upon, in one instance, to aid a village in putting out a bad fire. The town of Merrey, situated a few kilometers to the southwest of us, sent a messenger over one day to get the local fire department (pulled and operated by hand) to come to their aid, as the entire village was going up in smoke. All the firemen were volunteers and had to put on their uniforms and medals, which took a little time.

We were asked to help, so I took a platoon, loaded them in a couple of our trucks, and we went over to Merrey. One side of the village was in flames, and two or three of the houses had their roofs down in the basement. These French villages were built solid on both sides of the road, which usually ran through the center. The walls were continuous, a house, barn, another house and so on. The fire had started in one of the barns and was burning through from one building to another. The people were milling around. They had six hand pumper engines available. People formed long lines for the bucket brigade, dipping water from the nearby creek, and passing it from hand to hand until it reached the pumper when it was dumped into the tank. A two inch hose with nozzle squirted water on the fire.

Our platoon was joined by one from the 20th Forester Regiment stationed nearby. It was commanded by a Lieutenant also. We tried to help, but we couldn't get enough water pressure going to do much good. We formed bucket lines with the French people, also took turns at the pumper working the handles in shifts.

Finally some one got the idea, put the pumpers in line, one pumping from the creek into another, and just use two lines. We did this, and managed to get enough water on the fires to put them out, but not before half a dozen of the two story houses and barns were mere shells.

While this was going on, some of our men helped the people get their furniture and possessions out of the buildings. Two of my men entered a cellar, and as I came down to warn them that the roof was about to fall in, struggled up the steps with a cask of wine and a jug of hard liquor. They no more than got this out when the roof and second floor crashed to the bottom. These houses and barns were all built of limestone from the local quarries, but the partitions, floors, roofs etc., were all of wood. The barns of course, had their hay mows full of the new hay, and they really burned. We assumed that the fire was a case of spontaneous combustion caused by the close packed new hay being ignited. We never knew for sure. No one seemed to know.

The fire out, the mayor and officials of the town served us full lunch with plenty of wine, and our troops ended up with a hilarious evening. I had a hard time rounding them up and getting them back to camp. The surrounding villages furnished their fire equipment, or the entire town would have burned down. As it was one side of the village was almost in ruins.



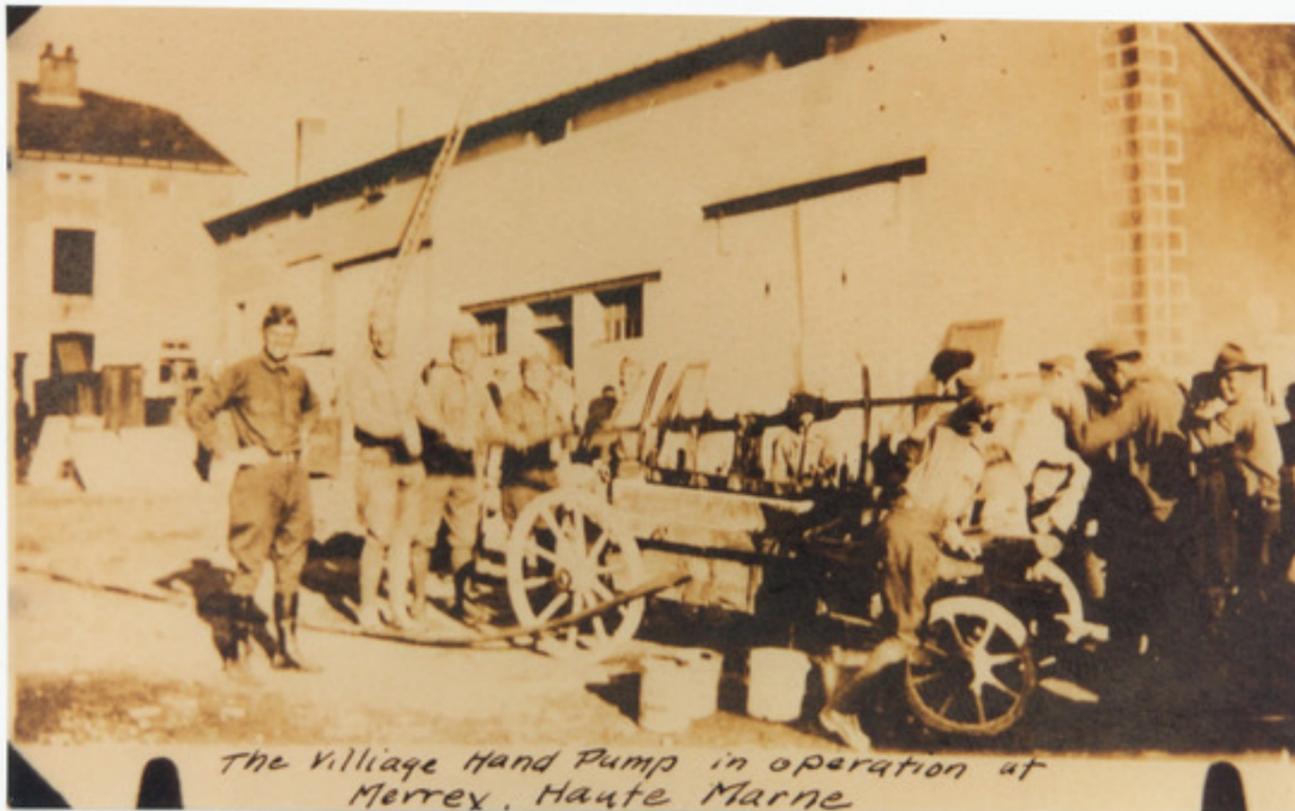
*French and American troops mingle in their common battle against burning buildings*

French and American troops mingle in their common battle against burning buildings, Merrey, Haute Marne  
August, 1918



*U.S. Troops operating French Fire Apparatus  
at Merrey, Haute Marne*

U.S. Troops operating French fire apparatus at Merrey



*The Village Hand Pump in operation at  
Merrey, Haute Marne*

The village hand pump in operation at Merrey

I occasionally had to go to Langres, Haut Marne (French province) to check on and attend to several small detachments stationed at or near there working on the main roads. These were in constant use and took an awful lot of pounding by our heavy equipment. Sergeant Paul was there at gas school, and several of the non-coms were attending officer's school, so I usually saw them when in town. Page 131 shows some of the country and the old walls of the town.

It was during the later part of our tour of duty in Breuvannes that I had an accident that nearly sent me to the hospital. I was still riding solo on one of our motorcycles, and was on my way to one of the jobs to inspect it. I came to a railroad crossing, double track on the Est line. The railroads were guarded by watchmen (their women, all the men were at the war) who had to open the gates to let you cross the tracks.

This was the opposite of our system where the gates remain open, and only are closed when a train approaches. The gates were standard metal pike and wire, swung on hinges from the fence post on the left hand side as you approached them. I stopped at the first gate and blew my horn. The lady tender came out of her house and started to open the opposite gate. I gunned the motor and inadvertently threw the clutch in gear. I crashed through the first gate, knocking it off its hinges, barrelled across the tracks into the second one, flipping it back (the tender had beat it out of the way) and roared on for 50 feet or so until I hit a mud hole and skidded sideways, falling on my left side with the machine on top of me. The cycles were heavy in those days. My left arm was numb, and I was pretty well bruised as well, skidding along those rock roads. I came to and got up but couldn't lift my left arm. It wasn't broken but badly bruised. I got the machine up, apologized to the lady, (I suppose the Est R.R. sent a bill to Chaumont), and got started again. I couldn't do much, and it was several weeks before I could raise my arm above my shoulder. I should have been hospitalized, but I wouldn't leave the company. Too many officers were sent to other outfits after release from the hospital. After this, I put on the side car, and had one of the men do the driving.

In September, we were ordered to move from Breuvannes to Bazoilles, which was about 8 kilometers south of Neufchateau, the large town from which a lot of our operations were conducted. We maintained the main thoroughfare from that point

# ROAD BUILDING IN FRANCE HAS ITS THRILLS

## Lieutenant Fred Stilson Writes of Work Near No Man's Land.

Lieutenant F. C. Stilson of Company B, First Battalion, 23rd Engineers, already famous for its work on the front in France, under date of May 23d writes home as follows:

We are stationed in a permanent barracks in the center of one of France's beautiful and rather large forests, full of small lakes, abounding in fish and game, on one side of a long range of hills which unfortunately are held by the enemy and consequently makes it rather uncomfortable for us at times. We have been here in this American sector at the front some three weeks and most of the time organizing working parties of engineers troops on the various roads leading up to the towns and villages immediately in rear of the trenches; so that at times our work has been subjected to no small amount of trouble from observation by the enemy, although we have always worked swiftly finished up and got away before the Boche artillery commenced firing.

Thanks to our captain's personal selection, he being the man who built the Panama-Pacific exposition as engineer, our company contains 250 picked men, all experts in their lines, and already here in France, Company B of the 23rd Highway engineers is well known for the high class of work it has done and the successful exploits carried out while at one of the American bases, and has also been at the front and has already been under fire twice from the enemy's artillery, or nearly so, as some of the shells fell as close as three hundred feet from where our men were working.

One evening we were called to repair a stretch of road between two small villages, both salients stretching out into No Man's land, and as there was danger both from shell fire and snipers, the work had to be carried on at night. Fortunately a reconnoissance had been made by one of our officers during the day and so the work was planned for the following evening. At sundown we set out with a wagon train of material and enough men to handle the job. We arrived at the scene about ten o'clock at night and it was a clear moonlight night and as still as a summer night there at home. We stole out into the advance town quietly, the same being almost a heap of ruins from shell fire in former days, when the Germans held the place.

ers were abroad and that we might expect trouble from enemy patrols, there having been a wagon train fired on a short time before by a Boche patrol and there were several American patrols out looking for them.

The plan having been worked out beforehand all went without a hitch. Up over a hill, down a little valley and on another hill crawled the wagon train wagons, several hundred yards apart so as not to draw shell fire or attract too much attention from enemy patrols in No Man's land, some three hundred feet away. The road was well

pitted with shell holes. Some fifteen or twenty of these had to be filled and leveled off with rock and binder. As each party of men and teams knew just what to do, as each shell hole was reached the loads were dumped and swiftly and silently the men filled and covered the Boche's attempts to destroy our means of supplying our salients with food and ammunition. After some three hours the job was completed and we picked up our tools, loaded up and started back to camp. The evening was very like the night of the Fourth at home. Rockets, star shells, search lights and signal lamps were in abundance, with an occasional crash of an outpost's rifle, and the far off rumble of a cannon or two taking pot shots at each other.

We were informed by one of the sentries to watch out for a gas attack as the faint breeze was suited for it. So each man was cautioned to carry his gas mask at the alert position on the chest for instant use, all having been drilled to put them on in six seconds.

After about an hour's work the infantry patrol near us came in and reported no trouble. So all breathed more easily and we finished our work without being discovered and shelled.

Just as we loaded up the wagons and started back to our base, all bedlum broke loose. Our artillery opened up and for half an hour the horizon was red with the flash of guns and the sound was like that of a whole series of explosions in blasting out rock in a railroad cut or twenty thunderstorms in one, and on the other side where the enemy was it was lighted up with the flash of the explosions, and the detonations of the shells was indeed deafening. Also it gave one an uncomfortable feeling to hear the whistle of the shells in the sky above one's head and fearing an answering shelling which might directly affect us and our work.

We arrived at camp at an early hour in the morning and gladly turned into our bunks, thankful that we had done our work with no men lost and glad to get back for even a short spell of sleep before the day's work which was yet ahead.

A week ago I took a long horseback ride in rear of our lines and passed down one of the valleys already famous in the war and saw the ravages wrought by the Germans and it is terrible—houses blown to pieces from shell fire, doors and windows riddled with bullets. There was evidence of severe street-fighting and a number of buildings had been destroyed by bombs dropped by air craft. I hope that the people at home have awakened to the fact that we have a war on our hands

and a gigantic task to perform and every one has to help to his bit."

In concluding his letter the lieutenant says: "I never will come back until it is finished and there is no danger of the Germans spoiling our homes and happiness again."

The Lieutenant is the son of Mrs. Mary J. Stilson, corner Cedar and Fremont streets, and enlisted early in the civil engineers corps.

## LIEUT. STILSON ARRIVES HOME

### SPENT SEVENTEEN MONTHS IN FRANCE—HAD VARIETY OF EXPERIENCES.

First Lieutenant Fred C. Stilson, son of Mrs. Mary J. Stilson of North Cedar street, arrived home late Saturday night from France, where for seventeen months he had been serving in the Twenty-third engineers and most of the time was in command of his company. He saw considerable service and had a large variety of experiences. He has vivid recollections of five weeks of strenuous work at "No Man's Land," and during the last two months was engaged not far from the American front in keeping roads in good condition. The company which he commanded was much of the time engaged in repairing roads and bridges damaged by German shells, and he described this as during the last few weeks of the war a very strenuous job. It was necessary to keep the roads in good shape so that transportation could be carried on and so that the movement of men and supplies would not be halted. He saw some of the details of the final battle and says that the men were for some days skeptical about the armistice lasting. After the armistice was signed he was engaged for several months in reconstruction work in northern France. He describes the ruin and havoc as something terrible and says that in some sections human bones and war implements cover the ground.

He was officer of the day when the steamship on which he sailed arrived in Boston, and he says that one of the hardest jobs he had was to keep the boys from clamoring all over the highest points of the ship when that city came into view. Such cheering and yelling were never heard, such was the joy of the 2,800 soldiers.

At Camp Devens, the company gave the Lieutenant a little banquet, at which they made some speeches telling him how much they thought of him, how sorry they were to part with him and wishing him well.

His early arrival home is due to the fact that he was put in charge of the troop train to Camp Grant where he arrived last week. His wife joined him there and they came on here. He brought back interesting war relics.

One of his interesting incidents relates to his having charge for some time of a large company of German prisoners.

Lieutenant and Mrs. Stilson expect to spend the week here.



# Army of the United States of America

To all who shall see these presents, greeting:

The Adjutant General  
Washington, D. C.

September 14, 1922

*This is to certify that*

The records show Frederick Clarence Stilson a First Lieut., Engineers, US Army at date of discharge and so much of this discharge certificate as shows otherwise is erroneous

by direction of the President and under the provisions of section nine of the act of Congress, approved May eighteen, nineteen hundred and seventeen,

Frederick Clarence Stilson The Adjutant General *[Signature]*

First Lieutenant, Infantry, U. S. A.

was honorably discharged from the military service in The United States Army

at Camp Grant, Illinois,

on the 18th day of June, 1919

*[Signature]*

Brigadier General, U. S. A. Commanding.

True extract certified by me on November 27th, 1920.  
for the purpose of obtaining Victory Medal by Mail.

*M. J. Rominger*  
M. J. Rominger  
Notary Public.

A true copy of this document made by  
me on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of October, 1923  
for the purpose of securing the Illinois bonus.

*Benjamin Levy*  
NOTARY PUBLIC  
In and for the County of Los Angeles State of California.

OCT 10 1919

Charles J. Sargent  
ASST. R. O. U. S. A.  
Los Angeles

### MILITARY RECORD

Battles, engagements, skirmishes *St. Mihiel (Off) Meuse-Argonne (Off)*  
*Ypres (Det.)*

Medals awarded *None*, 191

Wound chevrons authorized *None*

War service chevrons authorized *Two gold, July 24, 1918; January 24, 1919.*

Remarks *Sailed from U.S. January 24, 1918; Returned to U.S. June 9, 1919; Last organization: 23rd Engineers. Officer's Own Statement.*

Camp Grant, Ill. *June 18, 1919*  
Paid in Full \$ *202.16*  
Including Bonus of \$60.00 Act. of Feb. 24, 1919.

*S. H. Francis*  
S. H. FRANCIS  
Captain Q. M. Corps

*H. D. Todd*  
Brigadier General, U.S.A. Commanding.

ASSOCIATION  
DES  
ANCIENS COMBATTANTS  
DE VERDUN



Monsieur et Cher Camarade,

**"ON NE PASSE PAS"**

*Commission du Livre d'Or*

SIÈGE SOCIAL : HOTEL DE VILLE

Compte Chèques postaux NANCY 70-65



Comme suite à votre demande j'ai l'honneur de vous informer que je vous expédie ce jour la Médaille de Verdun ; vous trouverez dans la présente le diplôme indiquant que votre nom a été inscrit sur le Livre d'Or des Soldats de Verdun.

Veillez agréer, Monsieur et Cher Camarade, l'expression de mes sentiments les meilleurs.

*Le Président de la Commission du Livre d'Or,*

**R. PANAU.**

*Aux Grands Chefs - Aux Officiers - Aux Soldats - A Tous*

*" Héros connus et anonymes, vivants et morts, qui ont triomphé de l'avalanche des barbares et immortalisé son nom à travers le monde et pour les siècles futurs, la Ville de Verdun, inviolée et debout sur ses ruines, dédie cette médaille en témoignage de sa reconnaissance. "*



Le nom de M FREDERICK CLARENCE STILSON,

First Lieutenant Infantry,

23rd Engineers, U. S. Army,

est inscrit sur le Livre d'Or des " SOLDATS DE VERDUN "

St. Mihiel off., Meuse-Argonne Off. 1918

Le Président des A. C. de Verdun  
" On ne passe pas "

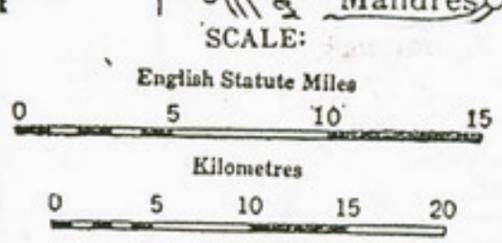
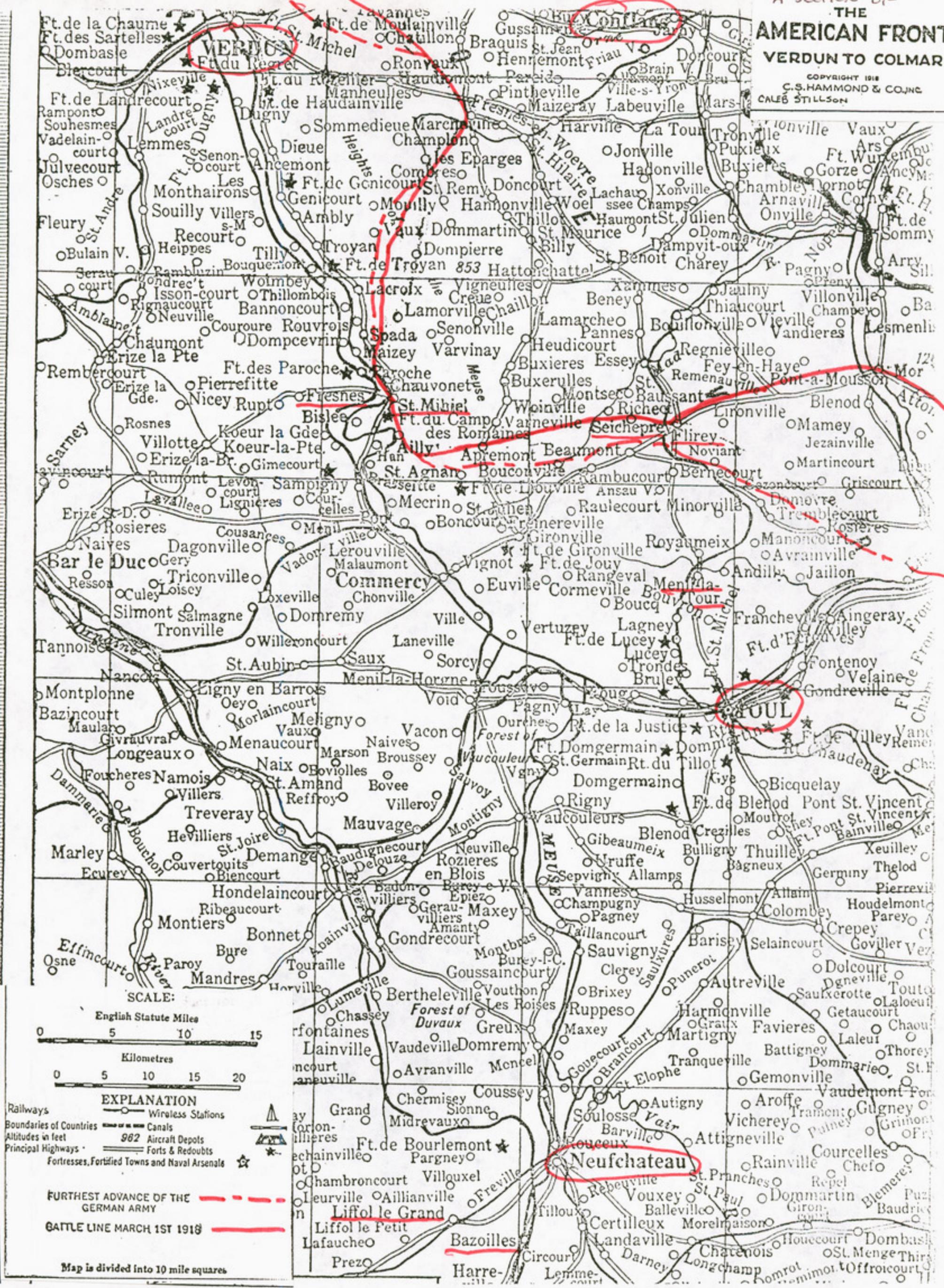
Le Président  
du " Livre d'Or ",

Le Maire de Verdun,  
Député de la Meuse,



A SECTION OF  
**THE AMERICAN FRONT**  
**VERDUN TO COLMAR**

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 C.S. HAMMOND & CO., INC.  
 CALLED STILLSON



**EXPLANATION**

Railways ————  
 Boundaries of Countries ————  
 Altitudes in feet 962  
 Principal Highways ————  
 Fortresses, Fortified Towns and Naval Arsenal

Wireless Stations  
 Canals  
 Aircraft Depots  
 Forts & Redoubts

FURTHEST ADVANCE OF THE GERMAN ARMY ————

BATTLE LINE MARCH 1ST 1918 ————

Map is divided into 10 mile squares



View of the reservoir de Charmes near Langres on the  
road from Montigny-le-Roi to Langres



View from the city walls of Langres, Haut Marne over  
looking the valley of the Marne River showing Base  
Hospital #26

to the city, as well as the side roads in the vicinity.

At the same time, the second detachment, under Lieutenant Felt, moved to Liffol-le-Grand, which was located on the main road between Chaumont and Neufchateau. They took care of the road between that village and Neufchateau. Some of the company "A" men were in that vicinity too under Lieutenant Sleight. Bazoilles was the area occupied by several of our base hospitals, and those of us who were in command of these detachments lived in the officer's quarters at that base, Lieutenants Carpenter, Sleight, Heintz, the medical officer assigned to us, and several others.

While there, the St. Miheil offensive started, and as I had to go to Battalion headquarters on business for the company, (I had just been placed in command), I left the morning of the second day of the battle with the motorcycle side car, and the corporal who was driving me.

We proceeded north from Neufchateau towards Commercy and then up towards Mt. Sec, which had been captured by our troops the day before. Our headquarters had moved forward with the beginning of the drive. Company "C", Battalion Headquarters, and a part of Company "A" were engaged in the drive, and I had a hard time locating Major Watson and the headquarters staff. I asked him, as the new commander of "B" Company, what he wanted us to do, and begged him to order us forward with the rest of the battalion to get us into the action. I was denied that request, but received the orders and instructions requested by my new command. We were under the orders of the advanced section Services of Supply, and he couldn't do much about it.

After leaving headquarters, my driver and I went forward sightseeing to find out what the war was really like. Mt. Sec had fallen the day before, together with the entire salient of the Toul sector, so we kept on up the road to an artillery park. The 145th Field Artillery (75's) was parked nearby waiting for orders to go into action again. I ranged around, as it was an Illinois outfit (32nd Division), and whom should I run across but an old buddy of mine from former Company "C" of the 6th Illinois Infantry. He had been a corporal then, when I was a sergeant, and now he wore the bars of a Captain of Artillery and commanded a battery of four French 75's.

We exchanged greetings, and I had field chow with him, although it was well past noon. And while chatting about the war and what each had been doing in the meantime, an explosion occurred near by. We rushed over to see what had happened. Three of the men of this battery had entered a German dugout and had tripped a wire that had exploded a booby trap. One was badly wounded, the rest slightly. They had been hunting

for souvenirs, a common failing of our troops in that area, and were paying the penalty for disobeying orders not to go into dugouts until the demolition squads had checked on them. We got an ambulance, administered first aid, and sent them back to the medics to work on. I got the first blood of the war on my hands then.

After leaving my friend of the artillery, we continued forward slowly until we had crossed over the German line of trenches, and were almost up to the firing line. The military police wouldn't let us go further without orders, and, as an occasional enemy shell came whistling over, we turned back joining the long line of empty ammunition trucks, ambulances with the wounded, and other miscellaneous traffic. It was slow going. Coming up, we traveled fast, as we could go around most of the heavy traffic, the ammunition and the ration trucks, the empty ambulances and an occasional staff car.

When we got back to Mt. Sec, we parked the side car, and both of us went into that fortification to see how the enemy lived. The mountain was honeycombed with passage ways, large assembly rooms, and officer's quarters panelled with knotty pine, and newly furnished. We found one cozy room that even had a piano in it, comfortable chairs and lounges. I guess they even entertained their women there, since they had held this position for four years. They had plenty of time to fix it up.

Forward, the hill was fixed with galleries parallel to the front with cross passages leading to gun emplacements housing 77's and 155 mm guns, as well as concrete emplacements for machine guns for direct fire and for cross fire to cover an attacking enemy. We had evidently bypassed this fortress and come in from behind, as I understood later. The shells from the 155's were the ones we were bothered with while at Rangeval. There were quarters and mess rooms for the men manning this fortress also. We spent a couple of hours here looking around. We didn't touch or pick up anything, as we did not know whether the place had been booby trapped or not. The enemy hadn't time to remove much of the equipment. It was still there 24 hours after it had been overrun.

We left here about six P.M. and returned to battalion headquarters where we spent the night and got our chow. I borrowed a blanket and a cot, and the Corporal was taken care of by the enlisted personnel for food and lodging. We left early the next morning and returned to our own headquarters.

A few days after I had returned to Bazoilles, where our company headquarters were, the men in my detachment began to come down with the Spanish influenza. There were a total of about 48 men down at once. The Sergeants had to man the cook shack, and the Medical Officer was kept busy trying to battle the disease. Some were finally sent to the hospital, it got so bad, and there was a scarcity of beds (cots) there. I was busy chasing from the barracks to hospital and tending to other administrative duties for the company.

After about a week of this, I came down with the same disease. I was worn out from all the duties I had to take care of, and was an easy victim. I lay on my cot in the officer's quarters for about 3 days, and the medical officer, Doctor Henty, thought I ought to be sent to the hospital. George Sleight was still on his feet and used to come over to me and wave a little bottle of Benedictine, (green liquor made by the Benedictine monks) over my head and say, "Fred, you ought to drink a bottle of this, and you'd soon get well." I was too weak to even reply, and I was only half conscious and couldn't eat anything.

Doc Henty called the base hospital, and they sent two orderlies down and rolled me on a stretcher. They took me up the hill to Base Hospital 46, and dumped me on a cot in the contagion ward. The ride shook me up so that I commenced to improve. Next to me was a soldier with a screen around him. I asked the orderly what was the matter with the guy. He told me the man was dying. That scared me, and I commenced to get better. I remember the orderly bringing me in some food. There was a sliced tomato (canned) on a wilted lettuce leaf, and I went for it. Fresh salad in an army hospital, most unusual. I gobbled it down and was soon so improved that they transferred me to the convalescent ward, where I was placed in with about 100 wounded officers from the recent St. Mihiel drive.

These wards were regular barracks with an office and dispensary in front and a room for the nurses and orderlies on duty. There was only one nurse, a buxom blond. The others were male orderlies and medics of the medical regiment in charge of the hospitals. All the doctors were Lieutenants or Captains with a Major or Colonel in command.

I was incarcerated in this bedlam of misery for three weeks. On one side of me was a Captain of Infantry who had been shot through the chest during the battle. He had killed a German Major and had his luger pistol and his iron cross as mementos of his act. The bullet had passed through him, a small hole in front and larger where it had come out. He had to lie on either one side or the other to sleep.

On the other side of me was a young doctor, a lieutenant in the Medical Corps, who had taken shrapnel in the back of both legs. They were split from the knee to the ankle. He was in a dressing station at the front taking care of the wounded when the shell exploded behind him. It killed one or two men at the same time he told me.

Every day, the docs and nurse or medics came through the ward checking each of us and dressing the wounds of the victims. The doc next to me groaned with pain, as they had to clean out the gashes. The proud flesh had to be removed and the anti-decon solution (a disinfectant used at that time) applied from a tube and rubber hose. It took some time each day for this to take effect. He had to sleep on his stomach or lie on it most of the time. He couldn't talk much.

Most of the men in this ward would recover from their injuries. I was the only "flu" patient and felt rather ashamed when all around me were men disabled in battle. Every day a Red Cross train would pull in from the front bringing more injured men, and as they came in, the ones who could travel were evacuated to the rear and even sent home to the States for better treatment.

After about two weeks of care here, I was permitted to get up and was impatient to be discharged and returned to my command. I learned from some of the officers of our mess that Co. "B" had been reassembled and ordered to the front in preparation for the Meuse-Argonne drive. I wanted to get out of there and get on the job.

A few days later, I was well enough to attend a Red Cross party and dance given by the base hospital staff. I went and met a Red Cross girl from Kalamazoo, Mich. We hit it off fine. I had been in her town when I worked for the U.S. Government Interstate Commission. We danced and drank a lot (wine) and sang a lot about "Kalamazoo, direct to you." It was fun, and I needed the break from the somber atmosphere of the convalescent ward. Next day, I asked for my release, and it was granted, although I regretted it later on, as I wasn't quite well enough to assume the duties of a Company Commander. I was afraid of being shipped out elsewhere.

21

I got transportation and rejoined the company up in the Toul sector. I found that "B" was scattered all over the area, and detachments under sergeants were everywhere and attached to other units as supervisors in road repair and construction. Also we were to be transferred over to the formation of the Second U.S. Army and report to my old friend, Major Carl

Wirshing, who was the Assistant Army Roads Officer with headquarters at Toul. I do not remember the name of the town where we landed, but I had to "side car" from one place to another to keep my hand in, as I had to know what was going on in order to make my reports to Battalion and Regimental headquarters.

The pictures of the French air field on page 139 show the Spads flown by the French Air Force. We used to do a lot of work around these air fields and maintained the roads leading into them. Our contact with all French people, wherever we were stationed, was always friendly, and we did a lot to help them too.

During our stay at Bazoilles, I ran two trips to Domremy, Vosges, the birth place of Joan of Arc. Since Sunday was usually an off day in the advanced sector, we could use our trucks for something besides hauling rock. I took my detachment first and on a later date, the 2nd detachment. We packed our lunches along, supplemented with the local wine from the cafes nearby. The men enjoyed these trips, and we made it a point to take them to interesting places near where we were stationed from then on, except when we were ordered back to the front for the Meuse-Argonne drive.

A lot of the traffic around Toul was on the Rhine-Marne canal. The boats were flat and carried bulk supplies such as coal, grain etc. The rivers were used also for such traffic. During October and some of November, we were scattered around the Toul sector in various detachments. I had one headquarters at Trovenau Barracks outside of Toul for a while, and we directed operations from that area. Some of the men were assigned as technical instructors with German prisoners used in the quarries around Toul to cut out and break up the rock, also on the roads in that vicinity. There was an occasional air raid by the Germans in the Toul area, and we watched the French Spads chase them off. I don't recall ever seeing one shot down, but a couple of times their bombs came close to us. One day one landed in a field across from our headquarters, but it was a dud, and the demolition squad got busy and defused it.

One of my jobs was to go down to Neufchateau to the Quartermaster's headquarters each month, or when we could be spared, to get the company payroll to pay off the men. These were dangerous trips, as I carried many thousands of dollars in French francs. I would get the payroll signed, and that took trips around to each detachment, and then, with my side car driver, we went after the money.

There were both French and American deserters who did a lot of robbing of payrolls in this area. One officer was killed and his escort wounded. So my side car driver carried his loaded rifle and a pistol. I was armed as well with my 45 automatic pistol loaded and ready to use. It never hap-



Side view of a Spad, Neufchateau Aviation Field



2 Spads at the Neufchateau Aviation Field



Unloading crushed rock into trucks at Liffol-le-Grand

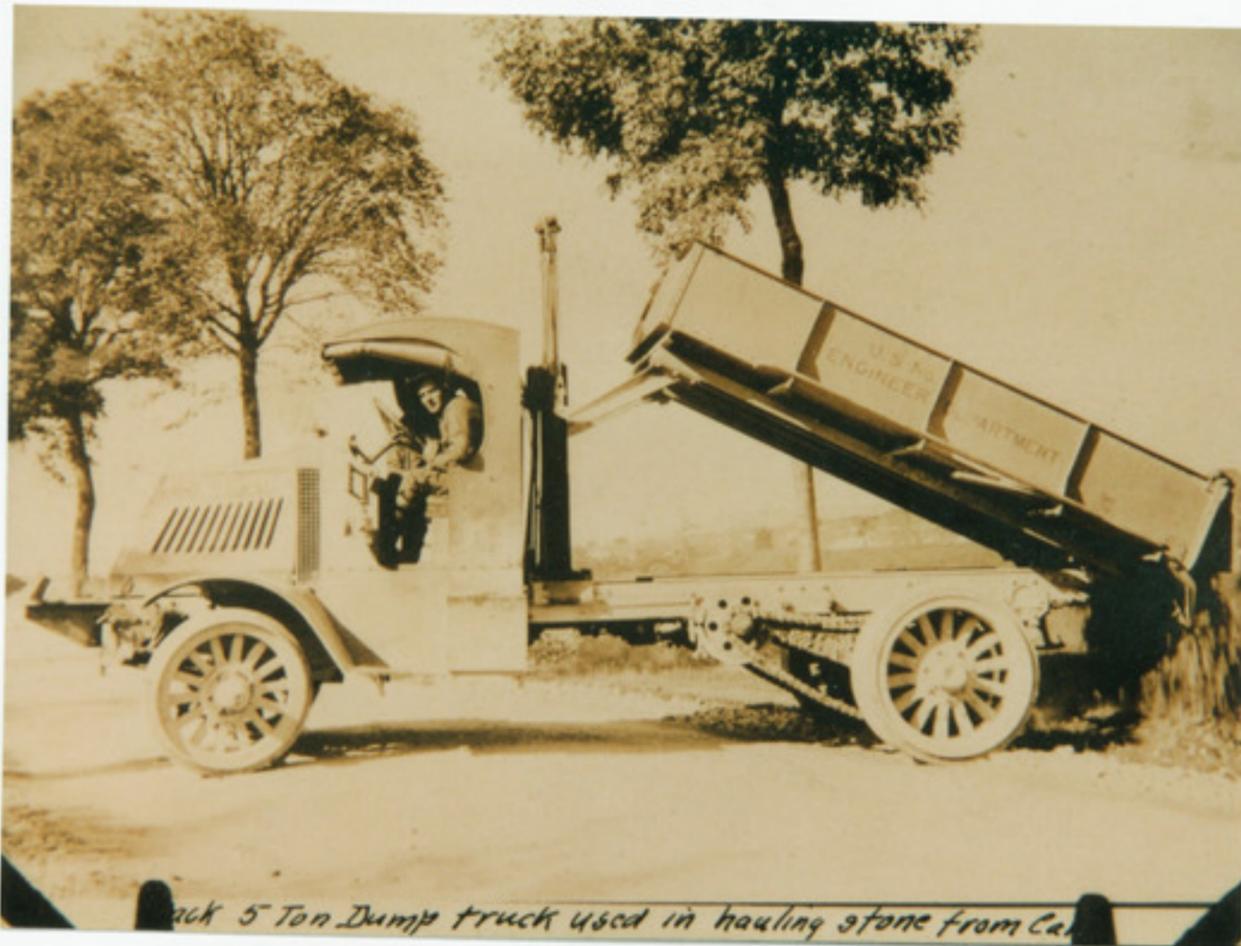


One method of getting clean clothes at Liffol



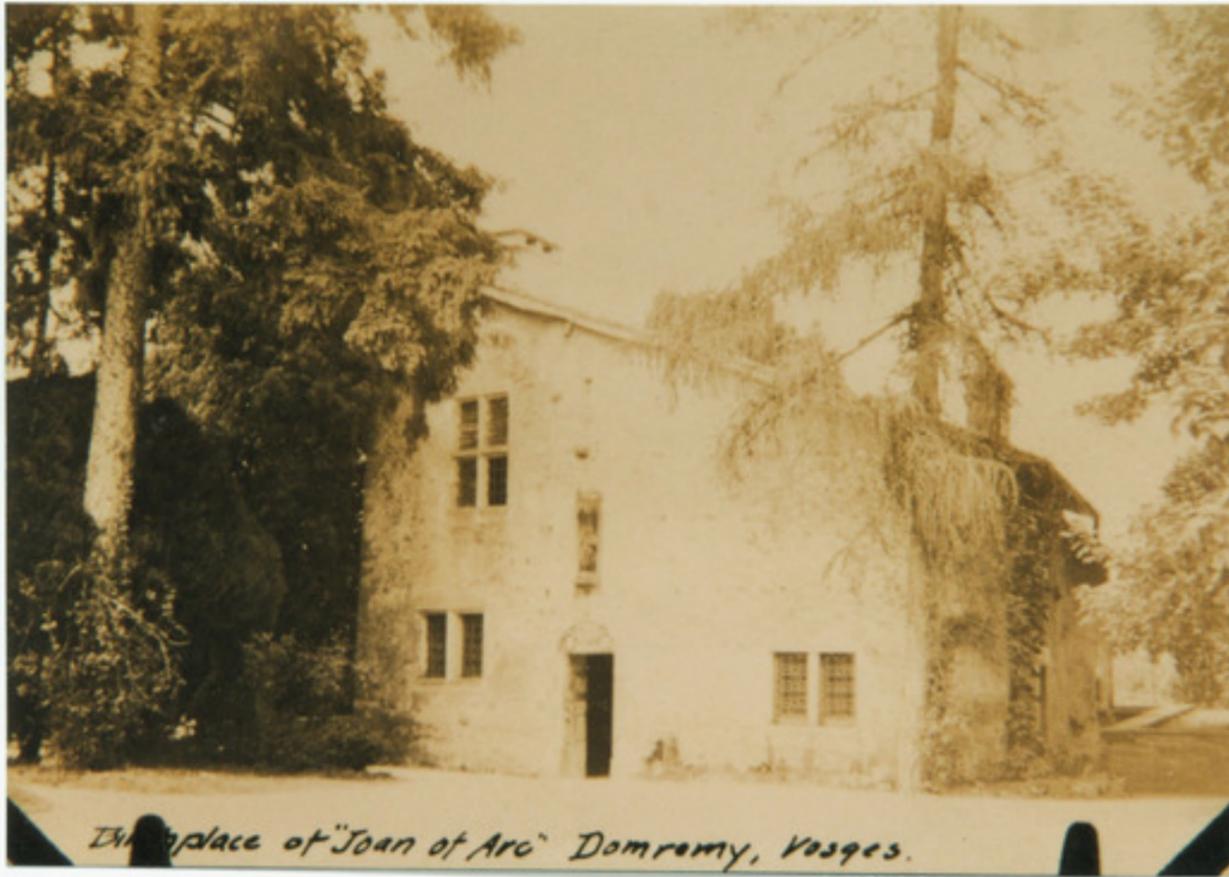
*Unloading Detail at Liffol-le-Grand-Vosges.*

Unloading detail at Liffol -le-Grand, Vosges



*Mack 5 Ton Dump truck used in hauling stone from Ca*

Mack 5 ton dump truck used in hauling stone.



Birthplace of Joan of Arc, Domremy, Vosges



The 1st Detachment, Co. "B" pays its respects to Joan and her basilica near Domremy, Vosges

pened to us. I carried a satchel full of money many times, but was never molested. After I brought the money to headquarters, we paid everyone off, and then out to the various detachments. This I carried out until our final trip to the coast to go home, some nine months after the Armistice.

At one station, where we moved our headquarters out of Toul during the Meuse Argonne drive, Hampton and I were together. We paid a French woman to cook for us and take care of our billets, as we were quartered in her house. We furnished all the food and materials, and, for a while, we ate real French cooking. She was a very pleasant hostess.

It was during this time that Lieutenant Carpenter was injured. We had to maintain the roads in our area up to the front, and the traffic was heavy. Cameons (French trucks) loaded with troops and supplies, ammunition trains, ambulances, and staff cars all made mincemeat out of our roads. All traveled at night without lights, and we kept men posted all along the main road in our sector with plenty of crushed rock to fill the chuck holes as fast as they occurred. Carpenter was on one of these inspection trips riding his motorcycle solo without lights when he crashed into the back of one of the large trucks. His right leg was broken in two places just above the ankle. He was placed in an ambulance and rushed back to the hospital, and there he lay for the rest of the war. We had several of our men in there too, and I went back to see him as well as them. His leg was almost severed, and only a small piece of flesh held the foot to the stump. They had him fixed in a cast so that the bone, which had to be taken out could grow together. He was hospitalized some 2½ years, and I didn't see him again until Essie and I headed for California from Illinois in 1921. I saw him at Boulder, Colorado, where he was a professor with the Colorado School of Mines. We stayed at his house while we repaired our old Model "T" Ford.

We had been transferred now over to the Second American Army, and our company headquarters was moved up near the base of operations. I was reporting to Major Wirshing and Colonel Pick of the Roads Section of their headquarters. The Company was still scattered over the area behind the new front that was forming when a Sergeant from Company "L" came to me demanding that I turn over all my transportation to him, as it was part of the First Army material. At this time we had one quad (ammunition) truck and two motorcycle side cars left at our headquarters. The quad was used for getting rations to

our German prisoners and the prison guard company. The other transportation had to be used by the two officers and the sergeants in charge of the work going on.

I refused, and the "L" Company Sergeant returned to his company commander with my message. A Lieutenant came next and I said "No!" Then a higher ranking officer threatened me with court-martial unless I turned our equipment over to him. I told him to go to hell, that we had to have that much equipment for our use, besides, we were not under the command of either the First Army or Regimental Headquarters. I then went to Toul to Second Army Headquarters and saw Wirshing and Colonel Pick, the Second Army Roads Officers. They said that the equipment was assigned to us in the States, and not to release it. They also sent a hot letter to Captain Hrass, Commander of Company "L", and he had no use for me after that, and later told me so, but the incident was closed.

At this time, our headquarters had under supervision on the roads of the Second Army area, the following; 2,000 German prisoners of war, guarded by a prison guard company of 70 men, one battalion of the 59th Pioneer Infantry, and the 515th Engineers (colored) under the command of Major Skeggs. (later the division engineer for the San Francisco Division, State Highway of California.) The total number of troops, besides our company of 150 men, was close to 2,579 men with our trucks and machinery.

I used to go along the roads with Skeggs, and he wanted to do this with his colored troops, and I'd say no! The orders from Second Army say thus and so. We'd often get plenty mad, but my people, Sergeants and Corporals, and even Privates, were scattered in small detachments all over the area bossing the job of road maintenance and repair.

One of my Sergeants, Paul by name, was to be court-martialed because he wouldn't let his detachment stand inspection on Sunday morning with the coloreds. I said no! I'll do the inspecting, and that held, and they called the court-martial off. Thus it was continuously over the last few weeks of the war.

At one of our German prison camps on one of my inspections, I found several men down with the flu. One young lad of about 16 years or so was really bad. The German Sergeant in charge of the men told me that he had to have hospitalization immediately. I checked the others and then sent for an ambulance. I had to leave before the ambulance got there, so I do not know whether the boy survived or not. It was a damn shame that

the prison guards could not have cared for him, but they were hard bitten and didn't care.

I asked the Sergeant why one so young was in the army and sent to the battlefront. He said, "They are taking them all now as a last resort." I learned later that this was true, for in 1921, while in Galesburg on a visit, I went with my brother, Arthur Stilson, to the meter repair shop of the Illinois Light and Power, of which he was the superintendent, and I met a young German who had immigrated to this country after the war. He told me that he had been in the lines opposite us and was barely within the age limit. He said that there were kids in the lines without much training and from 15 years on up. They had to take them, they had lost so many men.

The four German prisoner camps were mostly in the old ruined buildings shattered by four years of shelling and bombing. Some, however, were housed in the tarpaper and wooden barracks such as we had to have. They were not very comfortable, but had to do in war time. Our one truck had to supply them with rations, and we also had to furnish them with blankets, cots and kitchen material. All this fell upon the Co. "B" outfit, as all the Prison Guard Company did was to guard them and see that they didn't escape. None of them wanted to. They were fed up with the war, and when cornered in battle, they surrendered easily. So they were not hard to handle. Three of our men, a corporal and two privates, handled over a hundred of them in the quarries and without any side arms. Some of the boys spoke German, and they were assigned to these jobs. However, most of the German non-coms spoke some English, so we got along pretty well.

24

While we were stationed in Trouvenau Barracks in Toul before our last orders to the front, I happened to be down town in Toul one night to make a report to Major Wirshing. I was walking along, and I ran into a Lieutenant in the air service who was just out of headquarters and, lo and behold, it was a former classmate of the Galesburg High School. He was feeling rather low, as that day two of his squadron had been shot down by the German Air Force. I told him to come on into a cafe and have a drink, which he did. It seems that they sent them out in threes, a point and two wing men. The point and wing man were shot down, and the other escaped. He told me that he was to go out the next day. I wished him luck, and departed for the barracks. Later I ran into him when I was working for the California Highway Commission in Division 7 at Los Angeles. He got on the elevator one noon as I was go-

ing up. He had been in Portland, Oregon, and was down in Los Angeles on business. We had another get together. He lasted out the war, as there were only a few days of fighting left when I met him.

AT Trouvenau Barracks in early November, we were awaiting orders to go to the front again in support of the Second American Army on road maintenance. The men were getting pretty touchy and irritable, and one night all hell broke loose. Two of the guys had been into town and came back lit to the gills. It was late after taps, and the other guys in the room told them to pipe down and not make so much noise. Well, it started a general fight and, before they finished, the place was a shambles. The First Sergeant slept in the office next door with a couple of non-coms. They tried to quiet the men, but the drunks attacked them too. A sergeant came up to my quarters to get me, as I was the only officer with the detachment.

I dressed and went down and landed in the middle of it. When they saw me, they quieted down. Cots were overturned, and things were in a general mess. I ordered all to set things to rights and get to sleep. They did obey me. The next morning, I held court in the office. The liquor had worn off, and one of the drunks said he wanted out of this so and so company. I told him he was in it for the rest of the war, whether he liked it or not. He wanted to be transferred out of Company "B". Not so. I confined the two to quarters for the week and put a guard on them. A lot of high words were exchanged between us, but I was mad after trying to do so much for the outfit. They finally cooled it and were all right afterwards. When we parted in June of 1919 in Camp Devons, Mass., they thanked me for my consideration, as I could have had them court-martialed and sent to prison for disobedience of orders in time of war.

These incidents were always occurring, but I was loathe to bring charges against any man in the outfit. However, there were 13 cases of venereal disease, which we were obliged by the Medical Department to bring to summary court. (One officer acted as judge and jury.) These were handled with 3 month loss of 2/3rds pay and confinement to quarters, or such punishment as the officer should elect. I made it as light as possible, however. We kept our troubles to ourselves anyway.

While there, I had a panel truck taken from us by a Lieutenant of another outfit. (Different regiments or organizations sometimes got away with stealing the other's equipment). The guy got into the parked truck and drove off. The top sergeant saw him, and our guys chased him with the motorcycles. They got him and brought the truck back with him as a prisoner. They brought him into the office, and I dressed him down and said. "Next time, it's a court-martial for you, if we catch

you doing this again." He was only a freshly made shavetail (2nd Lieut.) and we sent him on his way. He was plenty scared!

25

About 3 or 4 days before the Armistice, we were ordered to the front, and with our trucks and equipment, we headed for the towns of Beaumont and Flirey to take part in the drive on Metz, the fortified town held by the Germans. We landed up there in the rain and reported to the roads officer of the 4th U.S. Division, which was also getting into position to attack the German lines. There were some abandoned barracks near Flirey, and we moved in. We had to prepare temporary bridging for getting the artillery over the German trenches in the advance, so we were to follow the infantry attack as closely as possible. I knew that this was it! And some of us would get hurt, once we caught up with the lines of infantrymen. We were already to go on the morning of November 11, 1918, when the war was called off. I had slept that night in the old tower of the ruined church shown on page 150.

Men from the 4th Division, during those few days, dropped in to our cook shack for a hand out and a cup of coffee. We were glad we could help them. They had marched all night, they said.

26

I have not mentioned the participation of the Salvation Army or the Y.M.C.A. at the front in this narrative so far. When I was up front during our stay at Rangeval during the month of May, I ran into the Salvation Army, coffee and doughnuts right up in the front lines. They set up shop in Brussey and Borccaville, and I stopped to get a bite and a drink. There was a man and woman who didn't seem to worry about shell fire or other interruptions provided by our German enemies. They, the "Army" treated me fine, and I always found them willing to go anywhere to help a soldier in the lines.

On the contrary, I saw very little of the "Y" up front. They mostly maintained "huts" back in the advanced section, S.O.S., where a soldier could go and get a snack or buy a pack of cigarettes. I heard it said they overcharged for the latter, but I do not know, as we had our own cigarette supply through the company exchange and fund. We also snagged several boxes at the pier at St. Nazaire one time, when the ship that was unloading them dropped the net on the wharf and broke the boxes



Canal boat on the Rhine-Marne canal near Void



German prisoners operating a quarry at Chaudeney supervised by Company "B" men.



*St. Mihiel from the west bank of the Meuse River*

St Mihiel from the west bank of the Meuse River



*St. Mihiel, Meuse, showing German dugouts*

German dugouts, St Mihiel, Meuse.



Side view of the tower of the Basilica  
St. Joan of Arc at Domremy, Vosges



Fort du Camp des Romains - St Mihiel-Meuse after four years of shelling



Cemetery monuments destroyed by shell fire.



Portion of road through shelled area



Railroad bridge S/W of Flirey blown up at the beginning of hostilities in 1914. German lines to the left.



Parish church at Beaumont.



German telephone lines leading to the Verdun front



Caterpillar tractor and gun carriage for large howitzer left by the Germans on the American front.



Russian cannon captured on the Western front by American troops.



Portion of concrete defensive works built by the Germans.

open. Our guys were there and secured our share. However, I found that the "Y" was doing a lot of good in entertaining the troops when back for a rest from front line duty. They provided a place to rest and write letters and the necessary stationery. It wasn't necessary to have stamps as our mail went free.

27

Speaking of mail; due to the censorship order, I was supposed to read every letter written by the men in the outfit to their families, girlfriends etc. As there would be hundreds dumped into the office mail bag unsealed, I would read one at random and order the mail orderly to seal them up. The officers were evidently trusted and only two of my letters were ever opened, as we were allowed to seal ours up. Finally towards the end of the operations, I just let all the outfit seal their own and the censor's stamp was applied. I was too busy to attend to such details.

The censor's stamp came in handy, for, after the Armistice, we were allowed to send 20% of the men on leave to tour France and some of the allied countries. However, it required special passes to go to England. I got one for Sergeant Walker, whose folks lived in Edinborough, Scotland. The rest went where they wanted to in France or to the American leave area at Aix-la-bains in the French Alps. We fixed it so that any man whose turn came up could borrow enough money from the Company fund to last him until his next pay day, and then it went back into the "kitty." In this manner, we could keep a continuous rotation for every two weeks period. This did not apply to 3 day passes, as I could write one out, stamp it with the censor stamp, and away they would go over the week end. One man went to Paris, where he was only allowed 24 hours, out to Breuvannes to see his French girl friend, back to Paris for another 24 hours, out to Breuvannes to see his French girl friend, back to Paris for another 24 hours and then back to our headquarters. That was done often during our wait to go home.

28

After the Armistice, we hung around Flirey and Beaumont for a day or two, and then were ordered back to Toul and again into the Treuvanaux Barracks to await the disposition of the 2nd American Army. Since the war was over, they were organizing

the Third Army to go to Coblenz, Germany, as an occupation force. This town became the American headquarters, and mostly regular army divisions and units were used to form the occupying forces. The National Army troops and the National Guard divisions were slated to be evacuated home to the States. There were a lot of letters sent to the home congressmen and senators to get them back to the States as soon as possible. We didn't know what they would do with the special army troops such as our regiment. In fact, we were held over there some nine months before the order came to entrain for the French coast. It was a very trying 9 months for me.

While we were at Treuvbanaux, one of our men, who had wandered by mistake into the German lines and was taken prisoner, returned to us. He told of his mishap. He had been listed as missing in action. We had certain men, volunteers, who got up front to get a line on what would have to be done in no-man's land (the area between us and the Germans) to get the traffic over the rough spots, as the entire area was potted with shell holes, mine craters, and trenches, and, as the Fall came on, became full of water from the rains and swollen streams. This man just got too far and ran into a German patrol. They questioned him, and he replied the usual answer; name, rank and serial number, but they told him they knew what regiment he belonged to (the shoulder patch), and where we were stationed. Their spy system was better than ours. They knew all about us. I asked him how he was treated. He said there wasn't much difference between the two armies, that the food wasn't quite as good as ours, but he had to work harder in the woods back of their lines. They kept our prisoners in stockades back from the war area. He had to work on the roads there too. The men who volunteered for these jobs, four, were recommended for the Distinguished Service Cross by our officers, but the application got no further than the headquarters of the command we were reporting to. It was too bad, they deserved it. They risked their necks to get the information needed to help with the advance of the 2nd Army.

while still at Treuvanaux, we had Thanksgiving. Of course, the day was a holiday, so there was little or no work done. I sent the Mess Sergeant around the country with a truck and his detail to get all the chickens, ducks, geese and turkeys they could find, as we had a large crowd to feed, including visitors from other outfits. Sergeant Parziale had a big wad of francs from the company fund to spend, so he bought all he could. Besides this, we got extra rations including candy and nuts. The day started off with a football game between our company and a neighboring outfit. Our boys, under the coaching and also playing of Lieutenant Felt, a former player with Texas A & M, had got together a squad of 12 or 15 men who had played

formerly in college or high school. I did not indulge, as I was too light, and I knew I'd be taking a beating as a player because it would give the enlisted men a chance to get even with the officer personnel.

We got our equipment through either the Red Cross or the YMCA, I am not sure which, but the same way in which we secured baseball equipment. We laid out a field on the drill ground, put up goal posts, and went to work. The game was pretty close. I do not remember whether we won or not. Anyway it took up part of the day and gave us good appetites for the Thanksgiving feast. No, I didn't referee the game. Some other officers did. I kept my hands off as the "Skipper" of the outfit.

We sat down to a real Thanksgiving dinner about 2 o'clock, and we had everything. The cooks had outdone themselves. In connection with the kitchen and mess work, some of the men liked that job and were assigned permanently to it, and we managed to get them a little extra pay, which they deserved, as they labored long and hard.

After the meal was over, I was called upon for a speech, and so I got up and talked about going home, and how soon it would be. I predicted that we would be on our way in a couple of months and elaborated on that. I was to eat my words later as we were kept on the job some nine months before being sent home. We didn't have the "pull" that the drafted boys had and especially the Nation Guard Divisions. We were enlisted men and were kept over there on that basis even though shipping was available. The "George Washington," capacity 10,000 or more troops was kept in Brest harbor as long as President Wilson was in at the peace conference in Paris, although she could have made several round trips to the States with troops. We never could figure that one out. However, the President was boss.

I also made some "cracks" about the "Bolshivicks," as the Russian Revolution was on, and this I regretted later. It was rumored shortly that we were to be sent on up to Archangel in northern Russia to join with a combined allied and Imperial Russian force to take the rail line and country south to Petrograd, or St Petersburg, as it was called then. It got a lot of protests from all of us. However, we were never included in that army, and they didn't get very far anyway, as the Arctic winter was upon them, and they had a rough time of it. The idea was to retake Petrograd from the Communists, use that as a base to overthrow the Bolshevicks, who had ousted the Kerensky government, which was favorable to the Allies. The government in power under Lenin and Trotsky wanted no part of the Western Allies.

I usually, on occasions of going to the quartermaster's headquarters in Neufchateau, could pick up extras, like Lowney's chocolates (in cans), cartons of cigarettes, etc, and, being an officer, could get more than the standard allowance. As I didn't smoke, and only needed one can of candy, I gave them to the men. In that way we were able to have things that some of the other outfits couldn't get. We all did it, even though it wasn't exactly fair.

Around the 1st of December, we were ordered to proceed to a town up in the German sector called Villers sous Pareid. Here we took over the roads for repair and reconstruction. This town had been somewhat shot up, but the Germans had repaired a lot of the buildings and used them as quarters for the men, as well as headquarters for some of their organizations. We were under the direction of Major Skeggs. Skeggs and I quarreled all the time over combining my men with his colored troops. My Southerners, and especially the Texans, rebelled, and so I kept them apart as much as possible. We furnished supervision of the 515th Engineers, that was all. No working with them!

We settled down in the new area, and I had my three photographers take the field. I sent one to Paris for supplies and the pictures shown of the war area are the result. Everyone wanted pictures to take home, as the photo boys used their cameras to good purpose. Corporal Formes, Fred Belknap and one other man received three day passes by me to cover the area during week ends. They were busy developing, printing and distributing the shots. We all paid for them and most got complete sets.

While in Villers, we really got organized. We raided the German dumps nearby and secured iron cots, mattresses and other equipment, so that all had decent places to sleep. We assigned so many men to a house (there were no civilians around yet), and one barn we made over into a club house with tables and chairs for cards etc., and we organized another group as an entertainment bunch and built them a theater in a large barn. After each pay day, the big games were on in the joint. I kept away! It was against general orders.





*Villers - Sous - Pareid - German plane captured by our troops*

German plane captured by our troops



*Pintherville, Meuse (Near Harville) Close up of ruined homes after four years of warfare. Held by the Germans.*

Pintherville, Meuse. Close up of ruined homes after four years of warfare. Held by the Germans.



*German Trenches, near Marcheville. Note method of construction in swampy ground.*

German trenches near Marcherville. Note method of construction in swampy ground.



*Colored Engineer labor troops engaged on road work in the vicinity of Ararecourt Verdun-Ponto-Mousson.*

Colored engineer labor troops engaged on road work in the vicinity of Ararecourt, Verdun.



What was the main street of Fresnes



Ruins of an old chateau near Fresnes.



German trenches and dugout near Fresnes-en-Woerre



This was made of reinforced concrete about 3' thick and commanded the approaches and intersection of the roads.



Moat and parapet of Fort Tarannes on the N.E. line  
of the Verdun defenses.



Rear view of Fort Tarannes, Verdun, Meuse. Note barb  
wire entanglements in foreground.



A dugout inside one of the forts.



The price of holding Verdun. French graves near one of the forts.



The trenches before Verdun.



Mine crater and "No Man's Land" Verdun.



*Ruins of Verdun.*  
Ruins of Verdun



Showing condition of roads and forests in the vicinity of Verdun due to the effect of shell fire.



East gate of Verdun



Lieutenants Shaffer and Stilson in Verdun, Jan. 1, 1919



Captured German artillery at Maimbotel, between Longuyon and Briey.



Longuyon-France. Results of Allied Bombing.

Longuyon, France. Results of Allied bombing.



Men of Co. B. 23rd Engrs. Touring the Verdun  
Battle Front New Year's day 1919

Men of Co. "B", 23rd Engineers touring the Verdun  
battle front New Year's day, 1919.

We had salvaged some German trucks, and also a large motor which the electricians revamped into a dynamo, hooked up a gasoline engine, and we had a power unit. Some of the places we wired for electricity. We got plenty of material for that from the Germans for free. They, however, had already wired some of the houses that were used as offices and quarters for the officer corps. We, Lieutenant Felt, the dentist officer and myself moved in together. The mechanics of the outfit took one of the German tanks and rebuilt it into a rolling machine shop. All this equipment was under the command of Lieutenant Felt, as well as 13 dump trucks, two road rollers, a tank truck (water) and miscellaneous other mechanical equipment. When we started to move from one location to another, we were spread out on the road for a mile. All the equipment had been secured after the Armistice and while at Villers sous Pareid.

While we were at Villers, our supply sergeant, Kaough, had established his office next to Co. "B" headquarters, and some one had taken a can of gasoline into the room and somehow a fire started and the can exploded. Most everything in this office was destroyed, and we had to put the fire out as best we could. We had no fire fighting equipment, except the water trucks, so we had to extemporize with dirt, shovels, wet bed sacks or anything to smother the fire. They finally got it out before it got into our office. The solid stone walls between the buildings helped as the fire was contained in one room of the building. We had to replace material destroyed and repair the building.

Several things happened while we were stationed at Villers-sous-Pareid. We had constructed a rifle range so that the men could use up some of their ammunition in practice firing. The range was built in front of a high hill, so that the misses would be embedded in the slope behind, and there would be no spent bullets endangering anyone in the vicinity.

This range was used usually Saturdays or Sundays when the men were off, and the sergeants took turns supervising. One day, one of the men decided to use some German ammunition in his Springfield 30 - 30. It was unfortunate for him as the German rifle bullet is slightly larger in diameter than the bore of our rifles. The bullet stuck in the barrel of the gun and blew out the breech block, which struck him in his right eye tearing out the eyeball, which was just hanging by a thread. We rushed him to the dispensary and the dentist, who also acted as medical officer, bandaged him up, and we took him immediately to the nearest medical center. I do not know to this day whether he lost his eye or not. He was lucky in one way, that it didn't tear part of the skull protection off and kill him instantly.

I mention the dispensary. This was in one of the buildings which was allotted to the dentist, who set up his equipment and also had a lot of first aid stuff for emergencies, such as related above. His dental equipment was antiquated. The drills for filling teeth were worked by an apparatus attached to a foot pedal, which the doctor manipulated with his foot while he worked on one's jaw. I had a sample of it, as I had to have a tooth filled while there. There was no novocain, and we just had to take it. Otherwise, his office had a long table to stretch out on for minor injuries, if needed.

One of the boys had been souvenir hunting and had extracted a fuse from a German 6" shell. He was trying to defuse the explosive head, and, as the thing was cold and wouldn't turn, (it takes a certain type of wrench to turn it) he laid it on the hearth of the fire place where he had a hot fire going. He turned around to do something else, and then the thing exploded and blew the coupler timing device right into the fatty part of his "butt" (bottom that is). He limped to the dispensary, and "Doc" had to extract the head without anesthetic, with four of us holding him down. It was done as gently as possible, but it must have hurt like hell.

There were other incidents of a minor nature that had to be taken care of in this dispensary; cuts, accidents, bruises, etc., as well as the regular work on the teeth of the men in his company. Most of the trouble occurred when the men went hunting over the former battlefields, trenches and dug outs for souvenirs. One of the barns in the village was stocked full of artillery ammunition from the 77mm size to the larger 6" size, as well as boxes of cartridges for the German rifles and cases of hand grenades called "potato mashers", as they were like such an instrument with a large cylindrical head and a long handle. The head was of steel and held the explosive; the handle, the string or wire which, when jerked, set off the fuse and caused the detonation. They were dangerous playthings. The entire barn load of explosives, if set off, would have blown us all to bits. We unloaded it, trucked it to a large open field, where it was stacked up with other similar caches and later detonated. Each of the men had picked up, or secured, one of the German rifles, so we kept that ammunition. I had one myself. They were an accurate shooting weapon, and I used mine a lot in practice. I sent it home to Essie in three sections with five rounds of ammunition. The artillery shells did not have the heads in them. They were packed in separate boxes. These were dangerous, and that is how one of the boys got it in the rear. They were made like a safe lock with the timer, so that it could be set at so many seconds after firing. The firing started the fuse to burning in the detonator. Some were designed to explode on contact,

such as the larger caliber; the smaller to explode in the air as shrapnel over advancing troops. Hence the steel helmets we wore, as most of the head wounds came from this type of shell.

A tragedy occurred one day in setting off a pile of this ammunition. The negro engineers were handling this pile, and it was exploded prematurely killing four men and wounding several others. Someone had set a short fuse and caused the blowup before the men could get away. Generally we used the electric caps and wires to a detonator at some distance from the pile and had to get under cover from the rain of metal after the explosion. None of our men were hurt on these jobs.

We also had to unload the mines, or stacked shells, under the bridges in the German sector, which had been mined for some 12 to 20 miles inland from the front. A German officer came to instruct us on that. We had to unscrew the detonator head a certain way and withdraw it from the shell or charge. It was a tricky business. We worked on this with one detail supervised by the two powder men in the company. They knew their stuff, so no one got hurt.

One day I was on an inspection tour, when I came upon one of our fellows sitting on the stone coping of a bridge leisurely throwing hand grenades out into the water. He had two boxes of them he had picked up in one of the nearby trenches and was tossing them into the stream after he had pulled the plug to set them off. I jumped him and asked him why he took such chances. "Oh, just to see how high the water would go," he said. The rest we threw into the creek.

These bridges were dammed up by putting fagots, roots of trees, straw and mud into the upstream side to back up the water making a lake that couldn't be crossed by the infantry. They were also mined with explosives and sand bagged as well. At the German end were blockhouses, either of sand bags or concrete, with machine guns trained down the roadway. No one could cross anywhere but at these crossings. If the machine guns didn't get them, the blasting of the bridges would. We had to clear some 12 miles of this type of thing. It was part of the so called "Hindenberg line," a series of fortified hills with frontal and cross fire protected by barbed wire entanglements. with artillery in the rear, as well as the valleys all dammed up into lakes that could not very well be crossed except at the bridges, which were protected as I have described before. If we had had to continue through this, a lot more men would have died or been wounded.

There was a German cemetery just outside of Villers which had been well kept up and contained not only the bodies of the German officers and soldiers killed in that area but also the French soldiers. The Germans believed in taking care of their dead, but also they rifled the tombs of the French in the same vicinity.

The clubhouse that we had rebuilt for the men was fitted out with chairs, tables and such games and other amusing things that we could make up down at Neufchateau, and we had also constructed an indoor theater with a stage, footlights and scenery. (This bunch could do anything.) During the time we were there, we put on one play, had one of the other companies come around with a vaudeville show and also a regimental band, who put on a concert for us. The theater was also used by Father Cotter, our chaplain, to conduct Sunday services when he could get around, both Catholic and Protestant. However, we had no movies at the time, but the shows were mostly by the people with acting ability. The theater was equipped with benches to sit on. The stage had draw curtains and some scenery made by the painters in the outfit. Crude, but it did the business.

We celebrated Christmas at this place. We didn't have the feast we had at Thanksgiving, as we were in desolate country, and no one had been living there for some four years or so. However, the Mess Sergeant and his staff managed to get enough goodies from the quartermaster so that we didn't starve. The Chaplain was on hand for a Christmas mass, and, of course, someone found a fir tree and put it in the club room with home made decorations and candles. I walked in on a poker game and innocently turned around to look at the tree. Most everyone had received packages and gifts from home. Some were around the tree. I don't remember any Santa Claus, but everyone had a good time anyway. The French wine was in abundance too.

About this time, the Colonel of the Medical Detachment came around, and I hadn't been feeling so well, from a backlash of the flu in the latter part of September. He examined me and recommended a glass of port wine with each meal. So I started drinking port. We had to send to Neufchateau for the stuff.

We, the officers, had a sort of rumpus room in our building, and I used to put on the gloves with Lieutenant Felt occasionally. After three rounds, I was pretty well battered and bruised, but could take it better than I thought. Felt was a good boxer, and on the boat coming back to the States, he fought several bouts with men of the other companies.

I have said very little about Lieutenant Hampton or Lieutenant Cooper, who were with the third detachment, up until

this time. They were mostly with the 22nd Engineers operating out of Abainville, the light railway center in the S.O.S. advanced section. They were cited for the fine work they were doing by Colonel Robertson, Commander of the 22nd Engineers. They did everything from maintaining the roads in the center to operate locomotives on the R.R. lines up to the front. They maintained the machine shops and most of the other facilities in this camp, besides supervising the men of some of the companies of the 22nd Engineers.

I went up there one time on business for the company and, while there, who should I run into but W.A. Brewer, my former boss on ICC car #8 of the Interstate Commerce Commission. We had lunch together in the officers' mess. He was a Captain of one of the companies of that regiment. He had gone to the 2nd Officers' Training Camp and came out the same time that our old commander, Captain Baker, did. I did not see him again after that, although we corresponded a little. He and his wife lost their lives in a train - auto accident in 1925, when their car was hit by a local train on the C & N.W.R.R. out of Chicago. I was one of the witnesses on his will. Had some correspondence on that at the time.

On January 1st, 1919, I took a truck load of men over to the city of Verdun to inspect its surrounding fortifications. Our work took us over that far anyway and the pictures from pages 161 - 166 show what happened to that area in four years of warfare.



Looking from the German side of "No Man's Land"

We enjoyed the trip and went through one of the forts including its underground passages, its mess halls, living quarters, some as much as 100 feet down, and into the ammunition storage areas with hoists to get it up on top to the guns. The guns had all been withdrawn when we were there. We picked up a few buttons and pieces of uniform, as well as some old rusted helmets (French), belt buckles, and various other material left there by the French soldiers who had manned the forts. They say that in the 100 days used by the Germans to try to take the place, over 100,000 men died in the frontal attacks. "Ele-ne-passe-pas" (They shall not pass) really meant something here.

It was while we were at Villers also that some of the men took transportation and went on into Metz and toured the German forts there. They came back with a truck load of souvenirs including rifles, bayonets, helmets, gas masks, parts of uniforms, ammunition, and even pieces of field guns found there. I was not along on this trip, but they were generous and gave me most of the relicts that I brought home from the war. I had a trunk full of them, as I threw most of my uniforms and personal stuff like knitted sox (the Red Cross supplied us with so many that I had six pair and couldn't wear any of them because they were wool) made by the well intentioned ladies in the U.S. for the servicemen. "Socks for the soldiers," so it said. We got "socked" enough as it was. The French people returning to their ruined villages got most of my stuff. When we got to Villers-sous-Paried, there was only one individual there who had returned just as the Germans left. He found his house pretty much in ruins but started to rebuild. We helped him with materials like cement, timber, etc., salvaged from a nearby German dump. (A "dump" was a supply yard or area where any sort of material could be obtained by the fighting man to construct dug outs, trenches, etc.)

All the roads used to supply these forts and entrenchments were well camouflaged or protected from the enemy's sight by erecting posts, connecting wire, and branches of trees or other material intertwined in the wire. This enable the transport to proceed without detection to their destination with rations, ammunition, etc. However, even this didn't prevent an occasional shell from landing on a French train, or individual conveyance, if spotted from an observation balloon or high hill like Mt. Sec in our area. Four of our men were gassed while working on the road towards Mt. Sec once from an exploding gas shell. The rest escaped.

The East gate of Verdun, shown on page 164 was the original insignia adopted by the French Engineer, who helped lay out the capitol of the United States, Washington, D.C. He was an engineer and used this as the design for the Army Engineers.

(Pierre Charles L'Enfant 1754-1825, American Architect born in France. On President Washington's request, he submitted (1791) plans for the new capital city at Washington. He was dismissed due to various personal antagonisms, but in 1889, the year F.C. Stilson was born, the plans were exhumed from the archives, and in 1901 the capital was developed along their lines. - Ed.) It has been our shoulder patch ever since. It was officially adopted by Regimental Headquarters. We had used both the 1st Army, 2nd Army, Advanced Section of Supply, as well as our own design for the 1st Battalion, 22nd Engineers up until this time.

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About the middle of January 1919, we were ordered to move our headquarters from Villers-sous-Pareid to the town of Pierrepont up in Northeastern France. This was close to the German border and close to Belgium, as well as Luxembourg. This gave us an opportunity to get acquainted with this area as well as take trips up into Germany, Belgium and the Duchy of Luxembourg. I managed to get around to all those places, as we were there some six weeks or so and also got another 14 day leave to go to the resort area of Nice, France, on the Mediterranean sea. A new Second Lieutenant had reported to Co. "B" for duty, Lieutenant Robinson, who had been promoted at headquarters of the regiment from the grade of Master Engineer. "Robbie", as we called him, was OK with everyone, and he went along on leave with me, as he had one coming. Major Baker showed up about this time and took command of this area for road work and of the rest of Co. "B" and assorted troops. I remained in command of the local detachment.

After arriving in Pierrepont, we set about getting places to stay. The large textile factory in the middle of town had one large building which housed the machine shop. We took this over and our detachment proceeded to make themselves as comfortable as possible. We all had steel frame cots with mattresses and a usual allotment of blankets and extra clothing. A mess hall was created in one of the other buildings, and the kitchen crew located there.

These buildings had been stripped of their machinery by the Germans, so there was little left in the space formerly occupied by these machines. There was a heating plant of sorts which our guys got going to get some warmth in the place. We, the officers, occupied the chateau near the plant, and each of us occupied a room to ourselves. This was a very ornate building, even the walls had been covered with velvet cloth with designs on it. Some of the rooms had been scarred by the



Insignia



Quarry at Pierrepont

Germans cutting out pieces of the cloth on walls or slicing it down with knives for what purpose I couldn't figure out. There was heat, and bath rooms which we got to use once the system was checked on by our experts. We also used the main dining room downstairs and their kitchen for the officer's mess, as we had enough "brass" around by this time to rate such extravagance. Joe Sarthane was established here as the chef, and had his staff with him. We never had it so good.

We had to maintain the roads from Verdun to the German, Luxembourg and Belgian borders. There were other troops stationed in the same vicinity to furnish labor for our men to direct and supervise. Our trucks and quarry outfits operated the local quarry getting out the rock and trucking it out onto the job. Since it was the middle of Winter and often raining or snowing, we didn't get too much done. The pictures on page 176 show what happened when a truck got away on a slippery hillside road. There were people living in this town and more coming back all the time since the Germans had left.

One night they gave a dance in a hall there, and most of our outfit went. There were plenty of "fems" this time, but the French method of dancing was different from ours, being to whirl your partner around and around, jigging up and down to waltz time, which would soon tire one out. The French didn't seem to tire. We furnished the music with our extemporaneous orchestra, and the affair lasted most of the evening with time out for snacks, which we furnished also. I guess we had fun, I don't know. I sat in a box and watched.

It was during this period that "Robbie" and I decided to take our leave and go gadding to Southern France. I had saved some 650 francs or more out of my pay, there not being any expenses where we were except for the officers' mess, and at most of these stations, we either messed with the organization or arranged with the French people to feed us for a price and rations for them as well. So we were well enough heeled to take off and go on a real "binge". And we did! It was one of the most exciting trips I ever had while in Europe. I had had others, but not like this one. We packed our musette bags with extra underwear, sox and toilet articles and set out forthwith on our "permission" as the French say.

We left early one evening in February being driven to the railway station of Pierrepont by one of the men in the outfit. We got on a train loaded with French troops either on their way home or going on "permission". We found a seat in the



*This truck got away from its driver  
Pierrepont.*

This truck got away from its driver, Pierrepont



*through a stone house - and into a stone wall before overturning  
Pierrepont. The driver jumped - No casualties.*

The truck went through a stone house and into a stone wall before overturning. The driver jumped.



Interior of machine shop, Pierrepont



German 6" naval gun

last car of the train with a bunch of French non-commissioned officers. The railway service on this line was very erratic, as no regular service had been restored since the lines over the battle area had to be rebuilt. So we just got on this train and headed for the French town of Nancy, where we could get an express into Paris. Being on a troop train, we didn't have to pay anything, but we shared our rations and cigarettes with the French poilieus and got acquainted. It took all night to reach Nancy, as the train ran slowly and was occasionally side tracked for other more important traffic. It was a cold ride, but the French wine warmed us up inside anyway.

We arrived in Nancy about 7:00 A.M. the next morning, where we got a little breakfast and bought our tickets to Paris over the Est Railway. Our train pulled into the station. It was a good train with vestibule cars and compartments. Our compartment had several in it including a Major Walsh of a Machine Gun Battalion of the new 3rd Army to be sent into Germany. He was on leave too, and so we decided to combine forces. These cars had compartments which would seat eight people.

Prior to our starting on this trip, I had written an old school chum from Washington State, who was a Corporal in the Railroad Transportation Service of the U.S. Army stationed in Paris, to get accommodations for us for over night in Paris, as well as reservations for the next evening's departure for Marseilles on the Mediterranean Sea in the South of France. Ben Hoffeditz had rooms in a pension (rooming house) in the Latin Quarter of Paris and arranged with his landlady for our accommodations. We invited the Major to share it with us, as he had no such arrangement. He accepted, and we were on our way, and such a way I never expected.

We arrived in Paris around noon, (the French express trains really hit the ball). We checked in with the Provost Marshal's office and were given 24 hour passes for the city. We had to be out by then. We hunted up "Ben", and he showed us to our accommodations. We left our baggage there and started out to see the town. Three American officers on leave can do a lot of sight seeing in 24 hours or so.

Our first stop was at the American "Bar" in the Place-de-la-Opera. or the opera square, right along side of the Paris opera house. Walsh had a favorite drink he wanted us to try called a "Porto-flipp". It is made of port wine with an egg beaten up in it and spiced to taste. We sat there for an hour drinking these things. I had four of them, and when I got up I could hardly stand. The effect was there all right. We went around the corner to the Cafe-de-la-Paix, another famous place and sat at the sidewalk cafe for some food. We hadn't had any since breakfast on the train. I felt better after this, so we went to the Folies Bergere, or a sort of vaudeville house, had good seats for a price, and watched the chorus

girls perform in their "G" strings. Not much on!

After this, we decided we needed more food, so we went to "Maximes", a famous French restaurant near the Opera. Well, we had a several course meal, about 9, I think, and a lot of French champagne with it. This did it! I was so befuddled I couldn't talk straight. I told the fellows, I'm going back to the lodgings and go to bed. They protested, but finally said, "You'd better take a cab." "No, I'll walk and get some fresh air," I said. I had been over the route before.

They wanted to go back and pick up a couple of the Folies girls, you see, between acts. The girls had come down into the audience to pick up men friends. Two had spotted us in the audience and had concentrated on Robbie and the Major. I didn't look like I had enough francs for them.

They asked me for the address of the place we were staying, and so I gave it to them as #3 Rue Napoleon. This was wrong, my brain wasn't working right. It was #3 Rue Bonaparte. Then I left them to hike back to quarters. I got there all right and tumbled into bed. I hadn't had much sleep for some 26 hours, and I was tired. I woke up about 7 or so, looked at the other bed, (I had a single) and no Robbie or the Major. I waited around most of the day, but they didn't show up. Finally I decided that they had stayed with the two girls. So I bid goodbye to Ben and left for the railroad station. We had secured our tickets the day before. I also had most of their money, some 4,000 francs on my person, as, when I left them, they made me take it as they felt they might be held up or robbed where they were going. I don't believe it occurred to any of us that the same thing might have happened to me!

I got to the station early and waited for them to show up. Finally, here they came a couple of mad and frustrated officers, if I didn't see one. They landed on me like a ton of bricks. I had given them the wrong address, #3 Rue Napoleon. "No such place in Paris!" They had taxied to Napoleon's tomb, to Napoleon's woods, and several other places named after the great general, spending most of the night in taxi cabs. After I had left them, they had gone to meet the two "fems" and had gone to their apartment after the last show. They cooked up a deal with the girls to go with us down to Nice. They gave the girls their tickets and reservations on the train and some of the money they still had with them and had helped the girls pack their trunk, throwing things in promiscuously.

Our train was made up and ready to board. After the barrage, I asked them why they didn't get on board. They then told me the whole story about giving away their tickets. They wanted to put the gals in with me in the same compartment. They couldn't get any tickets or reservations in time as the train was due to leave in a few minutes. They had been watching for the girls, but they didn't show up. They had the guys'

money, and that is all they wanted.

After they had spent the night trying to find our lodgings, some bright taxi driver said, "Oh, you must mean #3 Rue Bonaparte." That did it, and then they got home and had a short sleep. As I had left just before they arrived, they assumed that I had gone out sight seeing again, and they went from there to the station as Ben had told them when I left. I left word both with the landlady and with Ben too.

Now the problem was to get them on that train with no tickets or reservations. The guard was standing by the door steps into our car. I had already checked with him on our reservations, so that was in the clear. I told Robbie and Walsh I would engage the guard in conversation, and they could slip aboard while we were talking. They already knew the number of our compartment, so I asked the guard a couple of questions and had him turn towards me while the two guys stepped into the vestibule. As soon as they were out of sight, I climbed aboard too, and a few minutes later we were on our way out of Paris headed for Marseilles.

I will explain what happened. On all French express trains, you showed your tickets and reservations to the guard as you got on board. No one collected tickets, like on our railroads, while in route. When you got to your destination, you got off the train, and as you went through the gates into the station, you presented your ticket to the gate man, who picked it up then. If you didn't have one, you were in trouble! This problem we solved when we got to Marseilles. Note: the girls were not on the train!

In our compartment, there was a French businessman, a young married woman, whose husband was still in service, and the three of us. Well, Robbie was intent on making a conquest right then and there and went to work, but the Frenchman lit into him and made him lay off. "The lady is married. Her husband is a French army officer, and you have no right to act as you do! You Americans seem to think you can get away with anything here!" He turned on me and Walsh and asked us to make Robbie behave himself. The lady wasn't fighting him off, but we finally persuaded him to lay off for the time being.

We finally reached Marseilles the next morning, getting little sleep, as we had to get up wrapped in the blankets issued to us by the guard for a tip of a couple of francs. The problem was to get the two officers through the station without tickets. We finally arranged it this way. They got off the train and sauntered back down the track to the end of the iron fence, through the turnstile, somehow, and came back to the front of the station, where they met me after I had passed through the gates. We still had to get to Nice, the rest area for officers of the A.E.F. So we bought our new

tickets and went back into the train shed to get on the train again. Our car had been shifted to a local, so this time we climbed in and went on to Nice. We arrived there sometime that morning. We had breakfast in the diner. They had one, fortunately for us! We et!

After our arrival in Nice, we went over to the Hotel Negresco, which had been recommended to us, to check in and register. We also had to check with the Provost Marshal's office as to our arrival and get our passes stamped. Nice is strictly a resort town and is full of hotels, pensions, private villas and houses of the wealthy. It is the playground of Europe including other towns, such as Mentone and Monte Carlo. In the wintertime, the place is crowded as the temperature is similar to California's southern section. It's a lot like San Diego, and the coast between there and Del Mar. The long stretches of the beaches on the Mediterranean Sea were inviting even in the wintertime. However the beach before Nice was full of small pebbles, no sand and some rocky places. It didn't look inviting to me.

We had some time to kill before dinner at the hotel, so we went out for a walk to look the town over and see what the prospects were for a great time. We dropped into a cafe and had a drink or so and met other officers on leave. At about 6:30 we went back to our hotel for dinner. We were paying 50 francs a day each, or about \$9.00, for sleeping quarters, and they were some sleeping quarters! We had a suite on the 6th floor overlooking the Promenade Des Anglais and the ocean. Robbie and the Major took the one with the two single beds. I had the one with the double bed and adjacent bath.

We had an 11 course dinner in the dining room with appropriate wines with each course. We finished up with a liqueur. It took until about 9 P.M. to eat such a meal as the French serve so slowly, and each course took time to serve. After dinner, we went out to sample some of the night life. We went into two or three different cafes, there being no shows or theaters going on at that time, and all we could do was order a drink and sit there and sip it. Then we'd go out on the Promenade-des-Anglais along the ocean front and stroll a while. We ended up in a plain cheap joint about midnight, and I had had enough liquor to float a battleship. At this time, the M.P.'s (Military Police) came around and sent us packing to our hotel. No uniformed man, whether officer or enlisted, was allowed on the streets or in the cafes after 12:00 P.M. This order was really enforced. It meant the "hoosegow" if one didn't obey, or a cancelling of one's leave in case of an officer.

We were only a few blocks from our hotel, so we walked the distance somehow. I made it, although I thought at times the sidewalk was coming up to meet me. In the hotel lobby, the boys wanted to go into the bar for a nightcap. I said, "No!

I'm going to bed." I got on the elevator and told the man, "Six, please," in garbled French. He took me up and helped me to the door of our suite. I got in and into my room, and then it hit me. I was sick! I turned my insides out within the next 30 minutes and finally got undressed. I was reeling, and I went into the bath room the second time and ran the tub full of cold water. I stripped and slid in. The shock brought me to my senses. I toweled down and climbed into bed. The bed commenced to sway back and forth and up and down. I couldn't move even to turn off the lights. The fellows came in and saw me, and did they have a good laugh. All I saw was two figures in uniform at the foot of the bed swaying back and forth with the motion of the whole room. They turned off the lights and left me. They had succeeded in getting me drunk.

The next morning, I was not too happy with the way I felt, but had a bath and shaved, clean clothes and some breakfast consisting of a roll and some hot coffee. During the day before in our wanderings, we found out that there was a hotel giving rates for officers. The Ruhl-des-Angleterre was opposite the park shown in the pictures, and so we paid up at the Negresco and moved over there. We had a room and a half with bath on the second floor for 15 francs a day, saving some 35 francs for other purposes. This had one large room with an alcove off of it. Three beds or 2½ beds occupied the rooms. The bath was off the short hallway leading in from the lobby. We had maid service and also valet service, with tips, of course.

We put our shoes out in the hallway every night, and they were nicely shined at getting up time; same with the uniforms. They would be cleaned and pressed while we slept. The rooms were kept in tip top shape by the maid service, who also took care of our underwear and soxs. The bathroom had, besides a tub and shower, the usual double wash bowls and toilet, a low seated toilet without a seat, like a sitz bath. We were told that it was for the lady after a time in bed with her lover in order to wash herself off. The suite was so fixed that if one wanted to bring up his lady friend, the others would be elsewhere. Really nice, wasn't it? French life!

After being settled again in the new quarters, we went to the information desk to find out what trips we could take for local sight seeing. We were told that the nearby town of Grauss up in the mountains was an interesting jaunt, so we signed up for that. There were five of us in our group. We three and two girls from the Army Nurse Corps. We left the next morning early on a narrow gauge train, which literally crawled up the sides of the mountain, over high arched bridges, across the ravines and up a right of way cut right out of the sides of the cliffs.



*Museum and Art Gallery, Marseilles*

Museum and Art Gallery, Marseilles



*Nice from our room in the Hotel Negresco.*

Nice, from our room in the Hotel Negresco



Nice - looking west from Chateau Hill



The bunch of us on our way to the "Perfume" factories



*Promenade Des Anglais, Nice.  
Hotels on left and Casino Marine on Right.*

Promenade Des Anglais, Nice.  
Hotels on the left and Casino Marine on right



*River of Nice - Notice French Washerwomen  
on the bank*

River of Nice - notice French washerwomen on the job.



Lieutenant Stilson on the Promenade des Anglais  
Casino Marine - (in background) - Hotel Buhl des Angleterre



Major Walsh and Lieut. Robinson in the public gardens, Nice



Taking life easy at Mentone



A "Gendarme" of Monaco



Monte Carlo taken from the castle of the Prince of Monaco



The "Museum" at Monaco



Corp. Ben Hoffidetz



*Italian coast from "Ventimiglia" Italy*

Italian coast from Ventimiglia, Italy



Highway, Nice to Monaco



*"The" old Roman walled city back of Monte Carlo  
later it became an ancient stronghold of Marseilles*

Old Roman walled city in back of Monaco

Grauss is the perfume center of France, and, at that time, so they told us, of the world. There were flowers growing everywhere, whole fields of them, roses and lots of other kinds. There were several large factories making perfume in Grauss. We had permits to go through one of them. We landed in Grauss in time for breakfast in a cafe perched on the side of a cliff with a drop of several hundred feet below. We enjoyed our meal and the view, then set out to do the town. The perfume factory manager took us through the plant, showed us how the petals from the flowers were crushed, soaked and processed in alcohol, so that what came out was just the smell. I got several bottles of different kinds to send to Essie. There were other sights to see there including a canyon where one could deposit a cast in the water, and, in time, the lime would collect and harden on it to form the figure of the cast. I bought a broach for Essie there. We returned home by train that evening tired but happy.

One of the parties we attended was given by a lieutenant who had borrowed a dress suit, gone to Monte Carlo and won 9,000 francs at the casino gaming tables. He and several of his pals had us all go to dinner at a swanky night club, and we got the works. There were about 20 of us in the party, and after dinner, we joined another group in the cafe part where one could dance.

Our party was in a private dining room in the place, and all they did was open the doors after we had dined, and there we were. We moved right in. There were Lieutenants Robinson and myself, Major Walsh, two Captains, one a marine, a Lieutenant Colonel and a Brigadier General. There were plenty of women around. They generally picked their man and went after him. All you had to do was buy them supper, a few drinks, and she was yours for the evening. Two gals joined our party at our table and shared their dances with us. However, the General got the choice as well as the higher ranking officers. They knew how much more pay the higher ones rated, so they settled on them.

We kept buying and sipping drinks until midnight, and then the M.P.s closed in. "All out, it's midnight." So we started to go out the main door. There was a cabby there with an open hack and one horse attached. This vehicle would only hold four people. However, some "wag" in the bunch decided to load the carryall up in full. The Captain of Marines got in the box, took the reins from the French driver, and then three of the guys got in. We took the girls and heaved them in on top of the officers. The Captain slapped the whip on the poor horse, and away they went down the street yelling and laughing, swinging from one side of the street to the other, and the driver of the cab chasing after and yelling his head off. What an evening! I have never forgotten it. We, who were

left, then went arm in arm down the street singing back to our hotel. There were other nights like this. We needed it!

35

One day we took a trip over to Mentone, east of Nice, where we all had lunch in a cafe on top of a mountain overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. We could see all over the country, and we took some shots from that spot. I do not remember whose camera I had, but I think it was one that one of our photographers loaned to me for the trip. I had picked up films and other equipment in Paris. It was easy going along the coast from town to reach a double track railway into Italy and a wide highway with busses and streetcars part of the way. The entire Riviera coast was a resort with one town after another. We could go anywhere anytime of the day or night.

Another trip we took was from Nice to Monte Carlo. The Casino was not open to service men in uniform for gambling, but they would take you through for a five franc note and explain everything. We took the tour, and also went up to the Prince's castle and the marine museum. The guide told us all about how roulette was played and the other gambling games. Anyone going in while play was going on had to be dressed in a white tie and tails, and that rule was enforced. No poor person could get in under the rules of the Casino. The ladies, of course, wore evening dress. It was very formal, and it must have been an interesting sight to watch them play. All the employees wore dress clothes also. They had a restaurant and bar, but it was not operating while we were there.

We toured the outside of the Prince's castle. Whether he lived there or not, I was never told. His "Army" consisted of about 250 men dressed as shown on page 187. We didn't get into the castle itself, but they sold us cards of it and told us all about it. It was an old, old building built of stone with a parapet and fortifications all around it. The cannon shown were of the vintage of about 1790 or so. I doubt if they had ever been fired except for salutes on days of ceremonial activity. The guards were very friendly and helpful.

The museum was unique in itself, as it was built right out over a cleft in the rocky shore. On the lower floor you could look right down through the thick glass floor to the waves dashing into the cove.

The building was about five stories high and housed all sorts of marine life, both live and stuffed, also the bones and skeletons of the larger marine mammals. The Prince had a special boat that was used for scientific exploration of the sea. The ship was at anchor in the harbor at the time we were

there. You can see it on page 187, as well as the entire town of Monaco, and its harbor. We only spent the day there, as we had to get back to Nice before night fall.

However, another trip we took was in a hired car that ran us clear to the Italian border and over into the town of Vertinniglia, Italy. Here we met a bunch of Italian soldiers, and we went into a cafe and had a lunch and good Italian wine with them. There were several different Italian regiments represented in the group.

We drove back through the back country, which is all mountainous and leads directly up to the French and Italian Alps. We could see the snow capped peaks from the high road that we drove over. It was rather narrow and scary at times due to the drop offs and steep grades. However, the dangerous places had walls of stone erected along the outside, so one would have to go over that before dropping down into the ravines below. Our driver was very careful and pointed out the interesting places such as the old Roman walled city shown on page 189. We saw old ruined castles and passed through an occasional village, before we dropped down into Nice.

While in Nice at the Ruhl-des-Angleterre, I walked into the lobby one day, and whom should I see but an old high school friend, a former member of the class of 1907. He was Lieutenant Ruben Erickson of the Medical Corps, U.S. Army. He had attended Knox College, graduated, and then went on to Medical school at Johns Hopkins University near Baltimore. Our greeting was very warming, so we had a long talk to catch up with our past history. He had with him two charming girls of the Army Nurse Corps, who he introduced to me. We four decided to have dinner together that evening, and we made reservations in the dining salon of the hotel. They informed us that the Queen of Rumania and her daughter, Ileana, with their equerries and staff were dining there that evening too and full dress was requested. We appeared in our best uniforms and were ushered to our table by the Majordomo of the dining room. We had no more than been seated, when the Queen and Princess Ileana were announced. The orchestra struck up the national anthem of Rumania, at least I thought that was it, and they swept into the dining room. We all rose and stood at attention with a rigid salute as they passed our table. She smiled very graciously at us and was seated with her daughter and two aides at the next table to ours. The rest of the entourage occupied tables beyond us. Well, we were seated again, and our two hour French meal began. I understood later that the Royal party had been ousted from Rumania, and they were staying in Nice under the protection of the French government. So I got to sit with the Royalty of Europe at a dinner. This was an unusual experience. I do not recall what had happened to the King! Much later in life, I went through the Maryhill

Museum on the north bank of the Columbia River east of the Dalles and saw a full length painting of the Queen as well as all of her jewels and dresses which were on display there. It seems that during a visit to this country in 1922 or 1923, a wealthy business man (Sam Hill) had become enamored of her and had built this museum there (named after his wife - Ed.) and had collected all the royal relics he could find for this exhibit. Maybe I am wrong about this! (In part, Sam Hill was a personal friend of hers - Ed.)

After the dinner, we left the hotel and took a walk along the Promenade Anglaises. Returning to the hotel later on, the girls retired and Ruben and I sat a long time catching up again on past history. He had been in a forward dressing station and had seen and cared for a lot of wounded men that passed through his way. What he told me made me shiver.

Our leave had about expired, so we got on a train headed back for Marseilles to get the express back to Paris. On the train, I tipped the guard five francs to get us two seats in the express which left that evening for Paris. Evidently he didn't, for when we had purchased our tickets in the Marseilles station, there was no reservation for seats in a compartment.

We had to go anyway, as time was running out on us, and we were due back with the outfit in a couple of days. We couldn't even buy a seat on the train. It was evening, and the diner was open, so we went in there. We sat down at a table and ordered some drinks and food. Seated opposite to us were two Y.M.C.A. entertainers, and we got friendly right away. At about 9 o'clock the maestro of the diner ran us all out, as it was to be closed for the night. We went back in the vestibule of a car, and in a corner near the door was a jump seat, which was used by the guard assigned to that car. We alternated using this seat. It was uncomfortable, but each of us got a chance to rest from the motion of the train. The girls had gone to their compartment. Finally I got so tired, I just lay down on the floor of the aisle and stuck my musette bag under my head for a pillow. Robbie did too, and, as the train crew came and went, they had to step around or over us. The guard in our car had let us have his seat. He went elsewhere on the train.

We couldn't sleep, so we finally sat up and decided to leave the train at the next large town which was Lyon. When the guard opened the doors to the vestibule, we slipped out into the station yards. It was about 2 o'clock in the morning. In order not to have our tickets lifted, we went around the end of the fence and into the square in front of the station. We asked a watchman where we could get lodgings, so he directed us across the square to a pension. Here all was dark, no lights. So we banged on the door to the courtyard until someone upstairs

opened a window and wanted to know why all the noise, and what did we want. We told her in bad French, so she said she had two vacant rooms and would let us in. She was the landlady who ran the place. We were so tired, that it didn't matter what sort of a bed we had. It proved to be a feather bed with down quilts, and I sank right into a deep sleep only awakened up the next morning by Robbie banging on the door. He had the same sort of room I did, and we had a bathroom between us.

We decided to lay over for a day before going on to be sure we could get reservations on the train into Paris. We checked with the railway people and secured our seats on a train leaving the next day. Some of the people we met here in the cafes told us there was to be a big celebration that night at one of the theaters for the return of the local regiment home from the war. They asked us to be honored guests and gave us box seats right on the stage.

The regimental band gave a concert, and some of the real heroes of the war were decorated on stage while the townspeople cheered. We were alone in the box, and the Master of Ceremonies spoke of us as we stood at salute when they played the "Marseilles", their national anthem. Then they played ours, and we were asked to make a speech. All I did was to thank them for their hospitality and glad that peace had finally come etc. As I spoke in English, no one understood anyway, but they gave us three cheers, or the equivalent. Some of the young women tried toglom on to us, and I guess Robbie fell for it, as he told me the next day. I went back to the room and to bed alone. Thank you!

Our expenses in Lyon were nil. We only paid 5 francs a night for our rooms while there, and most of our meals were handouts, no big dinners. We were too full from Nice and vicinity, and the French people of Lyon, not having any American troops nearby, entertained us lavishly. It was nice to feel wanted again.

We got our train into Paris, and did a little sightseeing there too. We had to leave there the next morning, as the rule still held, only 24 hours allowed in Paris, that was all. As we were waiting for our train out of Paris, a train pulled in with all the prominent figures of the War in the Allied group. We stood at rigid attention while Premier Clemanceau, Marshal Foch, King Geroge V, the Prince of Wales, General Pershing, Marshal Haig of England and their staffs passed us by. We were not even noticed or our salutes acknowledged. They were on their way to discuss the Armistice terms with the Germans. Our Est train for Nancy pulled out shortly after this incident. We hooked a ride out to Pierrepont, our station. We were three days late, but, after explaining what had happened on the train from Marseilles to Paris,

we were forgiven, and, besides, Major Baker didn't much care. He wanted to go home as much as any of us.

36

On our return to Pierrepont, we found several changes which were not to my liking. First; there was a general order came through that we had to start drilling the men an hour a day as infantrymen, which no one liked including some of the officers. We also had to do the usual eight hours work on the roads or the various other jobs assigned to us. This hurt as it meant a 9 hour day, and we had to do our drilling from 7 to 8 A.M. in order to get in the regular working hours.

We had cosmoline, (greased), the rifles and battle equipment at the end of our hostilities and packed them in their cases for shipment to wherever we were ordered. So we had to unpack, clean up the arms and prepare them for an inspection, and I mean a real one. It fell upon my shoulders to get this done. I became very unpopular with the outfit. Major Baker put this on me as the temporary Company Commander, and I wasn't even a Captain yet. Nor did I ever get to be one in Europe.

In addition to the above, I found that First Sergeant Rosenthal had been demoted to Private, and raised again to a Sergeant's rating without an order from Regimental Headquarters, where such action usually took place. Something had happened that had caused this. I was never told. A new First Sergeant, Woodman by name, became the Company head non-com. He was all right. He had been a Sergeant before. He was a construction man, and a contractor in civil life, with a lot of experience in handling men. He had taken over the office force and was running it very successfully. I think "Rosy", as we called Rosenthal, became too easy on the men especially after the new drill orders came through from General Headquarters.

Previous to this, after the Armistice, the only formation we had was roll call at 7:00 A.M. Now it was 6:00 A.M. with breakfast following. I had to be on the job every morning and also handle the Sunday inspections, as Baker wouldn't do it. He had the rank and was the area commander, so I had to do what I was told or else! I had to tighten up the discipline on the outfit and administer some punishment for infractions of the orders. Felt and Hampton were not included, as they had other jobs to do. I had some help from Cooper, who always doubted my so called military ability. However, Robinson proved very helpful, but not much on infantry drill. I began to regret my previous experience as a militiaman, and Second Lieutenant of the College Cadet Corps. The men hated Lieutenant Cooper, for

he was a stickler for military discipline and courtesy. I found I had inadvertently put my foot in it and couldn't back out. "Face", you know.

There were other changes too, made while I was on leave. New Sergeants and Corporals had been made to take the place of those missing or transferred out. Usually these were recommended to the Regimental Commander, who issues the orders for the promotions. Of course, the promotions were temporary pending our reuniting with the regiment, which didn't take place until we reached Le Mans, France, the mobilization center where we were to be processed on our way home. In fact, the promotions were not verified and the orders issued from Regimental Headquarters until we were on the boat headed for the States.

One Sergeant, an engineering graduate of an eastern university, was demoted to Private and all my pleading later couldn't get his rank restored. He, like "Rosy", was perhaps too easy on his platoon. Some of the new ones were tough "Hombres", and we didn't get along too well. I generally issued the orders for work each day, and they carried out the assignments. Baker backed me up on that. I found what the word "Skipper" of a company meant. One was alone, and I mean really alone. The men wanted to get home, were dissatisfied with the set up, and usually took it out on the Skipper, if they could.

37

We moved to Puxe, a town near Conflans, the latter a railroad and highway center, where we engaged in work as far as the rear of the Third American Army up at the city of Luxembourg. This move was around the end of March 1919. The village we landed in was pretty well shot up, so we set to work to make it comfortable. Our electricians wired the place and put our light plant to working. All had steel cots and good mattresses. Our supply section had plenty of blankets and not a few Sibly stoves for warmth. It was still cold weather. There had been quite a bit of snow too, some 6" or more in Pierrepont. The Chaplain, Father Cotter, wanted a chapel constructed in one of the barns, so that he could hold services every Sunday, as he was able to get around now. I had to ask the men to do the work on their own time, which didn't help my popularity at all. Father Cotter never forgave me for that, but I had to follow orders. He made it uncomfortable for me later on. The Catholics in the company did the work on the chapel. Most of the Protestants, who were Masonic brothers of mine, didn't help



Prior to Nov. 17th - the above Area  
all in German hands

Most of the pictures  
were in the Area

taken of the ruined towns Pages 156-9  
shown on the lower portion of this map



Railroad Station - Luxembourg.

Railroad station - Luxembourg



Iron Smelter, Oettinger, (Lorraine) Germany

Iron smelter, Oettinger (Lorraine) Germany

much, and I would not order them to.

One weekend, Robbie and I took a motorcycle side car and drove up into Luxembourg city. We passed through a portion of Germany (picture on page 197) and, after arriving at our destination, we sought out a cafe, ordered a meal with wine, of course, and were surrounded by the townspeople taking it easy. They were playing "baccarat", or cards of some kind and drinking "schnapps" and beer along with their games. After lunch, we continued over through Aerlong, Belgium, Longuyon, France, and back to station. There were not many American Army Men around. No one paid any attention to us. The towns were pretty badly shot up in Belgium and France, but repairs were on the way, and people, who had been run out, were back trying to set the places to rights.

While we were at Puxe, we had built a shower and bath house with facilities for washing clothes, as well as a dressing room where one could lie down after a shower and relax. One night a bunch had come in drunk from a party (stag, I guess) and roused out the men and the caretakers of the bath house, and a general free for all ensued. The place was wrecked, showers torn down, and, as the noise increased, others came and got into the fray. I didn't know about this until the next morning.

It seems the "Forty Thieves", as we called them, had appropriated three carloads of champagne on a railroad siding, and had cached it all in the nearby river. They had loaded up with all they could and brought it into Puxe. I had gone to bed early. Our quarters, and the office, were in a building near the center of town. Felt, Robinson and myself were in one room, and Baker had the back bedroom. We had one striker, or orderly, for the four of us, each of us paying him extra for shining our boots, leggings and shoes, as well as caring for the beds, etc.

The hilarity had occurred outside of town near the bath house. We knew nothing of the affair until we were told the next morning. I knew we had to reassert discipline or there would be trouble. In the next village to us there had been an insurrection with some outfit, and some one had shot their Captain, and he expired. Stricter orders had gone out as a result of this, and we were all made aware of the seriousness of the situation.

Major Baker loved his cognac and was sleeping off the effects of a binge of the night before. Felt wasn't there. The Top Sergeant came in and apprised me of the situation, so I strapped on my sam brown belt, leaving the 45 automatic off, as I wanted to be unarmed when I faced up to the company. I ordered the men assembled in the street in formation, and when I stepped out and faced them, I never saw a sorrier sight in

my life; black eyes, bloody noses, dirty uniforms, bruised faces and cracked knuckles. Some bunch of hopheads, and they looked like it too.

I had decided before I went out not to punish anyone. I told them off and ordered the top Sergeant to detail the men who had busted up the bath house to make repairs. This was done, and I called the incident closed. However, after what had happened to that Captain, I didn't know what was in store for me. At least I obtained respect for not being armed. It took a day or two to get things back to normal.

The theft of the champagne caused quite a stink. I was not told of this until we were back in the States. What I didn't know didn't hurt me. It seems two other companies of another regiment were blamed for the "heist", and were kept over there two months longer as punishment. They had been known to make inroads on some of the box cars in the railroad sidings. We got off scot free thank goodness.

Hampton was on leave in Paris while all this was going on, and he landed back with a couple of "Fems" from the Folies. He and Cooper were staying up in the ruined chateau. Why he brought the girls there, I never could figure out. Oh, he was a brute of a man, big, raw boned and sexiated. However, without his knowledge, the girls set up shop in a German officers' dugout, and did a thriving business, as I was told later. I was kept in ignorance of all this on purpose. Major Baker didn't know, and Hampton was out part of the time on the job. He disobeyed orders, but there was nothing I could do about it. It was up to Baker, and he didn't know what was going on. The girls went back to Paris with a lot more francs than they came out with.

Somewhere around the first of May, 1919, we were ordered to assemble with the rest of the First Battalion, and proceed to Le Mans, France, which was the assembly point of most organizations for final inspection before returning to the United States. Le Mans is situated southwest of Paris, perhaps a half a day's ride by train. After turning all our equipment over to the local Service of Supply Headquarters, we entrained for the trip via Paris. I had to check in some half million dollars worth of equipment for which I was both responsible and accountable to the U.S. Government. This took us a day or two before we left Puxe. We only carried our arms, packs, gas masks and helmets. We had a field kitchen on the train with a three day's supply of field rations.

I do not remember the town where we assembled with the rest of the company and battalion, but finally we were all together for the first time since we had separated at Saint Nazaire back in February 1918. There were friendly reunions, and all seemed well. We were enroute out of Nancy and stopped at a small town for mess when it happened to me.

We were travelling in box cars, no third class carriages were apparently available. The officers of Company "B" had a box car of our own, and I was set up with my cot and duffel at the front end of our car. I had been taking an awful lot of "guff" from various members of the outfit, both officers and men, and I was keyed up to top pitch. I overheard a derogatory conversation in the next car to ours the night before, and I was furious, fighting mad. At this stop, I called the company up in front of the locomotive and faced them without any insignia to indicate I was an officer or had any rank or station. I dressed them down and offered to take on any man who thought they had a grievance or "gripe" at any of the things I had done in that company. I waited, no reply. They were stunned by my attitude, and I guess some had thought I had gone out of my mind. Well, I had! The last two months were ones of disappointment, frustration and anger at the things that had happened to us. I had no right to blame it on the men.

Sergeants Dierks and Rosenthal ranged themselves alongside me and several of the other non-coms in case anything started. They told me afterwards that had any man laid a hand on me, they would have taken care of him. I knew I was no match physically for most of them. I said after a few minutes, "Forget it, and let's get back on the train." I was full of remorse at what I had done and knew, if it got to headquarters, I could be court-martialed and sent home in disgrace.

The men of Company "B" got up a petition, and all signed it saying that they respected me for what I had tried to do for them, and I was handed it later when we reached Le Mans. Was my face red, and for several weeks afterwards, I couldn't say a word. Finally, at our farewell gathering, I made a public apology before we separated at Camp Devens, Mass. I became the "butt" of a lot of snide remarks in the officers' mess and elsewhere over the incident, and finally reason prevailed and most of the people quit pestering me. However, it was a long time before I ever got over that feeling of complete isolation which is often described as being sent into Coventry, when no one will speak to you but will make a lot of wisecracks within your hearing. For several days it was plain "hell" for me, and only the wise counseling of Major Baker and the close friendship of such as George Sleight kept me on an even keel. Finally, I had a long talk with Major Baker, and he suggested that I take a two weeks leave and go to Paris or someplace to get away from the

outfit. We had been put to work building a rifle range at this cantonment for a competitive rifle shoot for the various infantry regiments stationed there. The men didn't like it and were getting out of hand. I found after the experience that I had had, that I could command little or no respect from most of the outfit at this time and was glad to get out of the place. We were being held there several weeks until the entire regiment had been assembled for the final delousing, clean up and inspection before being shipped to a base port for transportation home. The only pleasure I got out of the place was going into Le Mans from the camp with Sleight, Doc Shafer (dentist), Robinson and one or two others to the cafes getting an occasional dinner and drinking champagne. They had a lot of it in that town, and it was good. We played a lot of poker in the evenings here too to kill time, nothing to do.

I got my leave OK'ed and left for Paris on the first train out of the place. I arrived there the same day, checked in with the Provost Marshal to get my leave stamped and was advised to get out of town within the usual 24 hours. So I took a train back to Versailles, where Louis XV had built his wonderful palaces and parks, added to by Louis XVI with the Trianon and little Trianon. This was outside of Paris a short distance, and there was no curfew or time limit on staying there.

I registered at the Hotel Swiss, was assigned a room and was furnished "petit-de-jon-aye", a little breakfast in bed in my room. I usually ate dinner in the hotel restaurant, but that was separate from the room. The first day or so, I toured Versailles palaces and grounds. As I was alone, I thought here was a chance to improve my knowledge of French history, as well as improve my linguistic ability. So I hired a guide to show me through the palaces and grounds. He showed me the great hall where all the Napoleon battle pictures were, as well as many other halls and boudoirs occupied by the courts of Louis XV and XVI, and also stood on the veranda where Marie Antoinette said, "If they can't have bread, let them eat cake." The cobblestone courtyard below must have had a howling mob. I also was in the large hall, or salon, which was to house the Peace Commission of the war and all the notables of the Allied and German-Austrian Commissions.

One Sunday in Versailles, they turned on all the fountains and waterfalls for the people to see. They also had a band concert in the park, which the people enjoyed. At night the fountains were lit up with colored lights, and the sight was gorgeous. We were taken through the little Trianon, the play cottage built for Marie Antoinette and her courtiers. They were costumed as shepherds and shepherdesses, and I guess had their fun before the French Revolution. The place was spectacularly furnished. The main palaces of Versailles were so vast that most of the furniture looked small along the walls.

The room of the mirrors, where the peace conferences were held, was just plainly furnished with the table and chairs and accompanying furniture for the principals and staffs of the leaders of the various nations involved. I was told all about this by the guide who accompanied me. No talks had started at this time. I do not know whether President Wilson had arrived yet, although I think he had as his liner, the George Washington, was at anchor in Brest harbor. As I had arrived in Paris just before May 1st, nothing had developed yet, or they would not have let me into this particular salon.

To get around the 24 hour restriction in Paris, I used to go in on an early morning suburban train as far as the Champ de-Mars (the Plain of War), where I detrained and took the subway under the Seine River to the Arc du Triomphe (built by Napoleon to commemorate his wars) over the Champs Elysees. I would change here and go down town from there. The reason I did not dare to go into the main station down in the center of Paris was because I would be picked up by the Military Police as being in town over 24 hours. I averted this every day until my leave expired, and I returned to Le Mans.

During the time I was there, I took the following trips; the tour of the Paris sewers, (celebrated by the famous novel by Victor Hugo of the story of "Les Miserables"); a trip through the catacombs of Paris where the bones of 6,000,000 people are stacked; the trip of the bridges over the Seine. The river twisted around through Paris from a northeasterly direction clear around to a southwesterly course. There are some 32 bridges over the river, some railroad, some subway, but mostly street crossings. They were built at different times in history and some were hundreds of years old. I took a number of trips on my own. Most of the sight seeing trips were arranged either through the Red Cross or the Y.M.C.A. The one in the sewers was for Engineer Officers only. The others were for anyone who wanted to take them, and the charge was nominal so any soldier, be he private or general, could go. Some I paid for and others I did not. They were free.

First, the Paris sewers. The sewer system in Paris is not like in our large cities. All sewerage, storm water and other liquid discharge drained away from the Seine River, which ran through Paris. We assembled at the main tunnel opposite the Paris city hall one morning, some dozen of us who were taking the trip. Our guide was a French Army Officer who was also with the Sanitary Department of the City of Paris.

The sewers consisted of large cylindric tunnels (round in shape), the smaller cross drains, egg shaped, branching out from one main stem at the different cross streets. These tunnels were large enough to run a locomotive in. In the center of the floor, which was flat and about twelve feet wide, was a channel about 3 to 5 feet wide and about 6 feet deep where

the water ran carrying the sewerage, or storm water, to out-lying sludge basins, or treating plants. On one side of the ditch was a narrow gauge railway on which electric trains ran when needed to clean the debree out of the channel. I forgot to mention that the surface of the flat section was of concrete, and the arches either of brick or concrete; in the older sections, brick or stone. The side opposite the railroad tracks was a walk way where the caretakers, using long rakes or poles, fished out anything that would block the flow of the channel.

At the cross streets, there were iron ladders up to the man-holes, so that one could enter anywhere in the city, if necessary. Some of these were large kiosks or round metal cylinders fitted over the entrance with a door for entrance or exit. Our tour occupied about half a day. We entered, as I said, at the river, and came out near the outskirts of the city in one of the kiosks. We took several side trips in the cross tunnels. On one the guide said, "Now you are under the Place de la Opera." It was a most interesting morning. Incidentally, there was no smell. Water from the Seine took care of that. The telephone lines, gas mains, water mains, electric lines were all in these tunnels strapped to the ceiling.

Another trip, which was a conducted tour, was down into the Paris catacombs. I had read of the ancient catacombs of Rome, but I did not know about Paris. We entered a building, the lot of us, and descended by elevator about 120 feet below the surface. These caves were hollowed out of solid limestone and were vast caverns, man made, with numerous passages between them lined with the bones and skulls of the dead taken from the Paris cemeteries for hundreds of years back. It seems that they (the bodies) were allowed to decompose, and then the tombs were opened and the bones removed and taken below, where they were stacked like cordwood. Along the passage ways were ornamental designs of skulls and cross bones, and once in a while, a whole skeleton to make you feel creepy. The large rooms contained great piles of bones, and, in some places, all skulls piled together. We were briefed by the guide, who, of course, received a substantial tip from all of us! We traveled about a half a mile through these passages and came out in another place in Paris.

This is similar to another experience that I had in Bordeaux, France, where I went into the vault of an old church tower (the church itself had been destroyed) and went down into the vault below the tower on a circular stairway. In this cavern were the upright skeletons, with the skin still on, of 127 persons, who had been petrified by the action of the lime water (underground seepage into the coffins) on the bodies of the dead. Result, petrified. They were lined up in rows around the circular tomb. One woman was holding a child in her arms. This was a "paid" exhibit, cost 1 franc (20¢). I secured post cards of this exhibit.



The Opera, Paris



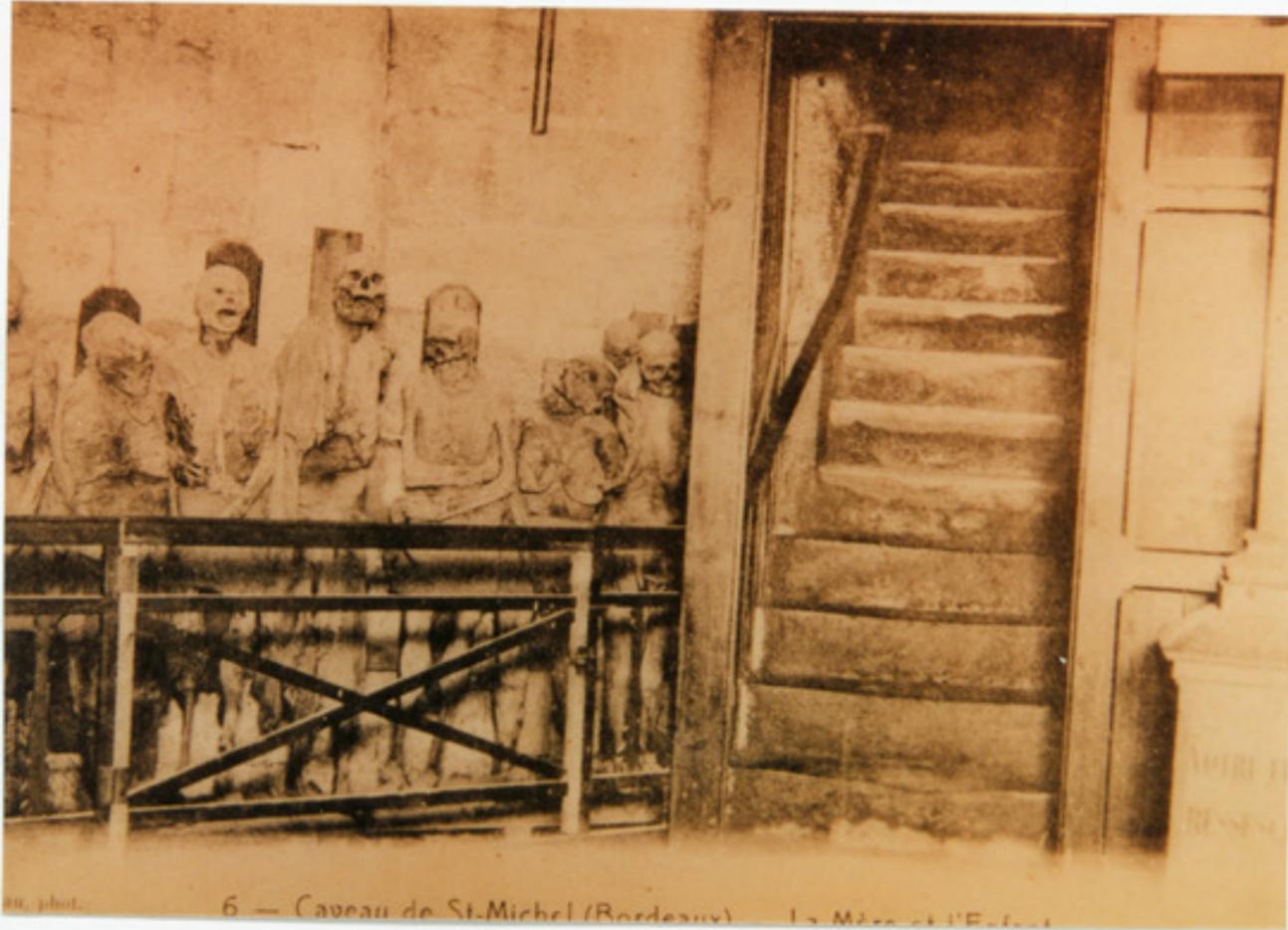
The Arch of Triumph, Paris



Panorama of Versailles



The little Trianon, Versailles



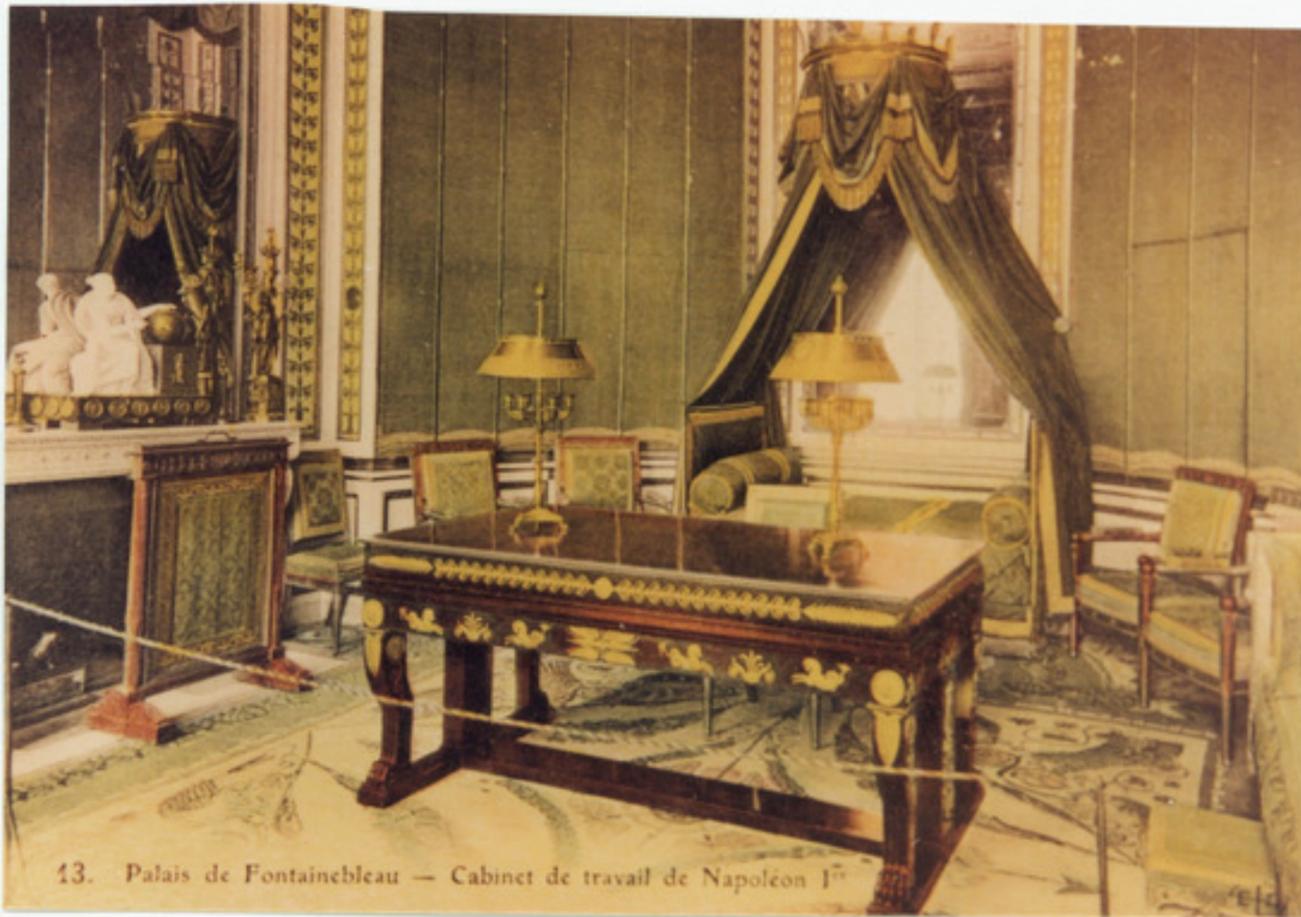
6 — Caveau de St-Michel (Bordeaux) — La Mère et l'Enfant

Cave of St. Michael



5 — Caveau de St-Michel (Bordeaux) — L'Enterré vivant

Woman and infant, Cave of St. Michael



13. Palais de Fontainebleau — Cabinet de travail de Napoléon I<sup>er</sup>

Work cabinet of Napoleon I, Fontainebleau



335 FONTAINEBLEAU. — Le Palais  
Chambre à coucher de Napoléon

Napoleon I's bedroom, Fontainebleau

Another trip I took, which was on my own, was to take a train out of Paris to Fontainebleau, which lies a few kilometers southeast of Paris. Here is the palace built by either Louis XVI or XV, I'm not sure which (Francis I - reigned 1515-1547), and which was the favorite spot of Napoleon Bonaparte the Emperor of France. I hired a guide and spent most of the day touring the palace and grounds.

Napoleon's bedroom was a study in boudoir art. A canopied bed of silk curtains, all in shades of green and blue with the initial "N" embroidered on the curtains. All the rooms were ornately furnished, and the large dining salon and ballroom with its drapes and furniture of that period was something to see. I had read so much about Napoleon's campaigns that it was a change to see how he and his court lived in this palace. The surrounding grounds were magnificent, with gardens, giant trees, close clipped lawns, and with tennis courts to match. After seeing this, I returned into town (Fontainebleau), where I stopped in a tearoom for a late afternoon snack before catching the train back to Paris.

As I was alone most of the time, I made the most of sight-seeing. I couldn't get tickets to the opera, as they were sold out way in advance, but I did tour the Louvre and saw all the art objects including the Mona Lisa and the statue with the arms gone, (the Venus de Milo - Ed.), as well as priceless paintings, sculpture and other art objects. I spent two or three days here with a guide book for a companion. I was in the Tuilleries gardens and palace, as well as in the Place-de-la-Concorde, where Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were beheaded. I went out to the Bastille (not in existence, but marked out on the ground) where the revolution of 1789 started. History was right there on the ground.

I also attended a high mass in the Cathedral of Notre Dame on the island of the Seine, where I was one Sunday morning. I think it was at 11 A.M. The music was terrific, the choir of youthful voices made one feel the Presence, even though I wasn't a Catholic. After the service, a priest conducted me into the small chamber where the valuable vestments were kept. These were made of cloth of gold with precious jewels embroidered on them. They were hundreds of these, with chalices of silver and gold, and there were six small angels modelled in solid gold. He said, "Try and lift one." I couldn't budge it. No thief could have got away with them because of their weight. He told me that anytime a king, noble or one of high rank had committed a sin, he donated these things to the church as an act begging forgiveness. From the size of the wardrobes and chests in which these things were stored, there must have been a lot of sinners of high rank down through the ages of France's history. I left a 5 franc note in the poor box



Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris



The great ferris wheel



The Est Railroad station

figuring that should help me get my sins forgiven. I also was conducted up in the choir loft, saw the mighty organ, and went out on the portico shown in the "Hunchback of Notre Dame." I didn't get to go underground, however, where all the skull-duggery took place in that picture and story.

Another trip I made was out at the church of St. Germaine, where most of the kings, queens and high nobles of France were buried. I went on a Sunday afternoon and attended a vespers service, which occurred about 4 or 5 o'clock in the evening. I sat with the congregation. There were not too many of them, and, after the service, another obliging priest showed me down into the vaults where Marie Antoinette and King Louis XVI were buried. There were other tombs, both above ground in the church proper where effigies of the monarchs, lay with their full armor and swords along side, on top of their tombs. One of the first kings, "Charles Martel", I believe, is buried there. There were others, makers of history for France, buried there. I cannot remember all of them fifty years after. I left my usual 5 francs in the coin box.

39

Our Mess Sergeant, Frank Pasquale, had obtained leave to attend a three months course in Architecture at the University of the Sorbonne. This was permitted under a general order issued by Headquarters, American Expeditionary Force allowing certain men with the qualifications and language proficiency to attend French Universities while awaiting transportation home. I got in touch with him while in Paris, and we agreed to meet at a certain restaurant in Paris for lunch, which we did. We were engaged on our meal, when in walked a member of the Military Police, who wanted to check on why an officer was dining with a sergeant. I had to lie with a straight face and say, "This sergeant is a relative of mine, and it's the first time we have been together during our service over seas. He seemed to be satisfied after I showed him my pass and "card identity." We then enjoyed our meal and catching up with the affairs of the company.

Another incident occurred once when I was about to enter a subway train at one of the Paris stations. The subway, or "Metro", as it was called, covered the whole city, and I used to get off the suburban train from Versailles at the Champ-de-Mars station and catch the subway over the Seine and thence downtown, or wherever I was planning to go. I did this to avoid the M.P's at the main terminal of the railroad line, where there was always one or two looking for guys like me wearing the shoulder straps of an officer.

In this case, I went to get on the train as it pulled into the station, when five or six big bruising Frenchmen pushed me back against the wall and started to work me over. Luckily there were a couple of French Gendarms (police) nearby, and they quickly broke it up. I found out that the attackers were communists, and, being near the First of May, decided I was a good bet for a beating. The "Yanks"1, as we were called, were beginning to get unpopular, because we got more "dough" than the French soldiers and civilians. So I got off after a few blows, which didn't do any harm.

At the Champ-de-Mars was the Invalides, where the French soldiers were housed when wounded, and convalescent during the Napoleonic era. Napoleon's tomb was there, and so I spent an hour or so in the balcony of the tomb looking at not only the marble sarcophagus (coffin) with its group of battle flags and mementos, both near the tomb and in the balcony, where I was allowed to go. In this area also was the Eiffel tower, but it was not operating at this time, so I could not go up. However, I climbed the iron stairs as far as the first platform, and there I got a good view of Paris in that vicinity. I had no camera with me on this trip, so all I could depend on was picture postcards.

I also visited the Pantheon-de-Guerre, where a large round building housed a panoramic picture of the entire war, with the various Allied leaders in the center portion before a large statue of Peace, or some such designated victory, I guess. In this picture were the figures of Clemenceau, Foch, President Wilson, King George V and numerous other famous men of peace and war who took part in the four years conflict. The panorama depicted most of the famous battles including Ypres, the Somme, Marne, Cinc-Marne, St. Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne, etc. It was done by a group of French painters and artists. It was magnificent. I spent some time there studying it. The painting was a complete circle and was life sized.

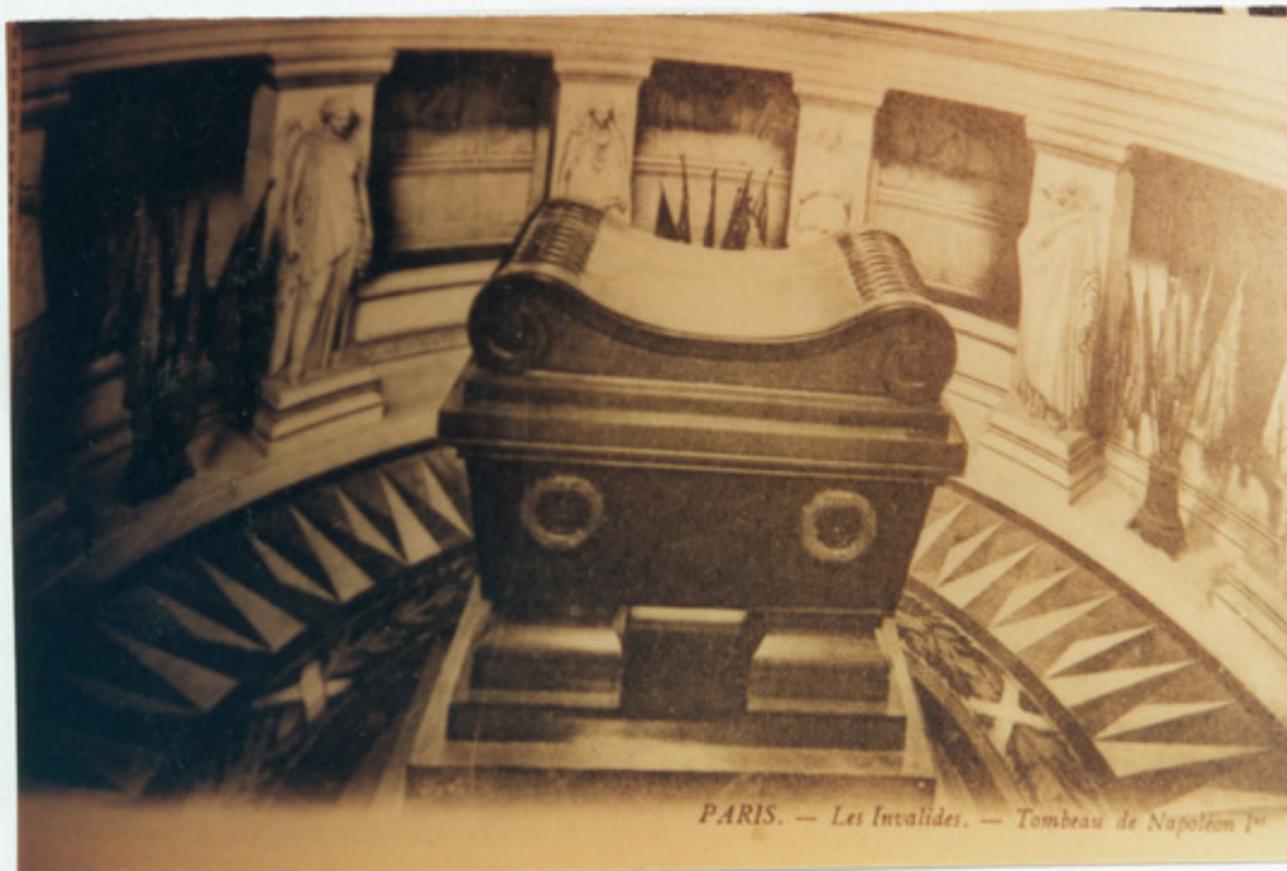
I also saw some 200 American and Allied officers decorated at the Ecole Militaire (Officers' school for French officers), and they received medals from the French Croix-de-Guerre to the French Legion of Honor, a very high decoration indeed. No! I didn't get one. They were Majors, Colonels and Generals. None of the officers of our regiment were included. We were just Engineer troops, although it was rumored that we would get the Croix-de-Guerre as a regiment, but we didn't. If that had been so every man in the outfit would have been entitled to wear the red and green "forgere" (French) draped across his chest from one shoulder to the other. It would have been a nice gesture, but our outfit didn't go to the "bat" about it. Too bad! It would have helped the morale of the outfit.



The Eiffel Tower



Les Invalides



The Tomb of Napoleon



The Pantheon



The Trocadero



The Bois de Boulogne

There were a great many other things I saw as I traveled all over Paris on its subways and surface lines. The Bois de Boulogne, the race track at Auteuil, some of the department stores, where I bought things for Essie, most of the railway stations, where I either arrived or departed from on my several trips, the Place de L'Etoile, where the Arch de Triomph is located, the square with the tall monument made from Napoleon's captured cannon from his campaigns in Germany and Austria, the Trocadero, a sort of museum, and many other places.

I used to get lunch once in awhile in the Latin Quarter in a small restaurant, where the walls were covered by the paintings of many artists who are now famous. For a couple of francs, I could have lunch with wine etc. I also visited the Gobelin Tapestry works, and saw them making, or weaving, the large tapestries that hang on the walls of some of the famous buildings in Paris. I also went to the Sevres Pottery works, and watched them make and mold their famous pottery. This was a guided tour.

I also took a few strolls down the Champs-de-Elyses and along the banks of the Seine. Paris in the Spring.

40

It was now time for me to return to the regiment, which by now had all been assembled at Le Mans, so I went to the station and bought my ticket back to camp. When I got there, all things had been changed. I had been relieved from duty as Company Commander, and my place taken by Captain Davey, who had originally commanded "C" Company, until he was wounded and sent to a hospital in the rear, where he spent the rest of the war. He was caught by shellfire early in our service at the front as he was trying to enter a dugout. A Colonel got in first, Davey was behind him, and a French officer behind Davey. The Frenchman was killed, Davey wounded, but the Colonel escaped unhurt. No it wasn't our Colonel. He wasn't even up there yet.

I was rather flustered at the change. While I was gone, the outfit had had a complete going over. A new company roster was made out, and I was completely omitted, not even mentioned. Pictures were taken of the 196 men and officers left. I wasn't in it, and so I went into the regimental roster as absent and unaccounted for. Fred Belknap called this to my attention years later, and showed me the 23rd Engineers roster, and I wasn't even mentioned. Well, I said, "So what!", and let it go at that. I did a little work around the office with Ed Allen, but the rest of the time, I just stuck around awaiting orders that never came.

Finally came the last parade and review of the entire

regiment by General Pershing. For some reason or other, I was put in command of the company for that event. We formed up that morning in battalion front, and we were not the color company this time. Some other company was. The oldest Captain in rank had that job assigned to him. We still had the Battalion flag, however, which was stacked away by Woodman, the First Sergeant. We brought it home with us, and Blain Willson has it now for the Company "B" reunions.

As we were waiting for the General, we were standing "At ease". No talking, smoking etc. allowed. However, Sergeant Hunter, who was acting as left guide for the company, deliberately took out a "Camel", lit it and started to smoke. I think he did it on purpose to see what I would do. Well, I did! I walked over to him and asked him to put it out. He did, and I went back to my post at company front. He lit another one to the amusement of the company! I again walked over to him, and this time dressed him down. I didn't like to do this, but I figured that I would have to do it to maintain discipline. This time he glared at me and muttered something, I have forgotten what, about "getting me" later on. Several years after, he called on us in Los Angeles, and mentioned the incident, and I said, "Well, here I am, so you can get me now!" He laughed and replied that it was a test to see how I would take it after my "bobble" of challenging the company to a duel. He stayed the night with us, and we enjoyed his company. He passed away later in Chicago, I understand.

Well, to return to the review, Pershing and his staff passed from company to company and, as he approached us, I called the company to attention, and he walked along looking over each man. I followed a little behind him, as was the custom of the drill regulations. He stopped twice and asked several of the men where they were from and complimented them on their soldierly appearance, and then went on to Company "C". We went back to "rest" again. Finally the band struck up one of Sousa's marches, and we passed in review before the General and his staff, and it was over. A day or so later, we entrained for Brest and Camp Pont-a-maisoun, or the "mudhole" as the boys called it, due to the muddy streets where we had to use "duckboards" (2"x4"s with slats across them) to get from one place to another.

We arrived by train at the above camp in the usual boxcars, "40 and 8", and even the officers didn't have very good riding. We were assigned tents, 4 to a tent on officers' row, and enlisted men 8 to a tent on their various company streets, and then the fun began. First to the delousing plant, where every man, stripped to the skin, went through the showers and fumigation process. Their clothes were taken and processed at the same time, and, if deficient, were replaced with new. The underwear and sox were reissued new. Most everyone got

new stuff. This process took several days for the entire regiment, as several companies went through in a day. The men were also checked physically, and, if any venereal diseases appeared, the man was pulled out and put in the field hospital for treatment. Several were left behind for this reason, when we took the ship for home, none of Company "B". The officers were also checked physically, but we retained our own clothes. I only had one uniform left, as I gave the others with all my spare clothing to the French before I left the final station for Le Mans. The main trouble in the war area was the acquisition of lice on the body, or as we called it, "cooties". No one was supposed to return to the States unless he was pronounced physically fit by the medics, and there were plenty around at this camp. No delousing process was supposed to be the cure all for the "cooties".

While in this camp, the regiment was "paid off" in U.S. currency, and, as some outfits hadn't been paid for several months, they got a "bundle". The more crafty started card or crap games and relieved the innocent victims of their newly received 20 dollar bills. In officers' row, I was in one tent where a crap game was in progress. Looking on, (no, I didn't play), I saw several thousand dollars change hands in a few hours. I was paid my two months pay, less allowances to Essie, which came to around \$200. As a First Lieutenant, I drew \$166.66 per month plus allowances and 10% increase for overseas service. Essie received \$100 per month allowance of this, which was sent to her by the paymaster in Washington, D.C. I also had a bank account with an American branch bank in Neufchateau, which sent her in addition \$25 per month up until the last two months, when I couldn't get into Neufchateau. I had closed the account, which stopped the \$25 payment. The new \$20 bills in U.S. money looked might good to all of us. I tucked mine away for when I would get home. I also had with me the two officer's trunks filled with souvenirs, post card books and other junk to bring home.

As I have stated before, President Wilson's "George Washington" was anchored in the harbor of Brest awaiting the settlement of the peace proposals and the organization of the League of Nations. This had been going on for several months. Meanwhile, a perfectly good transport, capacity 10,000 men, lay at anchor. I heard many a growl and gripe about this both from officers and men, who had been delayed too long waiting to get shipped back to the States.

Most of the National Guard divisions had gone and also the National Army troops, like the 76th, 77th (New York), 82nd Divisions, made up of drafted men, had departed and been home for several months being demobilized at the behest of their representatives in Congress, all political, of course. The men who least wanted to go got to go home first. We were all

volunteers and had to stay until the last and clean up the debris of war made by the others. That was the lot of most of the special engineer regiments like ours. The 17th, the 20th, 23rd (ours), the 27th Engineers were all held over, as well as several other units attached to corps and army units.

Finally our turn came, and we went aboard the S.S. Winnifredian of the Allen line (British), which pulled into Brest harbor to take on a load. They couldn't take all of us, as they didn't have room. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd Battalions with their staffs and Regimental Headquarters were included. We sailed out of Brest on the 29th of May, 1919, and put to sea headed for Boston, Mass., and Camp Devens for demobilization.

The accommodations on the ship were crude and the food rotten. The men had to sleep in hammocks slung from the underside of the upper decks and below, way down in the hold. Some slept on the decks on pads that they somehow procured. The meat served at the meals was sometimes tainted, and they came to me for help, that is, my company did. I still considered it mine, although I was not their commander. I authorized the use of some of our company funds to go to the canteen, there was one aboard, and buy extras such as canned food, bread, etc., to fill up the empty stomachs. Well, somehow we got by. I don't remember Captain Davey's part in this, but I guess he must have signed the order releasing the money.

We officers were assigned four to a stateroom and used the after lounge as a recreation room or place to relax after dinner. We got the best food as the government was paying full 1st class fare for us. The men were so much a "head." We also had to tip the waiters and the cabin and deck stewards, just as on a regular passenger liner. I paid out about \$9.00 in tips, and it took me two years to get reimbursed by the War Department for what I was entitled to.

One day in the lounge, I sat down at the piano and started to play a few songs that I knew (I could do a little then), and Baker came up and said, "Still, you have been hiding your light under a bushel," rather nice of him, as I hadn't done any such stuff for almost two years. I had played the mandolin with some of the boys previously. We had hijacked a piano somewhere near Viller-sous-Pareid from a German dugout nearby, but it was in the men's assembly room, or over at the theatre we had built, so I didn't get to use it. Others in the outfit played it better than I did. All the way across the Atlantic I kept at it. No one seemed to mind. There was one fellow who had sniped at me almost constantly in Le Mans about my "bobble." On ship board one day, as I was leaning over the rail watching the frothing water curl away from the ship's side, he came up and sort of apologized to me and told me he was on his way to meet his wife in New York. He said he had got a "dose" of venereal disease from a French woman and said, "What would he

do if I was him?" At first I thought he was kidding, but indeed he was serious about it. I told him that his best bet was to tell her the truth about it, and, if she was any kind of a forgiving woman, she would help him get well of the disease, otherwise she would be infected too. War and separation often caused men to do things they wouldn't do in ordinary life. I knew one officer who stayed drunk when off duty to avoid contact with the opposite sex.

During our stay at Brest, I was finally offered a Captain's commission if I would take over the command of one of the wagon companies to be left behind. I declined on the grounds that if I couldn't have been commissioned in that grade when I was a company commander of "B" Company, why should I give up my chance to return to the States with my old command for a new one and that uncertain too. Hampton had already got his Captain's bars and was in command of one of these companies. If I had known that we could get our wives over later, I would have accepted and asked for a transfer to a Regular Army Engineer Regiment up on the Rhine. This occurred later on after the 3rd Army began its occupation at Coblenz, Germany. The regulars lacked officers in the lower grades, and I had been offered a chance to change without promotion right after the end of hostilities, when they were forming the 3rd Army of occupation. As it was, I was offered the commission but refused. It was not until 1923 that I went back into the reserve as a 1st Lieutenant and later took the exam for a Captain's commission, which I passed successfully in 1924. Essie and I would have enjoyed touring Europe in peace time. Malcolm might have been born in Germany, who knows.

We arrived in Boston on June 9th, 1919. The last day, when we sailed into Boston harbor, I was Officer of the Day on board. We had been given strict orders not to let the men get up into the rigging, or on the ship's rails. The excitement was great as we were greeted by whistles from tug boats and other ships as we came into the harbor before docking. Everyone was on deck. I was on the upper deck trying to keep men out of the rigging. They paid no attention to me, and, finally, I gave it up. What the hell, they were home again and alive. Why should I spoil the fun? I called off my dogs, and let them have it rigging and all. Even the top brass didn't give a hang. We were warped into the pier with tugboats and, finally, one company at a time, we debarked. The Salvation Army met us with the usual doughnuts and coffee. It was noontime

and no chow. We formed on the dock and marched into the warehouse, where we ate standing up and were permitted to send telegrams free to our loved ones. I sent one to Essie at Edwards, Ill., where she was with her folks, Grandma and Grandpa Edwards, "Arrived safe in Boston, Mass. Headed for Camp Devens for transfer to Illinois. More later." It was lucky that we got these off when we did for by the time we reached Camp Grant, Ill., for discharge, there was a telephone and telegraph strike on, and we had no way of communicating except by mail. Details were ordered to handle the baggage, and we prepared to board the trains waiting to take us out to Devens, some 25 miles outside of Boston. Camp Devens was the cantonment where the 26th (National Guard) and the 76th (National Army) troops were assembled and trained. The camp took care of the entire New England states up to New York state.

We were assigned barracks when we reached Devens, and marched our men after detraining to the new quarters. I do not recall just what arrangements were made for mess and blankets etc., but I wasn't responsible for that part, as I had been previously. The next day we turned in all equipment such as rifles, pistols, bayonets, belts and other accouterments of that nature, except our steel helmets and gas masks. We were allowed to keep those and take them home with us. As we had found a couple of cases of pistols during the drive for Metz, we turned in those and kept the guns that we had carried all during the war. I brought home my 45 Colt automatic with about 150 rounds of ammunition, which I still have. (Sold by the Editor to a collector about 1985). Each Non-com of the company also were so armed and retained their arms also.

The ridiculous part of the whole transaction was this; we had cleaned up and polished all the weapons for the final inspection before turning them in. All the receiving officers and sergeants said was, "Throw your rifles on that pile," and they were cast down as worthless in a miscellaneous heap, as though they would be broken up as junk. The same with all the rest of the equipment carried by the company. There were a bunch of griping soldiers that night after what we had made them do to pass a rigorous inspection.

We made up for it that night. We had over \$1,000 left in the Company fund. Unless this was spent on the outfit, regulations stated that it had to be turned into the Quartermaster's office as unspent government funds. We decided to have one last big feed and binge, so we ordered the Mess Sergeant and his helpers to go to the canteen, or anywhere they could get the stuff, to buy up ice cream, cake, pie, all the rich food and drink they could get to get rid of the money. They did! And as we had more than we could use, we invited others from the rest of the Battalion to share it with us. The country had gone

"dry", so all the drinks were soft even the 2½% beer.

I made my farewell speech that night, and an apology to the men in Company "B" and wished them all well. I couldn't say much, and afterwards men came up and said goodbye in person, as I was to be detached from the company and command a troop train to Camp Grant, Ill., composed of casual troops from many different outfits scheduled to be discharged at the Camp Grant cantonment at Rockford, Ill., to be nearest their homes after their final checkup medically.

The next day the outfit started to break up. This was June 12, 1919. Men were taken out to be shipped to different parts of the United States to the nearest camp from which they had enlisted. I went over to Headquarters to get my assignment that morning, and found I had an order to proceed with five car loads of troops, one baggage car and a mess car, to Camp Grant, Illinois leaving that noon. I was handed the order with the transportation for some 320 men with rations and an order to secure \$200 from the Quartermaster (in cash) to buy coffee on the way for each meal en route.

The train was standing ready on the siding with the men lined up in groups of 60 to 65 before each car ready to board. The camp officer turned the outfit over to me with a chest holding their service records. I walked down the line, picked out the highest ranking Sergeant from each group and told him, "You are in command of this car load, and will be held responsible for any damage, loss or misplaced material, also for breakage of equipment and for any man missing from this train." I also appointed an acting Mess Sergeant, who selected details from each car to handle the mess arrangements. They were to be in the baggage car. The food had already been loaded aboard, and we were ready to shove off. However, there were two other officers who were supposed to accompany on the trip. One was a Captain in the Medical Corps, a doctor to watch over the health of the men; the other, a Lieutenant, who was supposed to assist me. We waited, and they never showed up. Finally the time to go, and we were ordered to board. I had instructed the sergeants that, "You will find me in the last car of this train in the last seat at the rear door with the conductor and brakeman, and you can reach me there." I was through being responsible now and had learned to pass the buck and quit worrying over the welfare of a new bunch of guys I had never seen before.

While we were waiting for the missing officers to show up, one of our fellows, Gandy by name, who was one of the company cooks, came along and sat beside me. He was considerably older than I was, and he told me not to take it too hard what had happened at the last, as I was liked and respected by the men in the company, and they all felt that I should have had the Captain's rating to command the outfit and bring them home.

Previously I had been handed a document signed by all of them to the effect that I was liked, and that all of them felt that I had given them a square deal.

The railroad transportation officer finally gave the word, and we started for Chicago. Our route was via the Boston and Albany R.R. to Albany, New York; the New York Central to Buffalo; the Grand Trunk R.R. over the Niagara River and through the Province of Ontario, Canada via Niagara Falls to Detroit, Michigan; from Detroit via the Michigan Central R.R. to Rockford Ill., and into Camp Grant, where we were to be discharged. We left about noon, crossing Massachusetts, going through the Hoosiac tunnel in Western Mass., to Albany, N.Y. before being switched on to the N.Y.C. tracks.

After we passed the Hoosiac tunnel, we stopped just beyond this on a siding to let the regular traffic pass. I had the conductor wire ahead for hot coffee for 350 men, and it was there waiting as we arrived. The men climbed off the cars and spread all over the track munching corned beef sandwiches as they drank their coffee. We each still had our mess kits, canteens and tools with us, which were not turned in until Camp Grant. There were gallons of coffee in milk cans kept hot on a grill that the caterer brought to the track. After a half hour rest, we continued on our journey. I paid the caterer for his coffee out of the \$200 ration money given me by the Quartermaster.

The next stop was Albany, where we were switched to the New York Central lines. It was getting dark, and we had more chow there with the usual coffee. From Albany it took us most of the night to cross New York State. We reached Buffalo early in the morning and crossed over the R.R. bridge into Niagara, Ontario, where we were delayed again with changing lines. We had some breakfast there. I believe we could see the Falls from the train, but I was too tired to look. We had new railroad crews both at Albany and again in Buffalo. I had to retain all the transportation records to turn over to each conductor as he took over the responsibility for his road. There was a lot of "red tape" to this, as he (the conductor) had to have a check on the number of men covered by the tickets. It was quite a job. I had the Sergeants count heads in each car before making my report.

We passed through Canada and reached Winsor, which is opposite Detroit on the opposite side of the St. Clair River. Here we were side tracked in the yards, as they had to remove the springs from each car in order to get it into the tunnel or tube under the river into Detroit. This took an hour or more. The cars were day coaches of the Boston and Albany Railroad and were higher in elevation than those used on the Canadian Pacific or Grand Trunk railways, and they wouldn't go through the tunnel without being reduced in elevation. So they had to

remove the springs and blocks under each coach. Once this was done, we were hooked on to an electric locomotive and pulled into the Union Station in Detroit. This was still the day of the steam locomotive as electric power had not been developed in diesel locomotives as it is today.

When we landed at the Detroit station, the men piled off the train, and the Red Cross ladies were there to meet us with coffee, sandwiches, candy and cakes. The entire crew detrained and ranged all over the station. We were there about 30 minutes while they changed engines (to steam again) and train crews. The men were ordered back on the train, and we pulled out into the yards where we were side tracked again while they replaced the springs and blocks under the cars. One man had been left behind in the station. We started checking the cars, and here he came running down the track to catch up with us. If it hadn't been for changing the blocks, he'd have been left behind and checked off as A.W.O.L. (Absent without official leave - Ed.)

While we were in the yards at Detroit, a sailor, homeward bound, had climbed into one of the cars with the troops. The first I knew of it was when the new conductor came roaring back at me and said, "What's that sailor doing on this train? Have you transportation for him?" I told him that that was the first I had heard of it. So I asked one of the sergeants in our car to check on the man. He did and returned saying that the boy wanted to get to Chicago, and they had let him get on that car.

The conductor said he'd have to pay his fare or get off at the next stop, which was Ann Arbor. I went forward and told the man he was to be put off at the next station, unless he could pay his fare. He told me he didn't have any money and was "beating" his way to Chicago. I told him that we'd get off at Ann Arbor and consult the Red Cross in the station; that they could help him. When we reached Ann Arbor, we got off, and I took him into the station where the Red Cross arranged for his passage on a regular passenger train. He probably got into Chicago before we did. It was the custom for each new train crew to "count noses" in the cars to see that no one got a free ride. It seemed to me at the time that it was a lot of nonsense relative to one man with a different uniform on.

We pulled into the Illinois Central - Michigan Central railroad yard in Chicago about dusk. We had managed to eat aboard the train enroute from Detroit, but with no coffee. The Michigan Central people were not very cooperative. They wanted to get rid of us as soon as possible. We were a half mile or so from the station and the yards were below that level along and near the lake front. (Lake Michigan, that is.) So when the men piled off again, they couldn't go anyplace but up, and there were no stairs to the street level, or rather

Grant Park opposite Michigan Avenue. I do not remember how long we were there, but, finally, after dark a switch engine hooked onto us, and we started around Chicago on the outer belt line to get to the Northwestern tracks.

One thing that sticks in my memory at this point was the brand new electric locomotive standing on an adjacent track. We all clustered around it and looked it over asking all sorts of questions about it from the crew. It was one of the first used by the Illinois Central to pull their suburban trains into and out of the city. Later I had a chance to go on board one of them and see for myself how it worked.

It was shortly after dark when we pulled out of the I.C. yards and headed around the city to the Northwestern. It took all night, from about 9 P.M. until almost 3 in the morning to go around the city. I tried to get some sleep, but about the time I would drop off, the switch engine would back and jerk and either come to a dead stop or slow down for some reason or other. No one slept on that train that night. We were shoved around like cattle cars. I was, of course, in the last seat of the last car, and I had kicked the seat ahead of me back so I could sort of stretch out full length slantwise. The conductor and brakies occupied the other two spaces, but they were in and out of the car taking care of their jobs. As I was the only officer with the whole outfit, I was blamed, if anything went wrong, by the train crews.

Finally the Northwestern hooked on a locomotive; a new train crew came on, and we set out for Camp Grant. It didn't take us too long to reach Rockford, Illinois, where we were switched onto the trackage leading into the cantonment. We were met there by an officer and a couple of sergeants, whose job it was to check the roster of the men, take over the service records, and check on damage to the train, for which I was held responsible, being the train commander.

We piled off, and lined up in formation. I turned over the train roster and the case of service records to the Lieutenant in charge of that section of camp. The roll was called. All were present. Service records checked against the roster, and I signed over what I had on the outfit. The car check showed one broken window where some fellow had put his boot through the night before. I thought I would have to pay for that, but I didn't. The sergeants marched the men off to their temporary barracks for processing towards their discharge.

I thought I could get away that day, but no! I was told that I was still responsible for the men and their discipline in the barracks while being discharged. So I had to remain there until the 10th of June, 1919, until every man on that

train was discharged and on his way home. I didn't do much; hung around the Y.M.C.A. canteen most of the time and got acquainted with some of the hostesses. I made one inspection in the morning of the quarters. They were still pretty good soldiers and kept things in shape. They knew if they didn't, their separation from the service would be delayed several days. (and mine too).

Through the "Y", I tried to call Essie that I was in camp, but there was a telephone and telegraph strike on, and I couldn't get word to her that I was "home." Finally I took my problem to one of the hostesses who was leaving for Peoria that day. I wrote a note to Essie to come on up to Rockford; that I was to be there several days until I was discharged, and then we would go on to Chicago to celebrate our reunion.

I had rented a room in one of the downtown hotels for us when she got there, as I wasn't required to stay at night in camp. I had turned in the balance of my coffee money given to me at Camp Devens, and had receipts for all property and damage given to me, so that my way was clear to go. They asked me if I wished the two weeks leave I was entitled to with pay, but I declined. I told them that I was through with the army, as the war was over almost nine months, and I felt I had to be back on my civilian job with the Interstate Commerce Commission. On June 18th I was released, paid off, another \$200 plus some \$60 bonus money that I was entitled to and received my honorable discharge.

In the meantime, Essie had got the message from Peoria and came on up, staying at the hotel until I had finally got my release. The next day, after I had completed everything at the camp, we took a "real train" for Chicago. We got there in a couple of hours or so and taxied over to the Fort Dearborn Hotel, where I used to stay while in Chicago with the government job. They welcomed me back, (I was still in uniform) and gave us a nice room up above the noise of traffic. This hotel was next to the La Salle street station from which the New York Central (East) and the Rock Island lines (West) arrived and departed.

First thing we did was go shopping to the "Hub", men's clothing and also women's, where I bought two civilian suits, one light grey flannel, one dark, hat, shoes, neckties and shirts, not excluding underwear. Essie got a gray suit to match mine and some other clothes, as well as some other things she needed. We also took in Marshal Field's department store and Carson, Prarie Scott for various other items we needed.

I took off the uniform, and we set out to see the town for a week or so before going down home. We took in several night clubs, such as the "College Inn", the "Terrace Gardens", where, as we dined, we could see the floor show. We also went to our

old haunt, the La Salle Roof Garden, where we were the first night on our honeymoon. We dined at "Stillsons", a very conservative restaurant, as well as going out to the Edgewater Beach Hotel dining room, where we could dine in a glass enclosed patio looking out over Lake Michigan. One night we taxied out to a German beer garden on the North side, where we spent the evening eating, drinking and dancing (2¼% near beer. The country had gone dry under the Volsted Act of 1919.) We took in the Lincoln Park Zoo, the art museum on Michigan Avenue, and various other things to see that we hadn't seen before. So we spent a very happy and interesting week, even if it wasn't so profitable. However, my clothes and Essie's only came to about \$150 for everything; the hotel bills, amusement, taxis, tips, dinners about \$100 more, so we figured we'd got our money's worth.

We decided to go down to Galesburg first to see my mother, as I knew, when we got to Peoria, we'd be there quite a while. We went over to the Union Depot and got an early Burlington train for Galesburg. We arrived there sometime before noon.

We had decided I should wear my uniform, since I was supposed to be one of the returning "heroes", so called, of the war, but when we got into the "Q" station, there was no one there to greet us as we stepped off the train. I hadn't notified my folks, as the strike was still on; no telegrams or phone calls could go through.

As we went into the station, there was a Red Cross booth supervised by none other than Mrs Secord, our neighbor, and when I walked up to her, she let out a squawk and grabbed me and kissed me. So did her daughter, Marie, later. We talked a little while, and then we got a cab to take us up to 1217 North Cedar street where mother was living at that time. She had moved back there just before the war from 627 North Broad street.

Mother was completely surprised and pleased; glad that I had returned safely. Art must have been there as well as Phil, although I do not remember for sure. She phoned Uncle Fred Jelliff, Editor of the Republican Register, and he came out that evening for a story, which I gave him. Mother wanted me to give a talk to her woman's club, but I had to refuse. I was too tired and sick of war to do this. Anyway, I put it off for a while. We went to Fred and Lillian's for dinner one evening, and that was the extent of my entertainment in Galesburg. All my old friends were either killed in the war, died of the flu, or were elsewhere, so there was no one to "look up".

We left for Peoria early one morning and arrived at Edwards, where the whole Edwards, Doubet, Strehlow etc., clan was at the train to meet us. They were disappointed that I didn't appear in uniform all decorated up (with what!), but very glad to see us home safe. I had given Essie's folks address as my home when

I went overseas. After a picnic lunch, I demonstrated the use of the gas mask and other things I had with me. I had left the trunks in Galesburg for the time being. The pictures on page 227 and following show our arrival in Edwards and the demonstrations on the Edwards side porch. This was the end of the War for me, and I had finally come home to Essie and a new life as detailed in other albums

In closing this narrative, let me say this; Sherman was right, "War is Hell" and no kidding. I had been there. I had seen it, and experienced it, and wanted no more of it. However, in 1923 I went into the reserve again as a 1st Lieutenant of Engineers and took the exams for Captain, passed and served 10 years in that grade from 1924 to 1934. I took and passed the exams for a Major's commission, but got a certificate of capacity only, as there was no vacancy at that time for me. So I resigned and got out of it. I had served 2 years, 1 month, 1 day in the War, and some 12 years in the reserve with a total of over 4 years in active service including camps and training. So, "Fini-le-Guerre!"





Returned - Camp Grant, Ill., June 1919



*Stepped off the train at Edwards, Ill. in June of 1919*

The crowd that greeted us when we stepped off the train at Edwards, Ill., in June of 1919.



The crowd that met us at Edwards Station  
Gone the uniform - free at last!



The "returned" demonstrating the English gas mask for  
admiring and critical relatives and friends, Edwards, Ill.