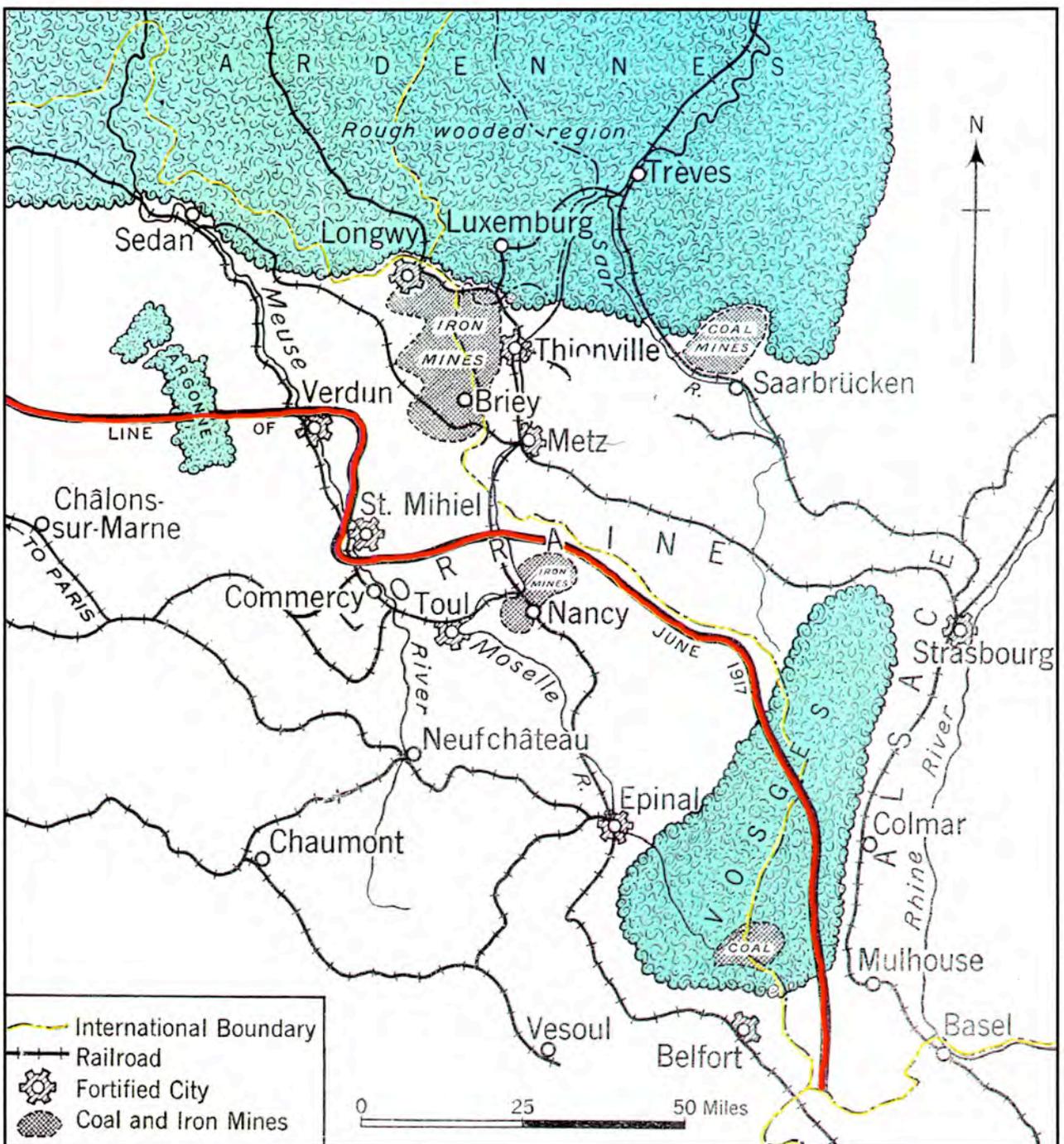




St. Mihiel



From a glance at the map it will be seen that before any decisive operation could be carried out, either on the Verdun or the Nancy fronts, the reduction of the St. Mihiel Salient would be necessary because of its flank position with regard to either, and also because it controlled the railroad, through Commercy, essential to the supply of an army operating in the vicinity of Verdun or Nancy. Looking forward to the active employment of our armies, it was virtually understood between Petain and myself that the American sector should include St. Mihiel. I suggested that our first offensive would naturally be the elimination of the salient, with which he fully agreed. The strategical advantages and the moral effect of an initial American success there were so evident that even then we entered into a more or less detailed discussion of the proposal. A few weeks later I formally approved a provisional plan for our activities in Lorraine, which, at that time, we calculated could be carried out in the following spring or summer, with an operation against the St. Mihiel salient as a preliminary move.

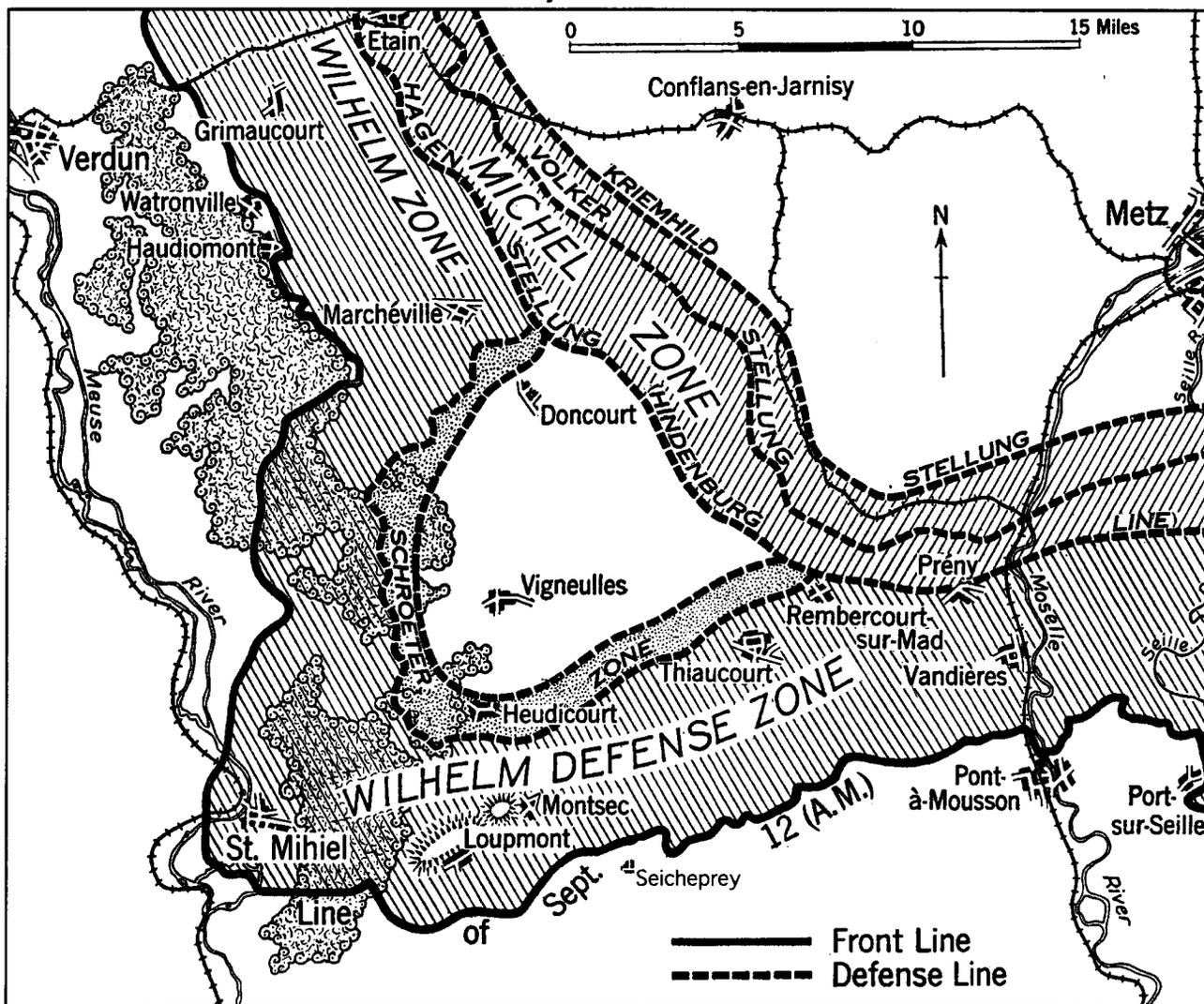
John J. Pershing
 Commander-in-Chief, American Expeditionary Forces
 1917

St. Mihiel

Attack of a Fortified Position

26th Infantry Regiment

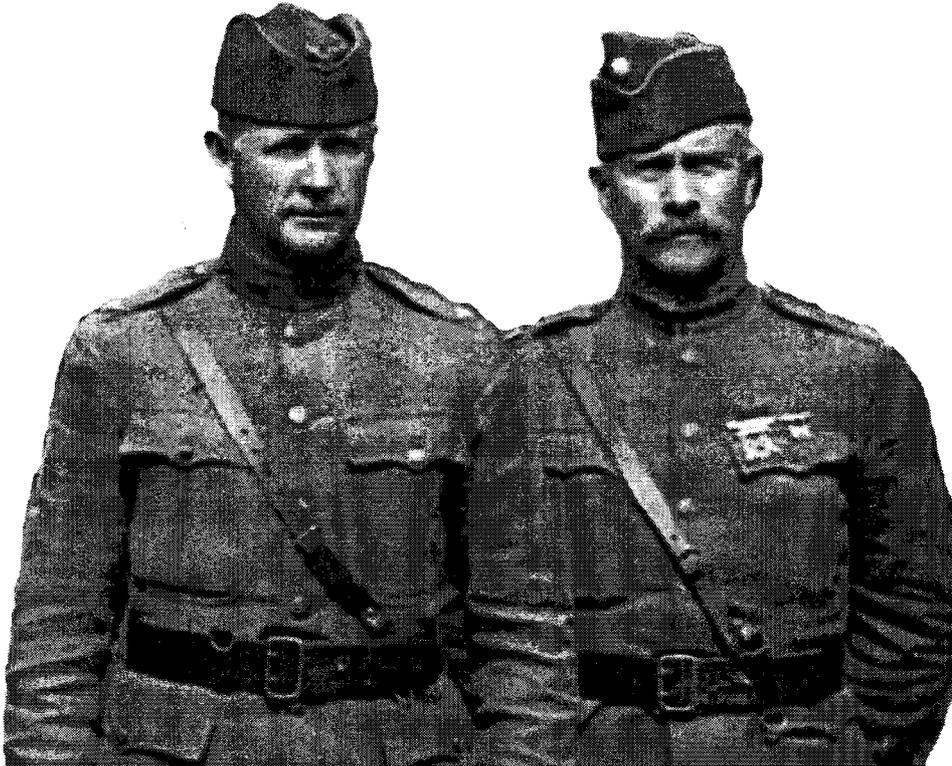
12-13 September 1918



German defense zones within the St. Mihiel salient

The 26th Infantry Regiment had entered the Battle of Soissons on 18 July 1918 with 3100 soldiers and 96 officers. On 23 July, after an advance of 11 kilometers, it marched to the rear. It had accomplished its mission, but in five days it had lost half its men, and two thirds of its officers. All field grade officers were killed or wounded. Lt. Colonel Clark R. Elliot, second in command of the regiment, was killed by artillery on the 21st, and the following day Colonel Hamilton A. Smith, the regimental commander, was mortally wounded directing the attack on the regiment's final objective on the road and railroad connecting Soissons and Chateau Thierry.

The Twenty-Sixth Infantry in France: ...The evening of the 23d the regiment entrucked for the area around ORRY-le-VILLE, arriving early in the morning of the 24th. It was here in this quaint little village untouched by the spoils of war and amid the sympathies of the French peasant that we laid Our Colonel away to rest. It seemed it could never be the same old regiment again. Surely it had been dealt a terrible blow. Its very heart strings had been cut. Would they ever mend?



Col. Hamilton and Lt. Col. Elliot, April, 1918. Col. Hamilton chose the Mohawk arrowhead insignia for the 26th Infantry because it signified "courage, resourceful daring and relentless pursuit."

The Division needed a rest and much new blood. After four delightful days, during which a few were permitted to see Paris by day, the regiment marched to LE PLESSIS BELLVILLE, and on the evening of July 28th entrained for BOIS L'EVEQUE, arriving at the latter place late in the afternoon of the 29th. The regiment detrained at MARON and by nightfall was comfortably settled in the same quarters in the camp they had left just four months previous. It was like meeting an old friend to find every-

thing about as we had left it. The Battalion of the Foreign Legion which had been on our right at SOISSONS had preceded us to the camp. They were glad to see us and to learn the last good news from that bloody battle. We were now on a par with the best of the French Divisions. We remained in the camp until August 3d checking over and verifying our casualty list. In several companies all the Officers had been either killed or wounded, and in one company all the Officers, the First Sergeant and Company Clerk had been casualties....

This Gypsy division of ours never remained long anywhere. The next Jump was to PONT-A-MOUSSON where we relieved the Second Moroccan Division the night of August 4th. The First Brigade went in on the left, the Second on the right. The regiment occupied the extreme right of the sector, with its P. C. just in rear of the village of JEZAINVILLE.

The cover is by Army artist Harvey Thomas Dunn, "The Tanks at Seicheprey," from sketches during the battle

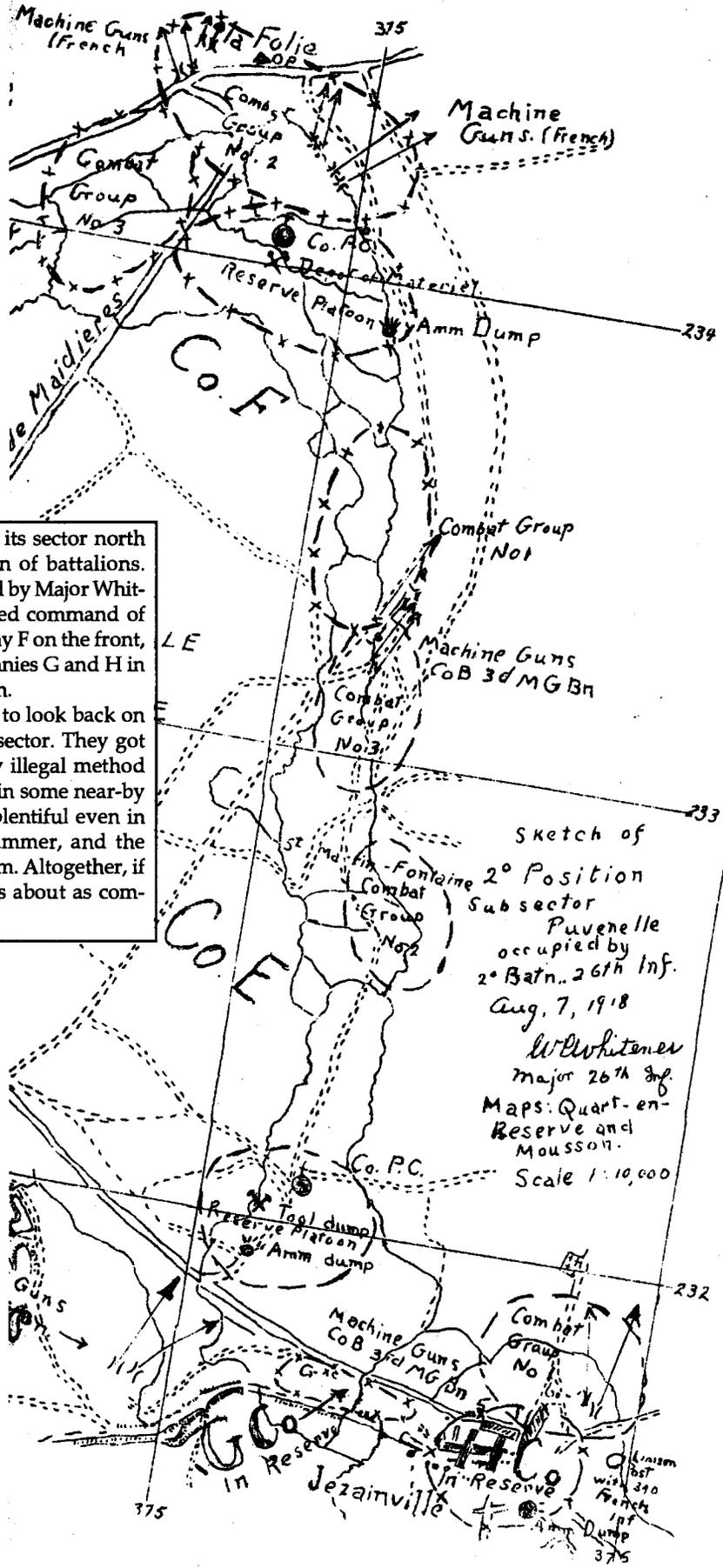
The French told us it was a tranquil sector in an appealing sort of way which seemed to hint that we should continue it as such. The boys called it a "bon secteur" and were not in the least determined to "liven it up". Except for some old 90's which were apparently fired to keep them from rusting, scarcely a shot was heard for days at a time. There were Company and Battalion gardens, planted by some of our predecessors, which were turned over just as any other sector property.

The Engineers dammed the creek running through JEZAINVILLE and constructed a swimming pool, where most any after-

noon one could see a hundred dough boys splashing about... There was little work to do in the sector. The line had not moved since the Germans had been stopped in 1914. Trenches were in good repair. Patrolling in the heavily wooded BOIS-le-PRETRE was almost out of the question. The great trees had been felled and the place wired and re-wired until only a rabbit could get through. We contented ourselves with day and night listening posts, occupied by small patrols.

It was in one of our day posts that a very unusual incident occurred. The regiment had absorbed some 1500 replacements, many of them in the trenches for the first time. One of these "rookies" was sent out as a member of a patrol to occupy the day post from which we had according to custom withdrawn during the previous night. The first to arrive at the post, he casually

The 26th Infantry defended its sector north of JEZAINVILLE in column of battalions. This trench sketch, submitted by Major Whitener shortly after he assumed command of 2d Battalion, shows Company F on the front, Co E in support, and Companies G and H in reserve - a defense in depth. **Roosevelt:** Everybody used to look back on their pleasant times in this sector. They got fresh fish by the thoroughly illegal method of throwing hand grenades in some near-by ponds, while berries were plentiful even in the frontline. It was midsummer, and the weather was pleasantly warm. Altogether, if you had to be at war, it was about as comfortable as possible.





On 7 Sep 1918, Lt.Col. JM Cullison, commander of 26th Infantry, was awarded the DSC for heroism with the 28th Infantry at Soissons

seated himself in the most comfortable spot where someone had kindly placed an empty sand bag. Fritz's machine began to work and in due time it went off. Recovering from the explosion the Sergeant picked himself up to find that the total damage was one private missing. A thorough search failed to produce more than remnants and so the casualty reports at the end of the tour showed three instead of two, one killed in action. Six months later he reported to the Personnel Adjutant in NENTERSHAUSEN, Germany, and the casualty report was amended. He had been hurled a great distance [and taken prisoner]...Today he is wiser but none the worse for his experience.

On August 22d we were relieved by the 360th Infantry of the 90th Division, fresh from the U. S. A. The regiment was trucked to URUFFE where we were greeted with a special ten days training schedule. With the terrain exercises and the tanks and big guns rumbling forward every night we rather imagined that another show was soon to come off, but we were very much interested in knowing just where it was going to be. Officers joining the regiment who had but recently come through Paris brought the word that the Americans were going to reduce the St. Mihiel Salient..



Gen. John J. Pershing

General Pershing: The St. Mihiel salient lay between the Meuse and the Moselle Rivers and was roughly outlined by the triangle Pont-à-Mousson, St. Mihiel, Verdun. On the western side of this area the wooded heights of the Meuse extend along the east bank of the river. Beyond these heights lies the broad plain of the Woëvre with its large forest areas and numerous lakes and swamps. High wooded bluffs follow both banks of the Moselle, and the deep ravines and heavy forests on the western bank offer difficult terrain for offensive operations. Between the Moselle and Meuse Rivers, the only stream of any importance is the Rupt de Mad, which flows northeast through Thiaucourt and empties into the Moselle.

The principal forests in the plain of the Woëvre are the Bois le Prétre, the Bois de Mort Mare and the Bois de Vigneulles. From the heights of Loupmont and Montsec, and from the steep eastern bluff of the heights of the Meuse, practically every portion of the plain can be seen. Our possession of the eastern edge of the heights of the Meuse northwest of Les Épargés was a distinct advantage. But farther south the enemy held sections of these heights, which gave him important observation stations and enabled him to conceal masses of artillery that could fire either against our lines to the south on the plain of the Woëvre or to the west into the valley of the Meuse. It was, therefore, especially advisable, in order to prevent the concentration of his artillery fire in one direction, for us to attack the enemy from the west face of the salient in conjunction with our attack against the southern face. The main rail lines and roads run along the river valleys, with subsidiaries passing through the heart of the salient and along the eastern

This description of the reduction of the St. Mihiel salient relies principally on contemporary official records and on postwar accounts of participants. Each source is identified with **bold face, underlined** entries at the outset of a quotation; for others there is a footnote. Editorial comments are boxed like this one. Chief among accounts quoted are the following:

"The Regimental Adjutant." The Twenty-Sixth Infantry in France. Martin Flock, G.m.b.H., Montabaur-Frankfurt o. M., Germany. 1919. The Adjutant at that time was Barnwell Rhett Legge, who, then a Captain, assumed command of the 26th Regiment when Colonel Hamilton was killed at Soissons, and later served as Lt. Col. Roosevelt's second in command during the Meuse-Argonne campaign.

DB 1-4, 1st Division (Regular) A.E.F. Infantry Regiments, Vol. 1. [computer file] Version 3.0. The Digital Bookshelf, 1999. The World War I regimental histories of the 16th, 18th, 28th and 26th Infantry on a CD.

Pershing, John J. My Experiences in the First World War. Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York, 1931. Two volumes. The commander of the American Expeditionary Forces in France, and the foremost proponent for the St. Mihiel offensive. During the reduction of the St. Mihiel salient, he was both commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, and the newly organized First Army.

Marshall, George C. Memoirs of My Services in the World War. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1976. Another of America's great soldiers who, as operations officer of the First Division, early gained Pershing's approbation. Pershing transferred him to his staff, and ultimately assigned him to First Army as its Operations Officer. Marshall planned the St. Mihiel operation, and simultaneously arranged the staging for the offensive in the Meuse-Argonne region, soon to follow.

The United States Army in World War I [computer disk]. The United States Army Center of Military History. Every publication of the Center of Military History on World War I on three CD. USACMH, Washington, D.C., 1998. N.B. does not include the Operations Reports of Infantry Brigades and Regiments, particularly those in Volume XIII, World War Records, First Division, A.E. F. September 12, 1918 to Conclusion. Since personal details in the latter documents had been excised, the originals in the National Archives, Record Group 201-33.6 were used as the source for the reproductions in this text.

Summerall, Charles P. The Way of Duty, Honor, Country. Unpublished typescript in the First Division Museum, Cantigny, Illinois. Major General Summerall commanded the First Division at Soissons, St. Mihiel, and the opening phase of the Meuse-Argonne operation. On October 12, 1918 he was promoted to command the 5th Corps.

History of the First Division During the World War. Compiled and published by the Society of the First Division. The John C. Winston Company, Philadelphia, PA, 1922. This volume was produced under the personal direction of General Summerall.

Gowenlock, Thomas R. Soldiers of Darkness. Doubleday, Doran & Company, Garden City, NY, 1937. The author was the intelligence officer of the Division at St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne.

Miller, Henry Russell. The First Division. The Crescent Press, Pittsburgh, PA, 1920. Miller was an eyewitness to events within the First Division from its arrival in France to the end of the war.

Roosevelt, Theodore. Average Americans. G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1920. Lt.Col. Roosevelt, son of the former President, commanded 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry 1917-1918, until wounded at Soissons, but returned to command the Regiment during Meuse-Argonne. After the war he was a founder of the American Legion, and was active in the Society of the First Division. Recalled for World War II, he resumed command of the Regiment, then, promoted to Brigadier General and Assistant Division Commander, led the 1st Infantry Division in North Africa and Sicily, 1942-1943. He died in 1944 during the invasion of Normandy, and was awarded the Medal of Honor.

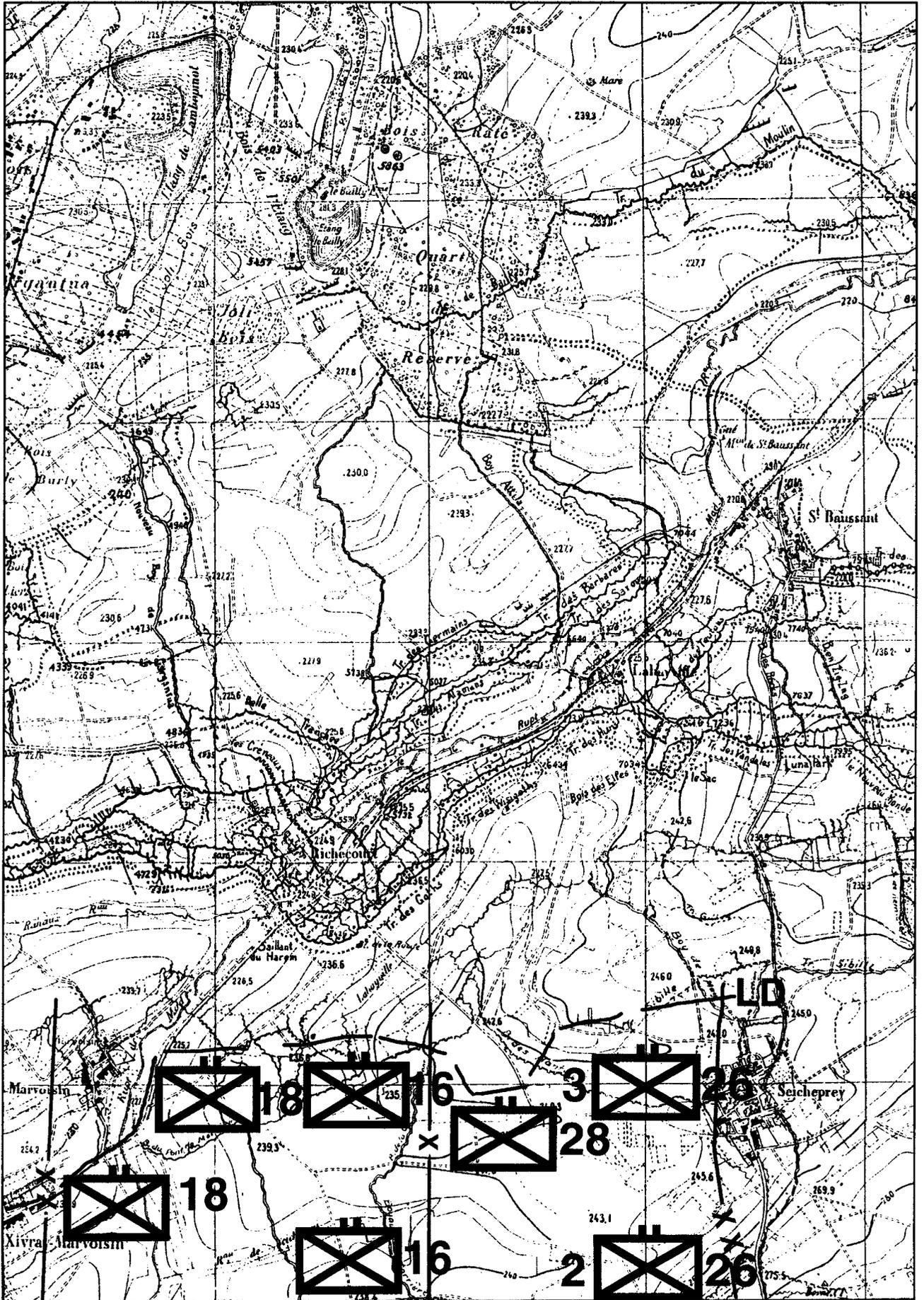
History of the 101st Machine Gun Battalion. Wainwright, P.S., ed. 101st Machine Gun Battalion Association, Hartford, CN, 1922. The 101st was a unit of the 26th "Yankee" Division of the A.E.F., one of the National Guard Divisions deployed early to France, a participant in hard fighting at Seicheprey in March, 1918, and in the counteroffensive to reduce the Marne salient in July.

slope of the heights of the Meuse. The Woëvre is seriously affected by the wet season which begins about the middle of September. In dry weather, the water supply is difficult, while during the rainy period the country becomes flooded, making many of the roads impassable. During the period of four years' occupation, the Germans had strengthened the natural defensive features by elaborate fortifications and by a dense network of barbed wire that covered the entire front. There were four or five defensive positions, the first of which included the outpost system, the fourth being the Hindenburg Line, back of which were a series of detached works, and in rear the permanent fortifications of Metz and Thionville. The strength of the defenses had been fully demonstrated earlier in the war when powerful efforts by the French against various points of the line had been defeated with heavy losses.

The salient was practically a great field fortress. It had, however, the characteristic weakness of all salients in that it could be attacked from both flanks in converging operations. Our heaviest blow was to be from the south where there were no great natural features to be overcome, while the secondary attack was to come from the west and join the main drive in the heart of the salient....In our original plans it had been my purpose after crushing the salient to continue the offensive through the Hindenburg Line and as much farther as possible, depending upon the success attained and the opposition that developed. [see map, inside front cover].



Brigadier General Frank E. Bamford studying the initial objectives of his 2d Infantry Brigade (see map opposite). The Butte de Montsec looms at right. After Soissons, Bamford had succeeded Brig. Gen. Beaumont B. Buck in command of the 2d Brigade, and went on to command the 26th Infantry Division after the battle of St. Mihiel.





Marshal Foch

On 30 August 1918 the Allied Commander-in-Chief, Marshall Foch, presented to General Pershing a directive that changed the plans decided on in July in the light of unanticipated Allied successes in August: the Germans had been driven back much further than expected, and they were vulnerably disorganized. Foch's new plan involved a broad converging attack eastward by the British in Belgium, north-eastward by the French in the center, and northward by the Americans between the Meuse and Aisne Rivers toward Sedan and Mézières. Hence, Foch proposed that Pershing's assault on the St. Mihiel salient be reduced in scope and duration to facilitate the launching in late September of an American-French offensive extending from the Meuse westward through the Argonne Forest (see map, inside front cover), and to provide American divisions to assist the French and the British attacks.

Foch asked Pershing if he had any observations on the foregoing. Pershing replied that he had always depended on Marshal Foch to assist him in forming the American Army.

The American people, their government, the Secretary of War and the President insisted that the American Army fight as such, and had criticized him [General Pershing] for parceling out American troops here and there among the Allies. Hence the proposed operation, in that it interspersed American formations among allied armies, was unacceptable. Within 48 hours, Foch agreed to go ahead with reduction of the St. Mihiel salient, but required Pershing then to concentrate the American army in the Meuse-Argonne region, on the right flank of what was to be the final Allied offensive of the war.

Decision Concerning Allied Operations at St-Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne
[Editorial Translation]

1st Subsection, 3d Section, G.S.
ARMIES

HEADQUARTERS, ALLIED

No. 3528
September 2, 1918

Bombon,

CONFERENCE OF SEPTEMBER 2

During the conference of September 2 at the headquarters of Marshal Foch, at which General Pershing, General Petain, and their Chiefs of Staff were present, the following was decided upon:

1. The St-Mihiel attack, limited as to objectives to obtaining the line Vigneulles ---Thiaucourt---Regniéville [a constraint later eased], limited as a consequence as to the means to be employed, and limited also as to duration, will be prepared for execution September 10. This attack will require 8 to 10 divisions.

2. The attack west of the Meuse [Meuse-Argonne] will be executed by the American Army covered on its right by the river and supported on its left by an attack of the French Fourth Army. It will be prepared without any delay for execution between September 20 and 25.

The American Army will put into this attack all the forces it has available (12 to 14 divisions), and will also shift to this attack such of the divisions from the St-Mihiel attack as may not be needed for it or may later become available. Its front of attack will

start at the Meuse and will extend toward the west at least as far as the Argonne [Forest].

3. The organization of communications in the Meuse sector necessitates bringing under a single command all the troops operating on the right and left banks of the Meuse. Consequently, General Pershing, who has already taken under his command the St-Mihiel attack sector, will also take under his command for the attack west of the Meuse the present front of the French Second Army at least as far as the Argonne.

The French divisions holding the passive front to the east of the Meuse will be retained there for the time being and are placed under American command by the present order.

The operations will be carried out under the high direction of the General commanding the Armies of the North and Northeast.

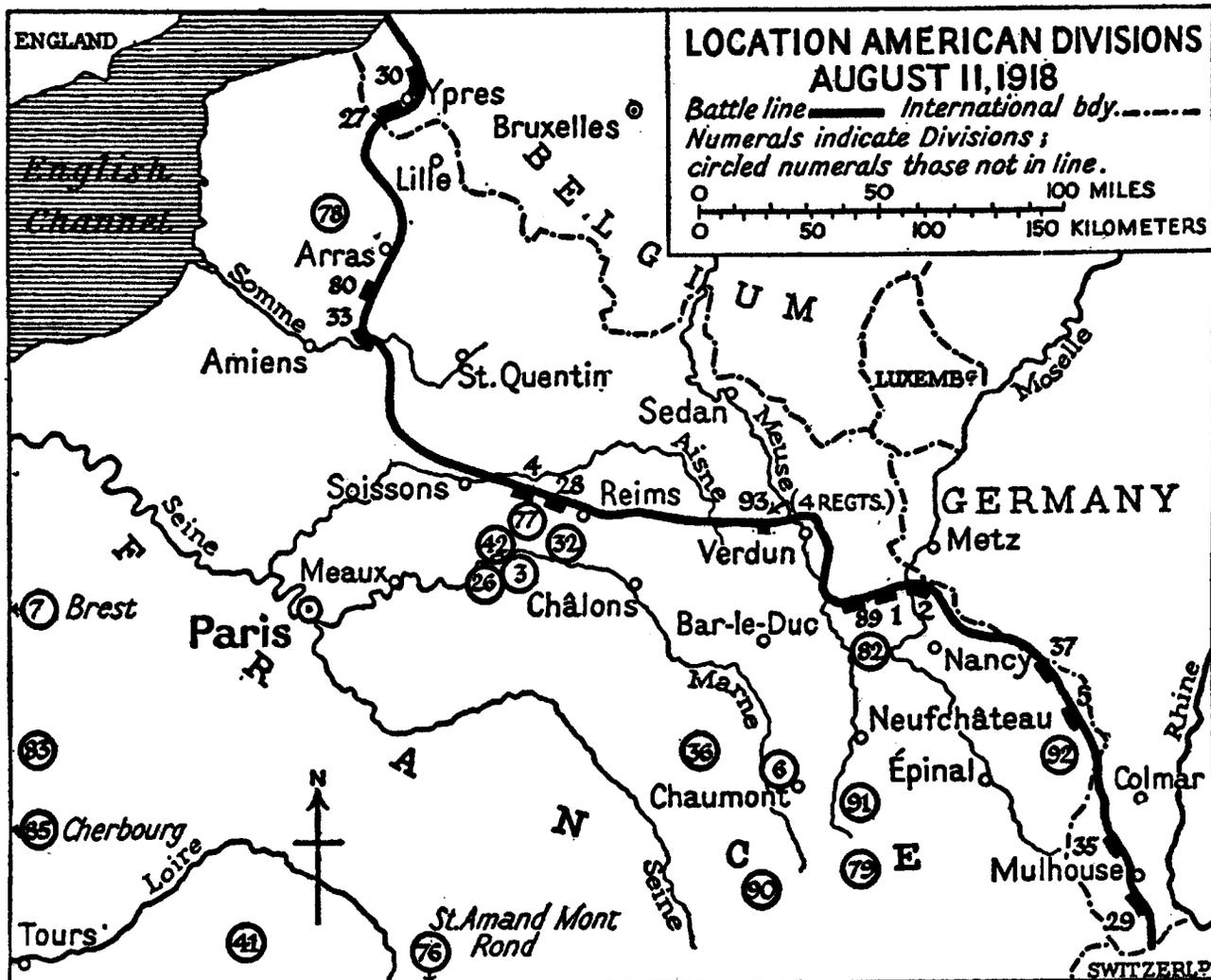
FOCH

General Pershing: The actual concentration of troops and materiel to form our First Army was begun in the St. Mihiel region in early August. We had 3,010 artillery guns of all calibers, none of which were of American manufacture. Of the total, 1,681 were manned by Americans and 1,329 by French. Before the attack, 40,000 tons of ammunition were placed in dumps. Signal communication consisted of telegraph and telephone lines, radio and pigeons. The central switchboard was at Ligny-en-Barrois with 38 circuits with separate nets for command, supply, artillery, air service and utilities. There were 19 railheads for daily supplies such as food, clothing and equipment. In addition to our own limited motor transportation, we borrowed from the French trucks capable of moving at one time 2,000 tons of material and 20,000 men. The Medical Department provided 15,000 beds for the southern and 5,900 for the western attack and 65 evacuation trains for patients. Engineers provided material, including rolling stock and shops, for the reconstruction and operation of over 45 miles of standard gauge and 250 miles of light railways. A bridge of 200 feet at Griscourt was built, and 15 miles of road reconstructed. Road rock used was over 100,000 tons. 120 water points were established, furnishing 1,200,000 gallons per day, replenished by night trips of railroad or truck water trains.

The greater part of the American troops had previously been serving at other points along the Western Front. As railway and motor transport became available, units were brought from the British front, from the French armies about Chateau-Thierry, and from the Vosges. They were assembled in billeting areas some distance behind the battle lines, where they received necessary replacements and equipment and continued their training.

The transfer of certain auxiliary units and the French artillery could not be carried out until after September 2d, as much of the motor transportation which came from the French was in use farther west. On account of the scarcity of roads and the necessity for the crossing of columns, complete march tables had to be prepared by First Army Headquarters for this concentration, which was conducted with efficiency and celerity. The organization of the First Army was completed in the back areas. Beginning at the end of August, the battle concentration was started, when all combatant units were quietly moved to their battle positions.

The aviation force, consisting of nearly 1,400 planes, under Colonel Mitchell, was the strongest that had been assembled up to that time. It included the British Independent Bombing Squadrons, under General Trenchard, which Marshal Haig had generously sent and which were particularly useful for attacking important rail centers in the rear of the enemy's line. General Petain placed at our disposal a French air division of 600 planes. Thus we started with a superiority over the enemy in the air which was maintained



throughout the offensive. Unfortunately, we could obtain no heavy tanks and only 267 light tanks, which were of French manufacture, and of these 154 were manned by American troops.

In addition to the American divisions, four French divisions, three of which were then serving under the French II Colonial Corps around the tip of the salient, were assigned to our army for the operation. The total strength of the First Army when ready for battle was about 550,000 American and 110,000 French troops.... Except for delay in the arrival of part of the French heavy artillery, the attack could have been made as early as the 10th.

The engineers were on hand with personnel and material to begin the reconstruction of roads and light railways. The signal troops were there to extend communications. Arrangements to give medical aid were ready, with many installations having been taken over from the French, who assisted us materially in this work. The size and shape of the salient made it necessary to organize two systems of supply, one to serve troops operating against the southern face, and the other those attacking from the west.

The preliminary arrangements were completed expeditiously and efficiently, and the First Army was now ready to undertake its first independent operation....

As we have seen, however, the agreement reached in conference on September 2d limited the operations to the reduction of the salient itself. The basic features of the plan were not altered, but its objectives were defined and the number of troops to be employed was reduced. A tactical surprise was essential to success....The sector had been quiet for

some time and was usually occupied by seven enemy divisions in the front line, with two in reserve. It was estimated that the enemy could reinforce it by two divisions in two days, two more in three days, and as many divisions as were available in four days....On the date of the attack the enemy had in the salient proper the equivalent of nine divisions in line, and one in reserve....These considerations prompted the decision to use some of our most experienced divisions along with the others.

As the plans for the battle neared completion, the duration of the preliminary artillery bombardment came up for consideration as affecting the element of surprise. Practically all previous attacks by the Allies had been preceded by severe bombardments, in some instances lasting for days. In the event that we should pursue the same method the enemy would of course be fully warned of our intentions. I decided, therefore, that there should be only enough preliminary artillery fire to disconcert the enemy and still not leave him time to withdraw or bring up reserves in any number before we could strike. A reasonable amount of firing would give encouragement to our own troops and would be especially advantageous in case rain should make the ground difficult for the tanks. The length of time for the preliminary bombardment was therefore fixed at four hours, which proved to be wise.

In the order of battle for the main attack, the I Corps was on the right, with the 82d Division astride the Moselle, and the 90th, the 5th, and the 2d in order from east to west. Then came the IV Corps with the 89th Division, the 42d Division, and the 1st Division. The V Corps, with the 26th Division, and part of the 4th Division, assisted by the French 15th Colonial Division, was to conduct the secondary attack against the western face. In this corps the 26th Division alone was to make a deep advance, directed southeast toward Vigneulles. At the point of the salient was the French II Colonial Corps composed of the French 39th and 26th Infantry Divisions and the 2d Dismounted Cavalry Division. This corps was to make a supporting advance on the left of the principal drive from the south, and also on the right of the western attack. Troops at the apex were to hold the enemy in their front....The plan presented an especial difficulty in that the troops on the south [U.S. First Division] were required to make a change in direction of sixty degrees during the advance....

George C. Marshall, promoted to Colonel on 27 August, was one of the principal planners of the St. Mihiel offensive. Colonel Marshall had an encounter with Pershing that long remained vivid in his memory:

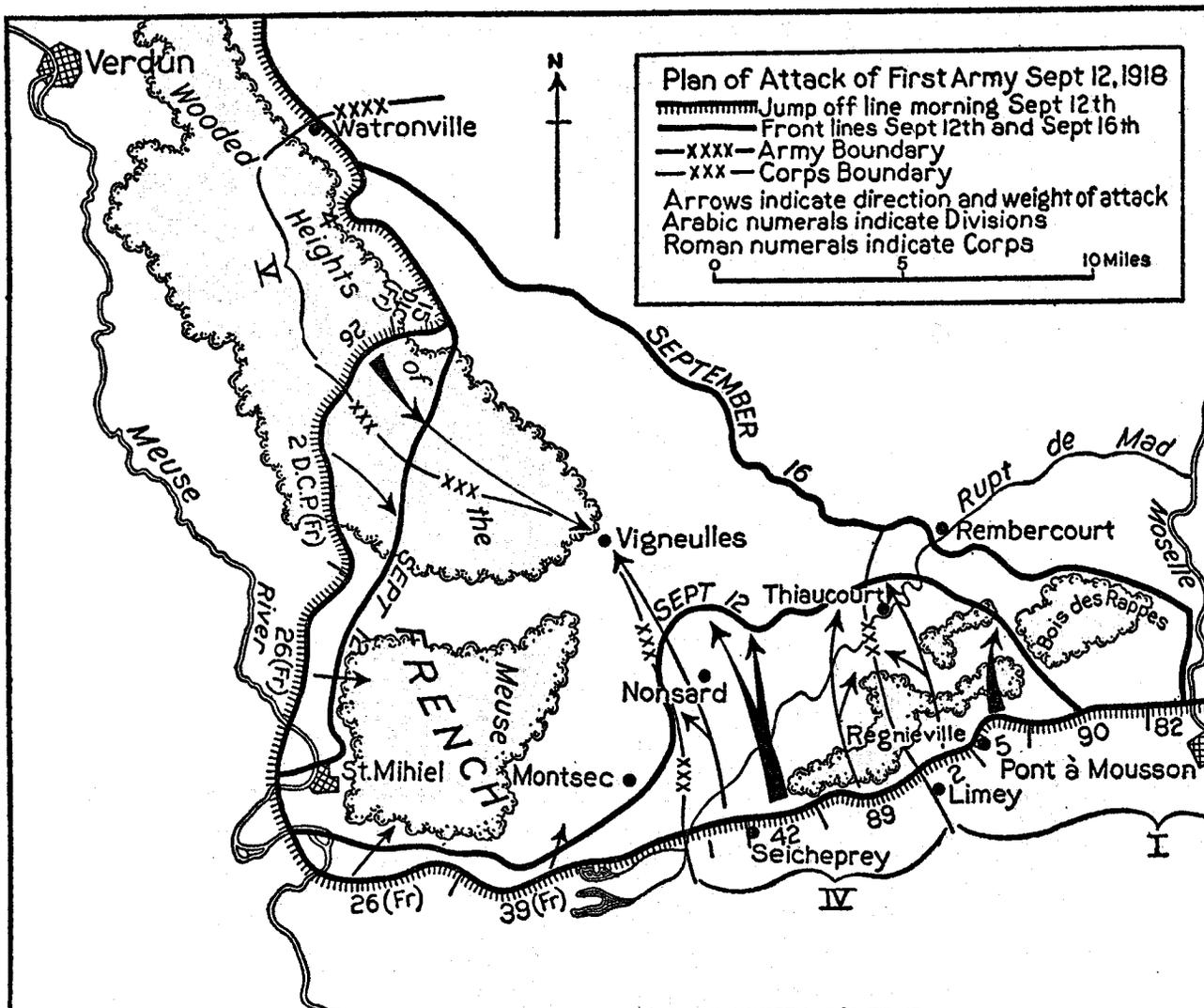


Lt. Col. Marshall, June 1918

George C. Marshall: Finishing work one morning at four o'clock, I decided to sleep until ten, and, as luck would have it, turned the corner on my way to the office and met General Pershing. While I felt justified in the lateness of the hour at which I was going to work, yet I did not care to undertake any explanations, as excuses are a poor business at best. He inquired as to what I was doing, referring, I believe to my work, but I thought he had other things in mind and admitted, unfortunately, that I was just going to the office. He asked me what I thought of the problem of getting the infantry through the barbed wire entanglements. This was an all-important question then under consideration and had not been decided. I replied that it presented quite a dilemma but

there was no doubt in my mind that we would soon arrive at a satisfactory solution. The British had promised us heavy tanks capable of crushing the wire, and at the last moment had notified General Pershing that these could not be furnished. It was impracticable to undertake a long period of artillery fire, as this would have required more than a day of continuous firing preliminary to the attack and would have sacrificed the element of surprise so essential to the operation without a heavy sacrifice in lives. Ultimately, General Pershing had the courage to take a chance and try something that had never before been attempted...The French thought that the General would wreck his troops on the first entanglement.....

On August 30th, Marshal Foch arrived in Ligny and went into immediate conference with General Pershing. I knew of his presence, but for some days remained ignorant of the momentous purpose of his visit, which was the first proposal for the Meuse-Argonne battle, with the possibility of abandoning the St. Mihiel operation. It also included another effort to split the newly formed American army. On September 2nd, a final conference was held between the Marshal and General Pershing, at which it was formally decided to carry out the Meuse-Argonne operation on September 25th, and definitely determined to limit the extent of the St. Mihiel operation. The last clause of the agreement was of decided interest to me, as it necessitated the alteration of the plan of battle, with corresponding changes in the orders for the attack. For a week I remained ignorant of the reasons



for the change, although aware that something of major importance was in the wind; but I was too hard driven with my own problems to feel disposed to ask any questions regarding extraneous matters.

As a result of this final decision regarding the St. Mihiel, Colonel Grant and I were notified that we would devote ourselves exclusively to the coordination of the plans for the battle, the revision of the orders, and the preparations concerned. The subdivision of the Operations Section of the General Staff, which would ordinarily have had charge of this work, was withdrawn from connection with it... Our office was continuously flooded with a stream of officers, mostly from the divisions gathering for the conflict. They usually urged some minor change in their orders which they considered entirely reasonable, without thought of how each alteration complicated the interlocking of the parts in the huge machine. The freedom of action and ample elbow room enjoyed by the small, scattered units of our old Regular Army had been conducive to a state of mind in its officers which made them slow to realize the rigidity of arrangements imposed by the massing of immense numbers of troops. It was quite evident that the longer an officer continued in France the more readily he understood the impossibility of making changes in basic plans for the benefit or advantage of a particular unit. Not that changes were not frequent, but they came from above and not from below. An interview between General Pershing and Marshal Foch might result in some seemingly insignificant amendment to the general plan, but it usually resulted in a wide disturbance in the lower echelons. An inch at the top became a mile at the bottom; and a division which had just marched up a hill might find itself reversed and ordered back to its starting point. These changes are unavoidable in making combinations among large armies, though they arouse the ire of the humble soldier, particularly the American with his characteristics of independent thought and action.

The critical decision to be taken at this time was the character of the artillery preparation to precede the advance of the infantry. Heretofore, when a strongly entrenched and fortified position, protected by numerous broad belts of wire entanglements, was to be attacked, very elaborate arrangements were made to destroy the wire so that the infantry might pass these successive obstacles without check or delay. Machine guns were always arranged to sweep the zones covered by the wire entanglements, and if the foot soldier was forced to pause in these dangerous localities the casualties were usually prohibitive. Prior to the German offensives, the French and British had adopted the plan of preceding the actual advance with several days — sometimes a week — of massed artillery fire, largely directed at the barbed wire. A departure from this had been made at Cambrai, where the heavy British tanks had been able to tear great gaps through the wire, but, as I have already mentioned, Sir Douglas Haig, at the last moment, had informed General Pershing that he could not spare any heavy tanks for our use. The Germans in their spring offensives had solved this problem by concealing in their most advanced positions a mass of *Minenwerfer* (bomb-throwers) of heavy caliber, and with these were able to destroy the wire in five or six hours of fire.

We did not possess sufficient heavy-caliber Stokes mortars (our equivalent to the *Minenwerfer*) for this purpose. Furthermore, even if these engines of destruction had been available in sufficient numbers, it was not possible in the brief time at our disposal to make the necessary installations, unknown to the enemy. Prior to our arrival on this front, the French had withdrawn their lines almost a kilometer in rear of Noman's land and the Germans had not made a corresponding advance of theirs. It would have been necessary to have located the trench mortars in this abandoned zone, because of their short range,

which would have required its reoccupation, and this in turn would have been plain notice to the enemy of our intentions. To place a battery of these mortars in an exposed position in such fashion that it would not show on the photographs continuously being taken from the enemy's aeroplanes would have been a long and delicate piece of work, and to have carried this out along the entire front would have required weeks, even supposing we had not had the problem of reoccupying the former forward positions.

To destroy wire by artillery fire is at best a tedious process. It first requires a series of single shots at each point of proposed rupture, each shot being observed and recorded before the next is fired. This is for the purpose of carefully registering the fire before the battle. Following this, it was estimated that five hundred shots from a 75 were necessary to cut a gap five meters wide and ten meters long. Unless the preliminary registration fire is distributed over a period of at least a month, the enemy is almost certain to draw correct conclusions, and the moment the fire of destruction was directed at the wire, the Germans would have instantly been aware of the imminence of an attack. At least a whole day would be required to cut the minimum number of gaps considered necessary. Registration fire on the previous day would also have been necessary. The large amount of ammunition required for such a fire of destruction or demolition was not available, as it could not have been brought up in time.

The three propositions which received most serious consideration were, first, to precede the infantry advance by eighteen (18) hours of artillery fire, hoping in this time to accomplish sufficient disruption of the wire to insure a reasonably free passage for the foot troops. The next proposal was to precede the active operation by about five (5) hours of artillery fire, merely for the purpose of demoralizing the defenders and inspiring our own troops. The third proposition was to launch the infantry attack without any prior artillery preparation. Both Colonel Grant [Marshall's co-planner] and myself were strongly opposed to the last-named proposal, and for a time it appeared that this was to be the decision. We felt that the risk involved was far too great to be justified for an army undertaking its first operation, particularly in view of the strong pressure exerted by our Allies to utilize our divisions in their armies and to prevent us from organizing a separate army of our own. Any failure on our part, however small, was bound to be the basis for renewed efforts to achieve their ends. This proposal was a departure from all previous practice in the assault of elaborately fortified positions. Time and again the infantry of the Allies had broken itself on the enemy's wire, in spite of preparations to secure its passage. Heavy American losses resulting from this departure would have inevitably resulted in General Pershing's relief from command; he had too many prominent officials, civil and military, in the ranks of our Allies, who resented the unyielding, though diplomatic, attitude he had assumed regarding the formation of an American army. So strongly did Grant and myself feel on this subject that we addressed a joint official letter to the Chief of Staff for the consideration of General Pershing, appealing to him not to undertake the attack without artillery preparation; and I recall that this communication closed with the statement that to do this would be to take a gambler's chance. We recommended eighteen hours of artillery fire and General Pershing decided on five. Whether it was his sound judgment, or the accident of circumstance, I do not know, but his decision exactly met the situation....

In preparing the special instructions, or annexes, to the battle order which covered the orders for the Engineer troops, supply services, signal communications, intelligence service, control of traffic on the roads, the handling of prospective prisoners, and what not — in preparing these to be mimeographed after they had been submitted by the respective

Chiefs of Services, we only had two hours available, and were forced to adopt much the practice of the make-up editor of a big-city paper. Being the first of such instructions prepared, they were not standard in form nor did they cover the same general range, so it was necessary to amend and rearrange, provide headings, and attend to many little details preparatory to the final reproduction. Working at high speed on such important matters, which involved all sorts of consequences, was a very trying business, but fortunately we accomplished our task without mishap.

The battle was scheduled for the early morning of September 12th, and on the afternoon of the 8th or morning of the 9th, General Drum [Chief of Staff, First Army] sent for me. Arriving at his office, I found Colonel Grant and Colonel Monroe C. Kerth also present. General Drum announced that on September 25th the First Army would launch an attack from the Meuse to the western edge of the Argonne Forest; that the plans for the actual attack were under preparation in the G-3 (Operations) Section; that I would have charge of the movement of the troops from the St. Mihiel to the Meuse-Argonne front; that Colonel Grant would arrange for taking over the new front from the Second French Army; and that Colonel Kerth would arrange for the billeting of the divisions as they arrived, and would also coordinate matters between the Operations Section, Colonel Grant, and myself. General Drum read a list of the divisions which would be in the first line in the attack, giving me their order from right to left, and also the designation of the artillery brigades to accompany them, where their own organic brigades were still in the south of France completing their training. He called off the list of the divisions to be placed in corps reserve and in army reserve. I wrote this down in a page in my notebook, which I found a few weeks prior to dictating this paragraph. With this data I immediately returned to my office to consult the map. About ten minutes' consideration made it apparent that to reach the new front in time to deploy for a battle on September 25th, would require many of these troops to get under way on the evening of the first day of the St. Mihiel battle, notwithstanding the fact that the advance in that fight was expected to continue for at least two days. This appalling proposition rather disturbed my equilibrium and I went out on the canal to have a walk while thinking it over.

Now I knew the purpose of Marshal Foch's visit on August 30th, and the meaning of the mysterious withdrawal of the Subdivision of the Operations Section, which ordinarily would have handled the work of the St. Mihiel then being carried out by Colonel Grant and myself. I remember thinking during this walk that I could not recall an incident in history where the fighting of one battle had been preceded by the plans for a later battle to be fought by the same army on a different front, and involving the issuing of orders for the movement of troops already destined to participate in the first battle, directing their transfer to the new field of action. There seemed no precedent for such a course, and, therefore, no established method for carrying it out.

The harder I thought the more confused I became, and I finally sat down beside one of the typical old French fishermen who forever line the banks of the canals and apparently never get a bite. In the calm of his presence I composed my mind and, after a half hour of meditation, returned to the office still without any solution of the problem, but in a more philosophical mood. There I found Walter Grant wearing a smile in keen enjoyment of my perturbation and of his luck in being assigned to the tail end of the dilemma. I must deliver the troops before he could take over the new front.

The preceding hour, and the period of futile fumbling which immediately followed, stand out in my mind as the most trying mental ordeal experienced by me during the war.

The development of the American Expeditionary Forces was marked by a series of personal tragedies suffered by officers assigned important tasks and who, with the limited means or facilities at their disposal, and the short time usually available, were unable to produce the desired result. In many instances, given the same man and task, but more peace and quiet and an abundance of time, the result would probably have been satisfactory....Being averse to making an inglorious sacrifice, and fully recognizing the gravity of my dilemma, I called a stenographer and started the dictation of the preliminary order for the Meuse-Argonne concentration, realizing that it must reach the various army corps immediately, if the corps commanders were to be given time to make the necessary rearrangements prior to the jump-off of the St. Mihiel. With a map spread out on the table and the line-up of divisions for the battle in my hand, I started with the proposition that the only way to begin is to commence. In less than an hour I had evolved a method for the procedure and had completed the order, which not only covered the preliminary movement of troops, but involved the regrouping of the organizations remaining on the St. Mihiel front at the close of that battle, and outlined instructions for the defensive organization of the positions which they were expected to capture.

My sense of relief at having made a definite move toward the accomplishment of the task was considerably tempered by the impression that the completed order was far from satisfactory. However, as no better solution occurred to me, I finally decided to submit it to the Chief of Staff, but avoided making a personal delivery. On my arrival at the office the next morning I found a request from General Drum for me to report to him immediately and I crossed the street to the main Headquarters building with a feeling of reluctance. Drum was hard at work and kept me waiting ten or fifteen minutes before explaining that General Pershing wished to speak to me regarding some other matter on which I had been engaged. As we went into the Commander in Chief's office, Drum remarked, "That order for the Meuse-Argonne concentration you sent over last night is a dandy. The General thought it was a fine piece of work."

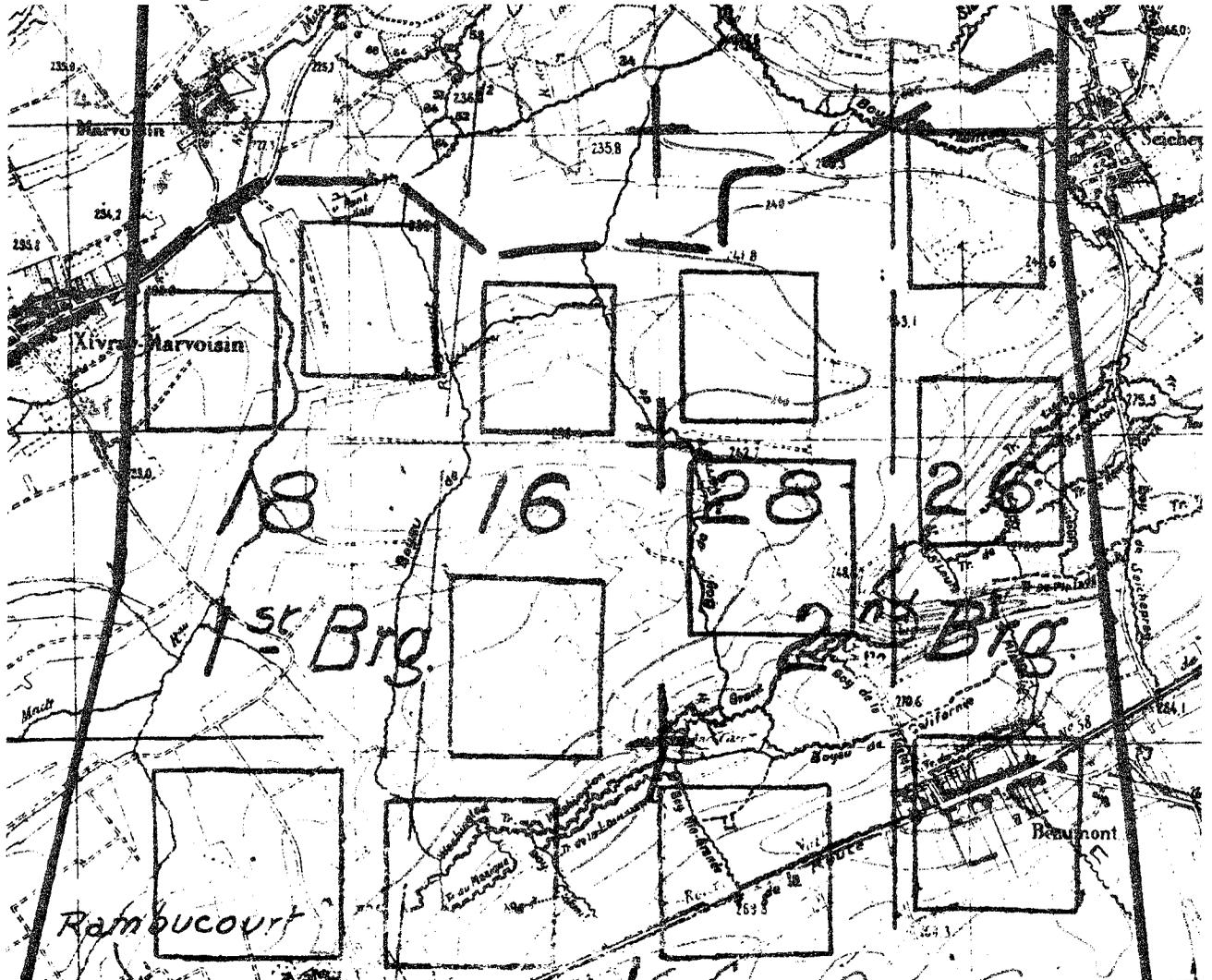
I have gone into the details of this seemingly small matter at length, because it was the hardest nut I had to crack in France. My first reaction was one of extreme dissatisfaction, but my final conclusion was that this order represented my best contribution to the war. It was the only official paper I preserved for my personal records and brought home from France....

As the hour for the battle approached, the tension became increasingly great. At the time I wondered what General Pershing's private thoughts were. He had created a distinctive American combat army, despite almost overwhelming difficulties, and in opposition to the pressing desires of all the great Allied leaders and most of their statesmen. As yet untried in the role of commander of a great combat army, accepting battle under most unfavorable circumstances — his reputation was decidedly in jeopardy. Any degree of failure or difficulty, even if approximately normal to the average successful engagement, was bound to be seized upon by all those who wished themselves to employ his fresh divisions of magnificent young men. If, when our men reached the barbed wire entanglements, they suffered many losses, even though they made a successful passage, there would come the chorus of "I told you so" 's from all those who in the previous three years of the war had not done it in just that way.

About fifty thousand (50,000) casualties was the percentage normally to be expected and hospitalization was prepared accordingly. Nevertheless, if we suffered that many casualties during the brief period involved, the American people, not accustomed, as were

our Allies, to such huge payments in human life, would have seized upon the criticism of any Allied official as a basis for condemning our own Commander in Chief.....

The Twenty-Sixth Infantry in France: The movement into REINE woods was worse, if possible, than the night we moved into position at SOISSONS. The mud was knee deep and the roads were blocked with transportation of all descriptions. This, too, was to be a surprise attack but it had not been hastily conceived. The most elaborate preparations were being made. Every implement known to modern warfare was to be used. It was to be almost entirely an American drive. Attached to and supporting the Division was the Fifty-Eighth Field Artillery Brigade; the 76 th F. A. with a Battalion of 8 inch howitzers; the 44 th C. A. C. with long range naval rifles, emplaced in the sector; a battalion of tanks; the 7 th M. G. Battalion of the 3d Division; 8th Observation Squadron; 9 th Balloon Company; a Platoon from the 1st Gas Regiment; and a Squadron of the 2d Cavalry. This gives a clear idea of the great number of troops massed in the woods behind the BEAUMONT-RAMBAUCOURT Road for



The 1st Division's much practised attack formation placed its two brigades on line, each brigade with two regiments abreast in a column of battalions. Each brigade was supported by a regiment of light artillery (75mm gun). The formation was designed so that should a lead (assault) battalion falter, the support battalion could pass through to preserve the momentum of attack. Typically the third battalion in each column would be designated as a brigade or division reserve, not to be committed without an order from the commander concerned. For the St. Mihiel attack, the left flank regiment, the 18th Infantry, attacked with two battalions abreast to facilitate wheeling left to protect the flank facing Mont Sec. Also, for this operation the division commander ordered that 75mm guns accompany the lead infantry battalions.

several days preceding the attack. At times, especially at night, it seemed that only the greatest confusion existed. The evening of September 11th the tangled mass began to unwind when the infantry moved forward to its attack positions. All night the movement continued. At midnight the 3d Battalion which was to lead off was in position in the old trenches with its right resting on SEICHEPREY. We were moving back into the old stamping ground of the TOUL sector and we knew SEICHEPREY like a book. The Division was the left division of the 4th Corps with the 42d on our right. The regiments from right to left were 18th, 16th, 28th, 26th. The customary formation of battalions organized in depth [column of battalions] was used. Our front was approximately 600 meters, that of the Division about two and one-half kilometers [2500 meters].

Miller, The First Division....[Seicheprey] one of war's rare spectacles.... A thrilling panorama. A level valley-plain, perhaps three miles wide, dotted by ruined villages and thick groves with their menace of a hidden enemy, and cut by yellow serrated lines, the trenches of the infantry. On one side the gently sloping ridge behind which lurk the Yankee guns. On the other, that series of hills and ridges known as Montsec, in their van and towering insolent over all the landscape, the famous Butte de Montsec. A very Gibraltar, this Montsec, one of the strongest positions in France. Once, so they say, the French lost thirty thousand in ten minutes in one futile attack. . . .

The date, September eleven. On the morrow the First American Army, now four hundred thousand strong, was to try to crush in the St. Mihiel salient, four years impregnable. To the First Division had been assigned the task, supposed to be most difficult, of outflanking and taking Montsec, and smashing through to the center of the salient. We expected a bloody affair, another Soissons or worse.

It was not, alas, the same division! The artillery had come practically intact out of the Soissons fighting, a few of the wounded doughboys had strayed back. But during August the infantry had been recruited to full strength with new men, fine, strapping fellows from the draft and the later officers' schools. Their training had been brief, they had never been under fire. But they had heard of the greatness of Soissons, and they were strong in the resolve that the standard there set should not be lowered. The personnel of a fighting division changes; its tradition, its soul, lives on....

Nine o'clock and black as Egypt; rain falling in torrents. Through mud kneedeep – not the kneedeep of poetic license but of cold, disagreeable fact – the infantry plowed forward into position, the first wave in the trenches on the valley floor, the second and third waves just behind the crest of the Yankee ridge.

One o'clock: a deep-throated "boom," a signal. Suddenly the night was alight and quivering with sound. All the great cannon that had lain hidden for months and silent for this very hour, were belching fire and steel upon Mount Sec. The wet sky grew red with the blaze of it. Fountains of white flame outlined the enemy ridges. The towering Butte was a cataract of fire...

The rain ceased. Dawn came, grey and cold, a keen wind blowing. A whistle cut faintly through the guns. The scattered groups on the ridge stiffened into line, the open formation the Americans know and use so well. Over the plain rolled the barrage, the tanks, the first wave, pygmylike under the shadow of the hills....

The Twenty-Sixth Infantry in France: The attack was preceded by an artillery preparation of four hours and was accompanied by a rolling barrage which moved generally at the rate of a hundred meters in four minutes. Preparatory fire of the artillery was imposing and awe

inspiring to a degree. If the Hun had been undecided about moving out of the salient there was little doubt left in his mind a few minutes after the bombardment started. He shot up every rocket he could lay hands on, and a lot we had never seen before. But apparently his artillery had packed up and left because the counter-fire was negligible.

At 5:00 A. M. September 12th promptly on time the attack started. From that moment on each objective was taken almost at the prescribed minute. Except for occasional shell-fire and a machine gun or two the whole show went off like a well executed maneuver. The gas troops laid down a smoke screen which due to the high wind did not provide much security. However, it mattered little as the wire had been well cut or else due to lack of repair was easily crossed. Neither the marshy country nor the trenches caused the difficulty that was expected to be encountered. The first objective was reached before 6:00 A. M. The 2d objective was also reached on time, our right resting on the western outskirts of ST. BAUSSANT, where a 20 minute halt in the barrage was made to cover the reformation of troops. Some resistance was encountered from enemy machine guns but the resistance was feeble and the morale of the enemy was low. The most serious resistance of the day was encountered between the 2d and 3d objectives at the southern edge of the QUART de RESERVE. The enemy's principal line of resistance ran through this woods. The Infantry attacked the enemy positions... and with well directed flanking fire soon passed over them.

Summerall: The front assigned to the First Division for the attack was the old Toul sector...the terrain was familiar. The division assembled in the Foret de la Reine and units rehearsed in their parts. Our objective was the angle of the salient just as it had been at Soissons. We were to penetrate the enemy position and meet troops attacking from the opposite angle of the salient, thus cutting it off. It was necessary for us to pass through at least a half mile of our wire, cross the unfordable Rupt de Mad and pass another half mile of enemy wire beyond which was the Madine River protected by wire. The task was very formidable. The high hill on our left, called Mont Sec, was heavily fortified, and commanded a view of our area.

The plan of attack was for the engineers to precede with bangalore tubes to blow lanes in our wire. They were followed by engineers carrying floating bridges to be shoved over the Rupt de Mad for the infantry to cross and capture the German advanced line. Then the engineers were to blow the German wire and the infantry were to cross it and occupy the position. The advance was to continue until it met the troops from the north. The French on our left were not to attack [until after the Americans seized their first several objectives]. We were to have a regiment of infantry [the 18th Infantry] face to our left in front of Mont Sec to protect our left flank. The attack was to begin at 5:00 A.M., September 12th. An artillery neutralization fire from 168 guns was to begin at 1:00 A.M., and to change to a rolling barrage in front of the infantry at 5:00 A.M.

At a conference before the attack, I pointed out the difficulties and ordered that infantry should swim the stream if the bridges failed to arrive. Major George S. Patton, who



Maj.Gen. Summerall,
CG, 1st Division

commanded the tank battalion, said that he would drive the tanks into the stream and the infantry could cross on them. I replied that the men in the tanks would be drowned. He answered, "Yes, and I will be one of them." I told him I could not resort to such sacrifice. Fortunately we found that the stream was fed from a lake some miles to our left [and behind allied lines]. The night preceding the assault we cut the dam and the water became low enough in the stream for our men to ford it....

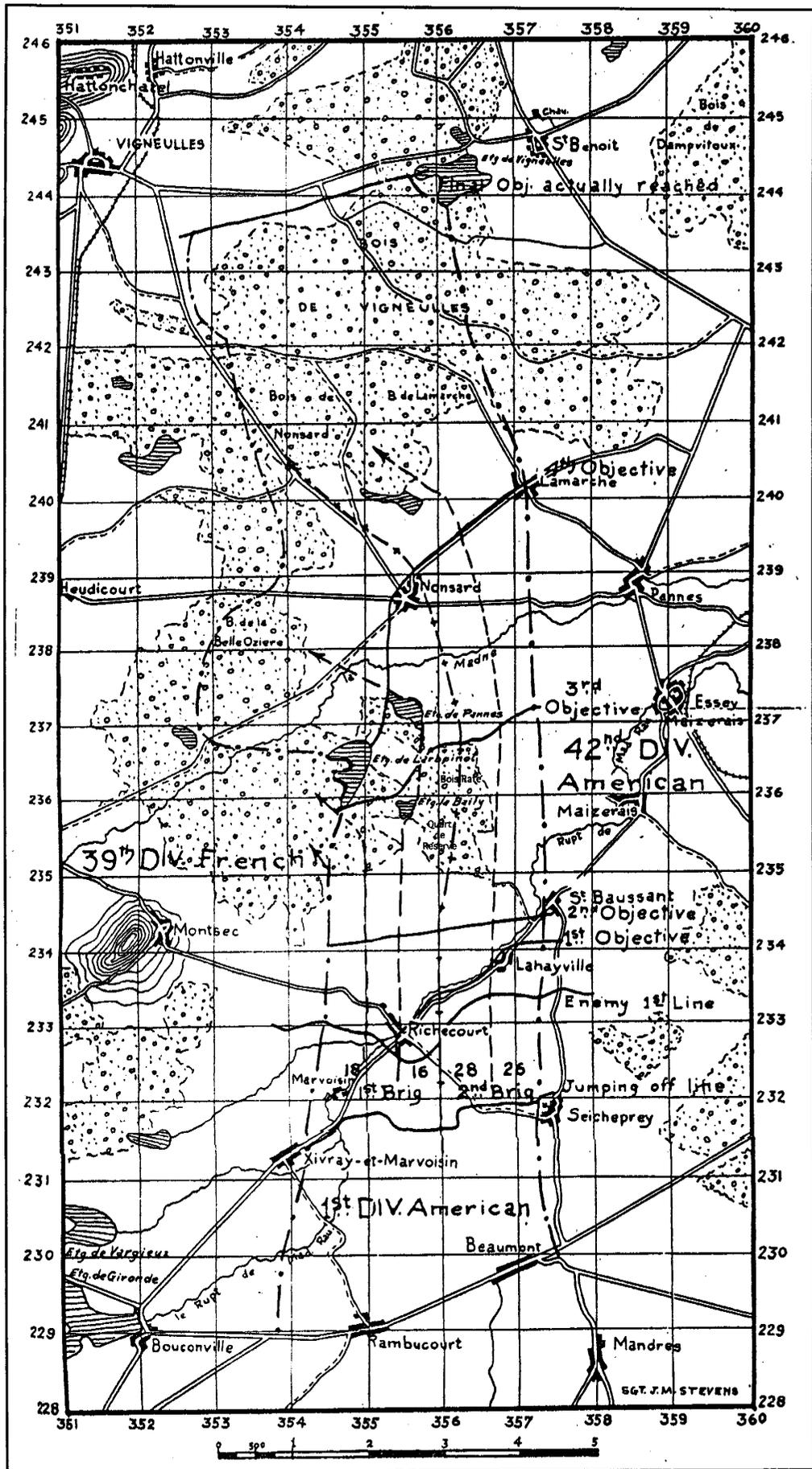
The attack went off as planned in every detail. The engineers with the bridges waded the stream and continued forward looking for a stream to bridge. Finally one exclaimed: "Where in hell is that river..."

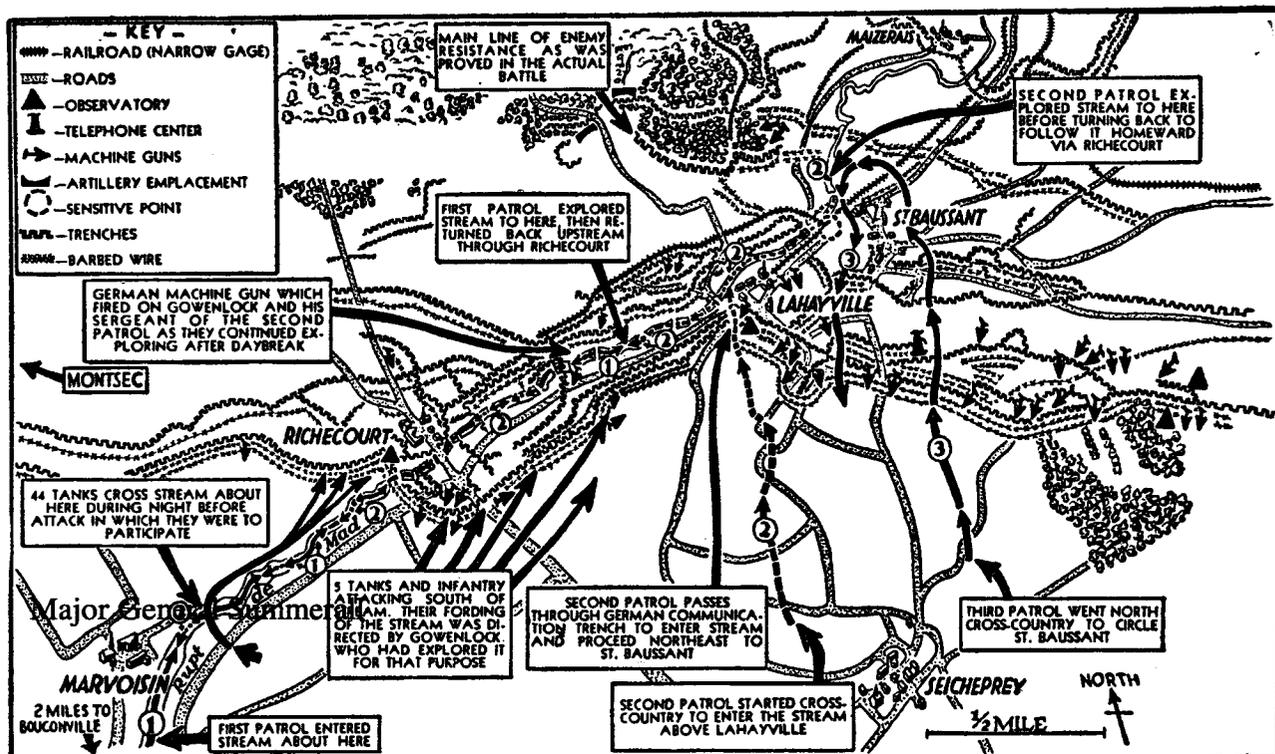


One of Major George Patton's tanks cutting a lane through German wire for infantry assaults on 12 September. This two-man French Renault light tank plunged into a deep German trench and was immobilized. Its driver, Corporal George Heezh, Company C, 327th Tank Battalion, extricated it the following day.

History of the First Division: In order to prevent the enemy from gaining any knowledge of the presence of the First Division, the preliminary arrangements were made behind a screen of the 89th American Division, which was occupying a wide sector on the front to be attacked.

So well had the Intelligence Section of the First Division done its work that sketches showing all enemy trenches, machine gun nests, battery positions and posts of command were issued to include platoon commanders. Daring reconnaissances were made by the Intelligence Officer in person, and he and his assistants waded the Rupt de Mad as far as possible along the front in order to determine its depth.





Gowenlock, Soldiers of Darkness

The assault was prescribed for 5:00 A. M., September 12th, which required the bombardment for destruction to begin at 1:00 A. M. On the night of September 10th-11th details from the 1st Engineers cut lines in the successive rows of American wire to permit the troops to pass through to the jumping-off line. The spaces between the gaps were joined by white tape to guide the infantry in the darkness. Other details of engineers dammed the overflow from the lake at Bouconville into the Rupt de Mad so as to lower the water in the stream and facilitate the crossing. On the afternoon of September 11th Division Headquarters occupied its battle post of command at Beaumont, where a complete communication system had been installed to all parts of the line.

Since their arrival in the Forêt de la Reine on September 8th, the troops had been exposed to continuous cold rains, and the ground was deep with mud. Here they perfected their organization and completed every detail of their equipment. In addition to the ordinary battle pack, there was added, to each man, one clip of automatic rifle ammunition and two rifle grenades, in order that there should be no shortage in these important types of ammunition. Gas masks were tested and fresh cans of carbon or fresh masks were issued where required. No troops could have been more completely equipped than those regiments as they adjusted their packs in the darkening hours of September 11 and took their places in the column to begin another history-making advance. There was little noise save the thudding that comes from masses of armed men in motion. Commands were few and in low tones. All faces were serious and strongly lined by the resolution and the courage that they reflected of the dauntless spirit within. Commanding officers and staff officers went from regiment to regiment and saw that all was well. A cheery-word to some group of men or a brief leave-taking with some old friend marked their passage through the forest trails and roads. In all grades and services the First Division stood united, and, to the masses of

men in the great human machine, was added the momentum of a psychology that counted lightly the obstacles in the vision of accomplishment that lay beyond. Never did there fall a blacker night than that of September 11th. Again the elements conspired to increase the hardships. As if to prove itself a harbinger of victory, the threatening storm broke with torrents of drenching rain that soaked the men and increased the weight of their burdens.

The faithful regimental guides led the heads of their columns unerringly to the gaps in the wire, where men of the 1st Engineers conducted them through the zig-zag passages to the line of departure [jumping off line]. By 1:00 o'clock all regiments were in place and in liaison on both flanks. In the darkness and the storm the gunners stood waiting for the instant when they should announce to the enemy by an avalanche of steel that the year-old challenge of those angry guns of St. Mihiel had been answered...

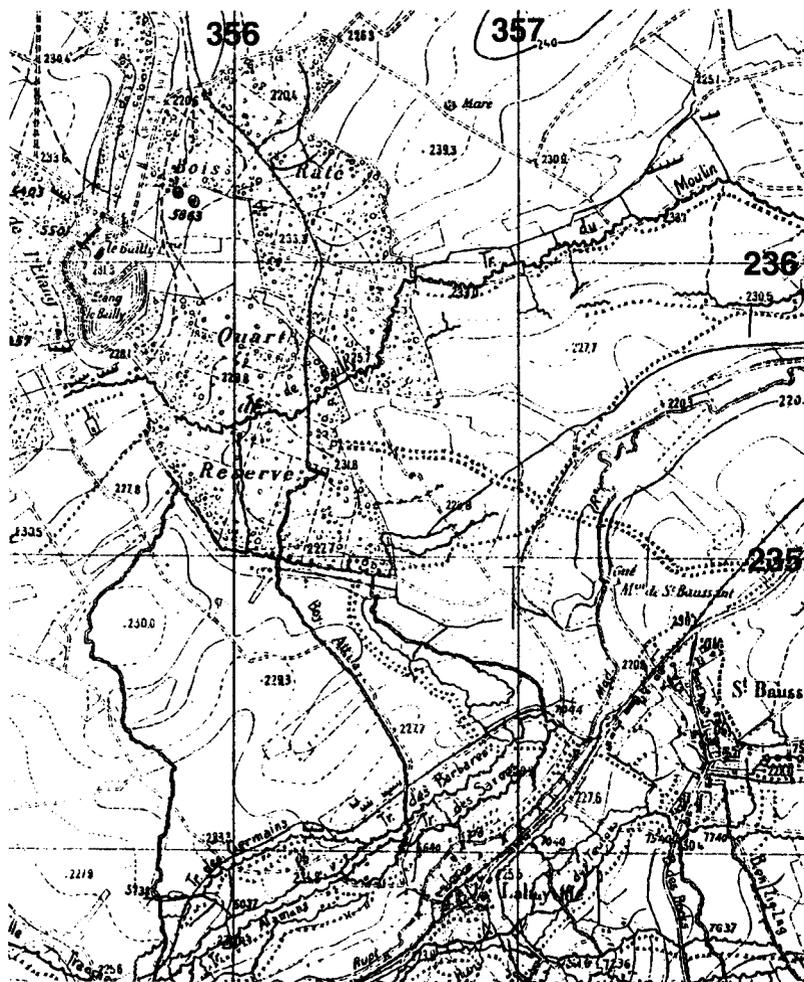
When the accurately synchronized watches ticked the second of 1:00 o'clock on the morning of September 12th, the darkness was turned into a quivering light by which one might see to read. A thundering crash that shook the earth broke the stillness and a whirlwind of bursting shell spread over the enemy's positions. Every known battery emplacement was deluged with gas by at least two heavy guns or howitzers. Every previously discovered machine gun position received the undivided attention of one heavy or two light guns. His trenches, command posts and billets were covered by concentrations of high explosive shell. The very earth seemed to belch forth the flame that shimmered over all that the eye could see. With a steadiness that was appalling in its volume, the convulsion continued. Above the crashing roar could be heard the deeper boom of the great railroad guns that were sending their tons of steel to the enemy's back area and tearing up his rest camps and communications. The waiting infantry was exhilarated by the great drama, and all along the line the men burst into cheers and song like children on a holiday. Cries of "Let's go!" came spontaneously from eager men, and the words became a slogan of the First Division.

At 5:00 o'clock the artillery changed the form of its fire. While the heavy guns continued to suppress the hostile batteries and machine guns, the 75's formed a rolling barrage that moved one hundred meters every four minutes. Smoke shells thickened the haze of the early morning and hid the troops from the enemy's lines. The infantry rose and advanced in perfect formation and seemed no less inexorable than its barrage. Montsec was the special target of the 8-inch howitzers and one battery of 75's firing smoke shell. At last its baleful eyes were effectually blinded. With the falling of the barrage, the enemy's line became illuminated by signal rockets calling on his artillery for help that it could no longer render. Overhead the American aviators watched for enemy guns that had not been silenced and gave information as to their location. The hostile artillery reaction was far less than had been expected. However, a number of his shells fell in the infantry waves, inflicting casualties.

The first objective was a line running east and west along the southern bank of the Rupt de Mad to Richécourt. The assault battalions passed their own wire, generally by stepping over or walking on it, and reached the objective line at 5:30. Here the barrage halted for twenty minutes on the enemy's trenches to cover the crossing of the stream. In some spots it was found to be fordable and the men plunged into the water. Where it was unfordable, the engineers threw across their prepared

foot-bridges with no appreciable delay. When the barrage advanced, the leading waves were across the stream and following it closely. The troops were in complete formation. By this time a number of casualties had reached the dressing stations and small groups of prisoners were being sent to the rear. In the fulfillment of its mission, the 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry, wheeled to the left opposite Le Tombois woods and formed a buffer against any hostile movement from the direction of Montsec.

The second objective was an arbitrary line passing north of the enemy's old trench system. This was reached on schedule time and the barrage halted again to allow the troops to re-form or to close up in case unexpected delays had been encountered. In accordance with orders of the First Army, the 39th French Division on the left advanced one hour after the First Division attacked, to follow up the movement.



The third objective was an east-and-west line passing through the northern edge of the Bois de Raté. The advance from the second objective progressed favorably until the leading troops approached the southern edge of the Quart de Réserve. This proved to be the enemy's principal line of resistance. His machine guns and artillery were well emplaced and the woods were rendered impassable by successive rows of new wire that had lately been nailed to the trees. Nevertheless, the lines charged and the tanks moved with them, rendering the greatest assistance. The hostile machine gunners and cannoneers who resisted were killed and the remainder made prisoners. Some of the units were compelled to skirt the woods where they

could not be penetrated. The 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, wheeled to the left and formed along the eastern edge of the Bois de Gargantua in liaison with the 2d Battalion on its left. Thus, the left flank of the Division continued to be secure. The remainder of the troops reached the third objective with the barrage between 9:30 and 10:00 A. M.

The light artillery advanced by echelons to positions in front of the jumping-off line and was ready to cover the further advance of the infantry at 11:00 A. M. By this time all the villages to the north and northwest were in flames, showing that the enemy was carrying out the well-known orders of the German High Command. The engineers at once began improving the road and building a new one for the



A reserve rifle company marching through St. Baussant to keep up with the assault and support battalions

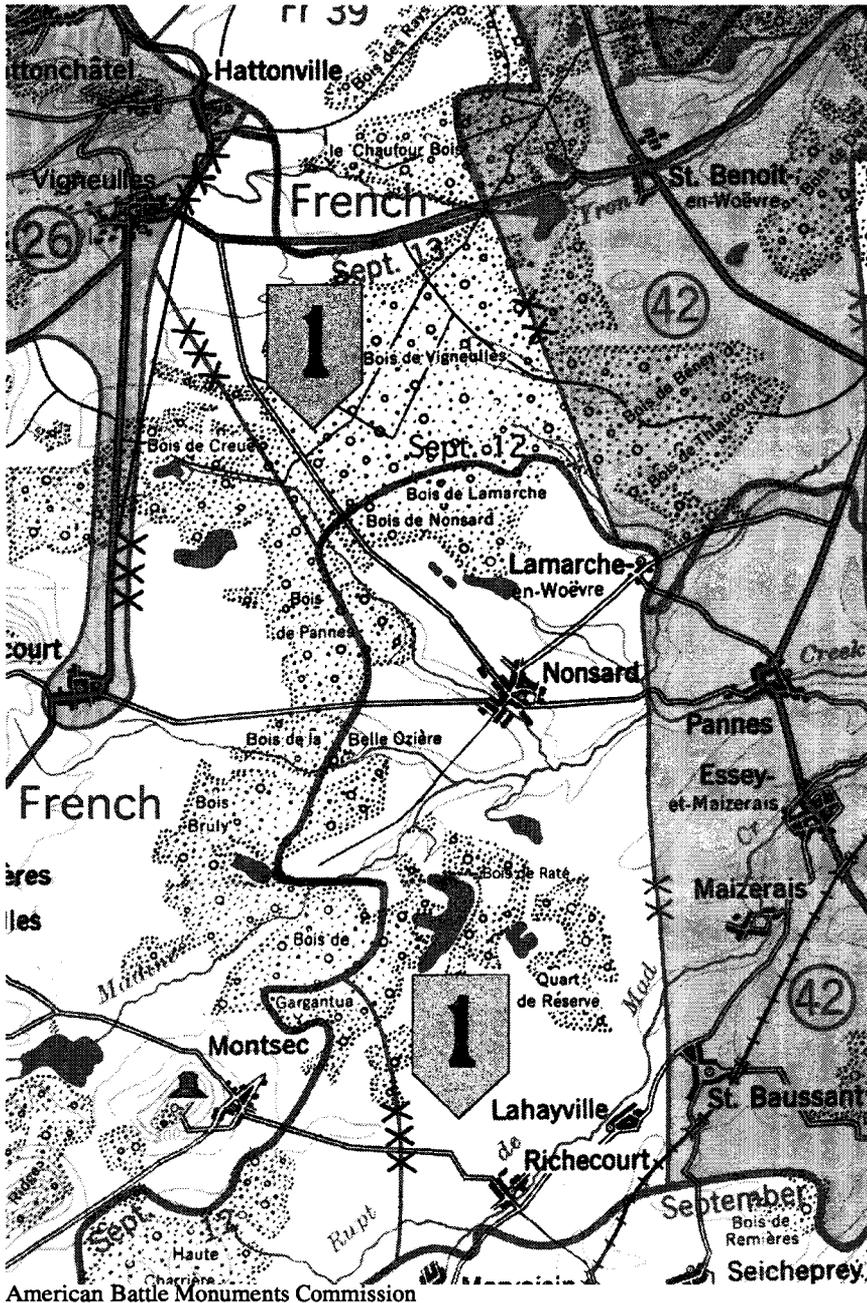
artillery across the old trench system and the adjoining areas which had been rendered impassable by shell holes.

The losses had been far less than expected and the sanitary troops promptly evacuated all wounded to the field hospitals, from which they were dispatched to the evacuation hospitals.

Just before reaching the third objective, orders were received from the Corps to continue the advance to the first day's objective as soon as the Division was ready. This objective was the enemy's partially constructed positions marked by the towns of La Marche and Nonsard. For the First Division, the line was prolonged to the Bois de Gargantua. The artillery barrage dropped in front of the third objective at 11:00 A. M. and the lines resumed the advance. The support battalions passed through the assault battalions and took the lead. The Madine River was found fordable, but the banks were so precipitous that the tanks met with delay and a few became disabled in the stream. The enemy's wire was crossed by stepping through it and the objective was reached at 12:20 P. M. Here the troops dug in and organized in depth to hold their gains. During the progress to the fourth objective the two battalions of infantry and the one machine gun battalion in Division reserve were advanced to positions to meet the counter-attack which it was expected that the enemy would make from the west and north. The provisional squadron of the 2d Cavalry was also pushed forward to make it immediately available for exploitation.

Upon learning that the attack was progressing so well, the Corps ordered a resumption of the advance to the first phase of the second day's objective. In conformity with these instructions, at 1:35 P. M. the provisional squadron, 2d Cavalry, was ordered to advance to Nonsard to debouche and exploit toward Vigneulles and Heudicourt with a view to intercepting the enemy. The squadron passed through the infantry at 5:20 P. M. and advanced along the Nonsard-Heudicourt and Nonsard-Vigneulles roads. The resistance encountered prevented progress through the woods, but some prisoners were taken.

In the meantime it was necessary to advance the artillery to cover the further movement of the infantry. The 75-mm. guns were in position in the vicinity of the Bois de Raté by 5:30 P. M., in spite of the deep mud in which the wheels often bogged to the hubs. At 5:45 P. M. the infantry resumed the advance and at 7:45 P. M. the Decauville road through the Bois de Vigneulles and the Bois de Nonsard was in their possession. Each front line battalion sent one company forward, and at 10:00 P. M. the company of the 28th Infantry was astride the Vigneulles-St. Benoit road, with the advance compa-



nies of the 26th and 16th Infantry on its right and left, respectively. Prisoners were taken on this road by the 28th Infantry, and, from the moment of its arrival, all escape by that route was cut off. The left flank battalions of the 18th Infantry moved northward to the Bois de la Belle Ozière and prolonged the new line. Patrols were sent in the direction of Heudicourt.

George C. Marshall:

As the day [of 12 September] wore on, it became evident that only a halfhearted resistance had been made by the Germans against our attack from the south and that many prisoners had been captured. We also learned that the enemy had apparently started the withdrawal of his heavy artillery about two hours prior to the opening of the bombardment and the fire of our guns had caught

these artillery columns on the road, causing great confusion and disorganization. This was a piece of rare good luck, which has since been twisted by our friendly critics, depreciating the achievement of the First Army at St. Mihiel, into a statement that the German garrison was actually withdrawing at the time of our attack, and, therefore, the reduction of the salient was assured without any particular effort by our troops. As a matter of fact, it developed that the German divisions on this front had informed their higher command of the evident intention of the Americans to attack and this information had been unsympathetically received. Therefore, when the attack actually fell as predicted, the officers with these troops were much incensed over the dilemma in which the higher command had left them and put up, as a consequence, a halfhearted defense.

About five o'clock in the evening, General Pershing received a report from a member of his personal staff, who had gone in the front line with the troops attack-

ing south of Verdun, that caused the General to personally telephone an order that a regiment in this division (Twenty-sixth) would be directed on Vigneulles, in the heart of the salient, immediately and must reach there by five o'clock in the morning. He had gained a correct conception of the state of affairs within the salient and realized that if a junction could be formed between the left wing of the main attack from the south (First Division) and the troops attacking from the northwest, tremendous captures in prisoners would be realized. Later events proved he was also correct in his assumption that the enemy was withdrawing in the northwest, and would not make an effective resistance. The regiment previously referred to reached Vigneulles before five o'clock on the morning of September 13th, and its patrols gained contact with the patrols of the First Division in that neighborhood at about that hour. The French troops operating against the point of the salient were able in the late evening and during the night to move forward without encountering any serious opposition, and by noon of the next day it was apparent that we had captured in the neighborhood of 15,000 prisoners and over 400 guns. The southern attack had gained such momentum on the afternoon of the first day that the orders were changed sufficiently to permit the troops to proceed beyond the objectives assigned for that day.

By noon of the 13th, the First Army had established a rough line across the base of the salient after experiencing about five thousand (5000) casualties, instead of the fifty thousand (50,000) we were prepared to handle. Few of the division reserves had been employed, and, of course none of the corps or army reserves (six divisions in all). Had not the operation been definitely limited in order to permit troops participating in it to be withdrawn immediately and marched to the Meuse-Argonne in time for that battle, there is no doubt in my mind but that we could have reached the outskirts of Metz by the late afternoon of the 13th, and quite probably could have captured the city on the 14th, as the enemy was incapable of bringing up reserves in sufficient number and formation to offer an adequate resistance.

That night we were called upon to express an opinion as to whether the advance should be resumed. Grant and I drew up a joint statement vigorously opposing any idea of such action. The attack had lost its momentum; the enemy had been given a breathing spell to reform his scattered units and bring up reserves; and we had stopped the advance clear of the Hindenburg Line and out of range of the heavy artillery of the permanent fortifications of Metz. At least twelve hours must have elapsed before a new decision at Army Headquarters could have been translated into coordinated action by the front-line units. Furthermore, the renewal of the advance would have rendered impossible the completion of the concentration for the Meuse-Argonne by the date set. General Pershing adhered to the original plan for the battle and proceeded to stabilize the front and withdraw as rapidly as possible the troops intended for the Meuse-Argonne.

In the aftermath of the battle we gradually learned the details of how the infantry crossed the barbed wire entanglements. It seems that the special pioneer detachments and groups of Engineers, armed with long Bangalore torpedoes and wire cutters, who accompanied the first waves of the infantry and were to cut the passages through the entanglements, started on the execution of their difficult task, but the doughboys, impatient at the delay and possibly ignorant of the difficulty, walked over the wire. Practically no gaps were cut out until later in the day to open formal passages for artillery, trains, and reinforcements. So remarkable was this incident considered

that few outside of those who were eyewitnesses would believe it. Marshal Pétain was convinced of the facts in the case and he sent down to the First Army, two days after the battle, about eight hundred (800) French officers and noncommissioned officers to see for themselves how the American troops had succeeded in crossing this hitherto-considered impassable obstacle, without first having it cut by tanks or destroyed by artillery fire. A French officer in this party told me afterwards that the evidence on the ground convinced him that our infantry had walked over the wire, but he thought perhaps they were assisted in this remarkable performance by the size of their feet.

Once the success of the battle seemed assured in the afternoon of the first day, my attention became directed to the preliminary movements of the concentration for the Meuse-Argonne....

General Pershing: By afternoon [12 September] the troops had pushed beyond their scheduled objectives and by evening had reached the second day's objective on most of the southern front. The divisions of the IV Corps and those on the left of the I Corps overwhelmed the hostile garrisons and quickly overran their positions, carrying the fighting into the open. The German resistance on this part of the front was disorganized by the rapidity of our advance and was soon overcome.

When the 1st Division, on the marching flank of the southern attack, had broken through the hostile forward positions, the squadron of cavalry attached to the IV



U.S. 2d Cavalry moving through St. Baussant 12 Sept

Corps was passed through the breach. At 1:45 P.M. it pushed forward to reconnoiter the roads toward Vigneulles, but encountering machine guns in position, was forced to retire. On the western face of the salient progress was not so satisfactory. The 26th Division, in its attempt to make a deep advance toward Vigneulles, met with considerable resistance and except for a battalion sent from the division reserve had not reached the day's objective.

The French at the tip of the salient had attempted to follow up the flanks of our successful penetrations, but made only small advances. Upon the request of General Blondlat, commanding the French II Colonial Corps, a regiment of the 80th Division, in reserve, was sent to his assistance.

On the afternoon of the 12th, learning that the roads leading out of the salient between the two attacks were filled with retreating enemy troops, with their trains and artillery, I gave orders to the commanders of the IV and V Corps to push forward without delay. Using the telephone myself, I directed the commander of the V Corps to send at least one regiment of the 26th Division toward Vigneulles with all possible speed. That evening, a strong force from the 51st Brigade [26th Division]

pushed boldly forward and reached Vigneulles at 2:15 A.M. on the 13th. It immediately made dispositions that effectively closed the roads leading out of the salient west of that point. In the IV Corps the 2d Brigade of the 1st Division advanced in force about dawn of the 13th, its leading elements reaching Vigneulles by 6:00 A.M. The salient was closed and our troops were masters of the field. [There was controversy, described below, about which units reached Vigneulles first, and what division therefore should be credited with closure of the pincers. Within the First Division, there were conflicting claims by the 26th and 28th Infantry Regiments as to which unit had first linked up with Yankee Division elements].



In 1950 the Society of the 1st Division published this picture, captioned "Maj. C.A. Davis and another officer captured 50 Germans, a number of horses and supplies. They were the first to enter the town Vigneulles-de-Hatonchatel, France. 13 September 1918"

The troops continued to advance on the 13th, when the line was established approximately along the final objectives set for this offensive. In view of the favorable situation that had been developed just west of the Moselle River by our successes farther to the left, a limited attack, in accordance with our previous plans, was made on that part of the front by elements of the 82d and 90th Divisions, with good results. During the night, our troops were engaged in organizing their new positions for defense, preparatory to the withdrawal of divisions and corps troops for participation in the Meuse-Argonne battle. On September 14th, 15th, and 16th, local operations continued, consisting of strong reconnaissances and the occupation of better ground for defensive purposes. Beginning on the 13th, several counterattacks were repulsed. The line as finally established was: Haudiomont — Fresnes-en-Woëvre — Doncourt — Jaulny — Vandières.

Reports received during the 13th and 14th indicated that the enemy was retreating in considerable disorder. Without doubt, an immediate continuation of the advance would have carried us well beyond the Hindenburg Line and possibly into Metz, and the temptation to press on was very great, but we would probably have become involved and delayed the greater Meuse-Argonne operation, to which we were wholly committed.

During the fighting from September 12th to 16th, the German 125th, 8th Landwehr, 88th and 28th Divisions reënforced the enemy's line and several other divisions arrived in reserve positions. On September 16th in front of the First Army there were ten German divisions and two brigades in line and seven divisions in reserve.

Nearly 16,000 prisoners were taken and some 450 enemy guns had fallen into our hands. Our casualties numbered about 7,000. As the enemy retreated he set fire to many large supply dumps and several villages. The few remaining French inhabitants who found themselves within our lines were overjoyed to be released from the domination of the enemy, but many were left destitute by the burning of their homes at the very moment of deliverance....

On my visit to several corps and division headquarters the following day, I found all jubilant over the victory and overflowing with incidents of the fighting, reciting many feats of heroism among the troops. In one or two cases, the keen rivalry between adjoining divisions had resulted in friendly controversies between them as to which should have the credit for the capture of certain localities. Important villages along their boundaries were sometimes entered by elements of each without the knowledge of the other, and these instances formed the basis of claims for honors which were upheld with insistence by the units concerned. However, distinction in achievement among the attacking troops on the southern face could not be made with any assurance, as all had done more than was expected of them.

It is never difficult to discover the attitude of a commander, as it is almost certain to be reflected in his unit. If the commander lacks energy or is disloyal, his officers and men are likely to be affected accordingly.

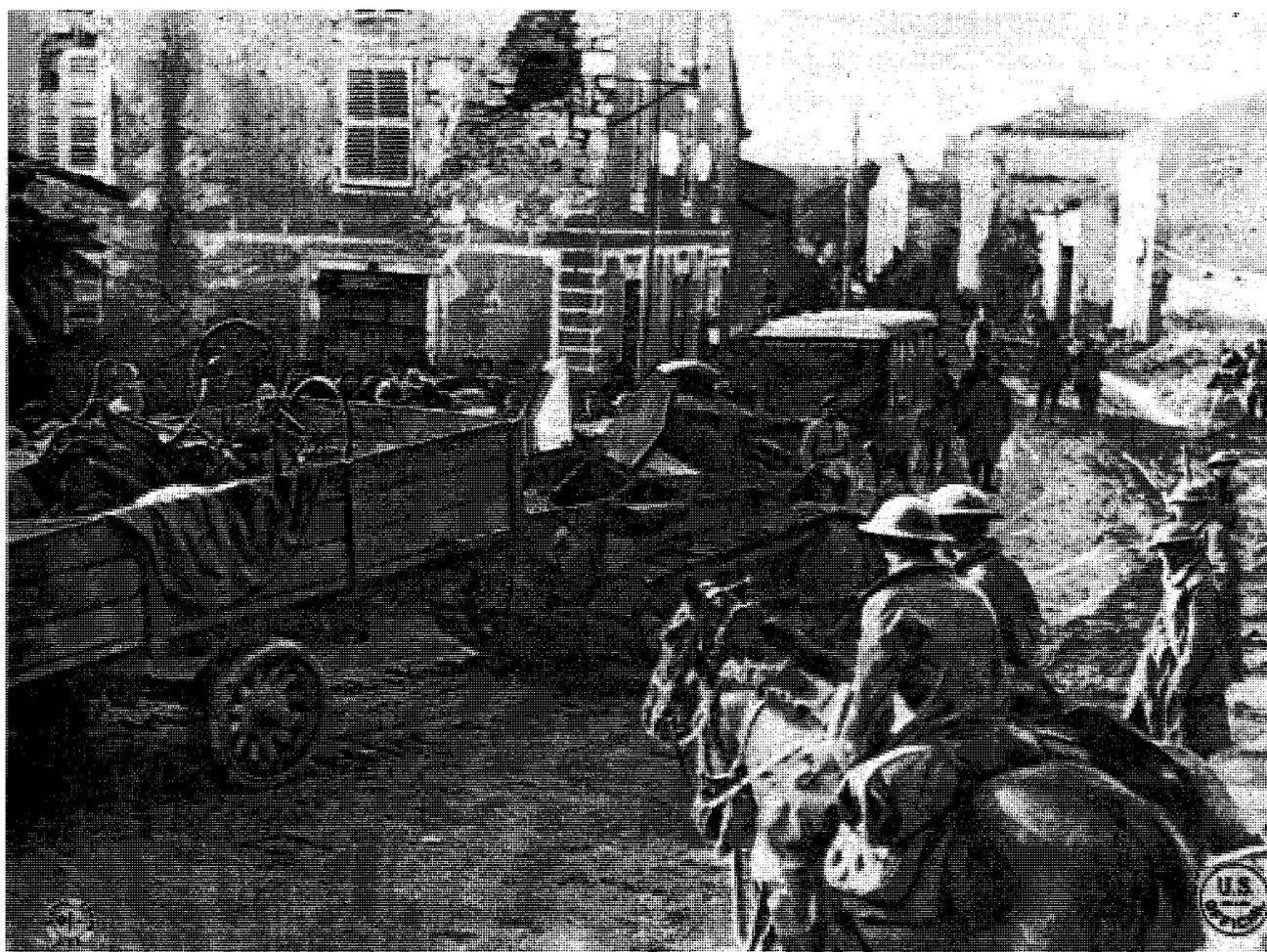
More than organizational hubris was involved in the controversy over what unit first reached what town at the juncture of the pincers on 13 September. The dispute was bound up with (1) Pershing's pride and trust in the 1st Division, (2) his doubts about the 26th Division and its commander, Maj. Gen. Edwards, and (3) Maj. Gen. Summerall's insistence that orders from "higher" be acted upon instantly and precisely. Hence, the Army commander's personal intervention to cause the 1st and the 26th Divisions to converge on Vigneulles led Maj. Gen. Summerall to direct a formal investigation of the response to derivative orders by the 26th Infantry Regiment – his division's foremost unit – and to the circumstances that had led to the arrest and the relief from command of Major Whitener, commander of its 2d Battalion, and eventually to the replacement of Colonel Cullison, commander of the 26th Infantry .

The Story of the Twenty-Eighth Infantry in the Great War. There they lay with the cold rain and mud chilling them to the bone and the crash and whine of shells beating continuously on their ears. The preparation fire of the American Artillery had started at 1.00 a. m., and was continuing with the regularity of a trip hammer, crushing the German defenses and destroying their barbed wire. At 5.20 a. m., the American fire took the form of a rolling barrage and the Infantry started forward through the semi-darkness. The few Germans who were in the front line positions were so stunned by the long preparation fire that they made but little resistance. Some difficulty was experienced in getting through the wire though teams of wire-cutters preceded the attacking troops and the Engineers destroyed the foremost bands of wire with torpedoes. At 5.30 a. m., the first objective was reached and the line pressed on. As it grew bright, familiar landmarks came into view. On the left, appeared Mont Sec, rising above the morning mist. The ruins of St. Bassaunt could be seen on the right, while, to the rear, was the collection of wrecked houses known as Seicheprey. To the front, were the shell-pocked fields and shattered woods stretching away to Nonsard. Moving

through the opening made in the wire by shells and wire-cutters, the 28th came to the Rupt de Mad river. It was known that, in some parts of this stream, the bottom was covered with barbed wire entanglements but there was no hesitating. The men plunged boldly into the water and made their way to the opposite side. Very light resistance was encountered until the leading elements approached the southeast corner of the Quart en Reserve. At this point some German machine gunners in an entrenched position made a stand that caused a pause in the advance. Stokes mortars and 37 mm guns were brought to bear on this position and flanking parties quickly cleaned it out, taking 85 prisoners. The woods were now taken without much difficulty, the third objective being reached at 9.37 a. m.

At 11.00 a. m., the First Battalion passed through the Second Battalion and advanced towards the fourth objective. As the flank on the left was open, "E" Company, 28th Infantry, was ordered to protect that flank and in execution of this order moved on Nonsard. Before the town was entered, the Regiment on the left had advanced to its position in the line and "E" Company withdrew and resumed its place in support of the First Battalion. The fourth objective was taken at 12.30 p. m.

At 5.45 p. m., the advance was continued and the First Battalion pushed on through the Bois de Nonsard, cutting the Vigneulles-St. Benoit road and forming a line of resistance along the narrow gauge railway in the Bois de Vigneulles. Retreating parties of Germans were intercepted on this road by advance patrols and about 40 prisoners, including a Major and four Lieutenants, were taken. Orders were given for a further move at 3.15 a. m., Sep-



P.M. 12 September: a tank advancing to rejoin its unit at the front has been pressed into service to haul forward a wagon of bicycles for use by First Army couriers.

tember 13th. The Second Battalion took the cross-roads southeast of Vigneulles but did not enter the village because of express orders to the contrary. The Scout platoon of the First Battalion took the cross-roads southeast of Vigneulles but did not enter the village because of express orders to the contrary. The Scout platoon of the First Battalion went on ahead passing through Hattonville at 6.20 a. m., where five Austrians were captured, and arriving at Hattonchatel at 7.15 a. m., meeting advanced patrols of the 26th Division in the latter town. With the meeting of these patrols the St. Mihiel Salient became a thing of the past and later movements along this line were of a local nature.

Hq., 26th Inf.,
17 Sept., '18

From: C. O. 26th Inf.

To: Commanding General, 1st Division. (thru 2nd Brig.)

Subject: Report on Operations against St. Mihiel Salient.

1. Statement of part played by the 26th Infantry in the operations.

- (a) The 26th Infantry was the right regiment, of the extreme left Division of the 4th Corps.
- (b) The regiment was allocated approximately a 600 meter front and for the jump-off rested its right front on the N.W. corner of SEICHEPREY. Direction of attack: compass bearing to 3rd objective was 12 degrees East of Magnetic North; from the 3rd to the 4th objective 1 degree east of Magnetic north.
- (c) The general disposition was one of depth with the 3rd Bn. on first line, 2nd Bn. in support, and 1st Bn. held in division reserve.
- (d) The troops moved forward at H hour on D day following a rolling barrage.

First objective. (Elev. 227.6 - northern edge of LAYHAYVILLE) reached without incident. Troops had no difficulty following barrage.

Second objective. (Elev. 220.9-Elev.227.7 reached on scheduled time. Very few casualties; all from shell fire.

Third objective. (Unimproved road between Elev. 245.5 and Elev. 226.3) Between the 2nd and 3rd objectives a machine gun nest was encountered. By flanking movement, Co. M successfully reduced the nest and 4 officers and 164 men were taken. Co. M suffered about 25 casualties. Objective reached on scheduled time and consolidation begun.

Fourth objective. (LAMARCHE-NONSARD road). As soon as the protective barrage lifted from the 3rd objective, 2d Bn. passed thru the 3rd Bn. by means of small columns and captured the 4th objective and consolidated it. There was practically no resistance offered and the Bn. suffered very few casualties.

Situation after capture of 4th Objective:

2nd Bn. entrenched on 4th Objective.

3rd Bn. entrenched on 3rd objective.

1st Bn. in division reserve and assembled in Trenches des Barbares and des Saxons [~ 3km. N. of LAHAYVILLE].

- (e) At 5:15 P.M. orders were received to advance the first line battalion in the woods on the approximate bearing of 30 degrees West of Magnetic North as far as the railroad; 1 company to

advance to the VIGNEULLES-ST. BENOIT road and cut off the retreat of the enemy. The rear Bns. were to conform to the movement of the 1st line Bn. and the movement of the regiment in general to conform to the movement of the units on our left; liaison to be maintained with the 166th Inf. on the right.

The extreme darkness and difficulties offered by the woods made it impossible to get the whole Bn. to the objective. One Co. reached and blocked the railroad and 1 platoon succeeded in reaching the VIGNEULLES-ST. BENOIT road. 260 prisoners were taken during the night.

- (f) At 2. A.M. 13 Sept., '18, orders were received to push the leading battalion on to the outskirts of HATTONVILLE. To facilitate the maneuver the 3rd Battalion leap frogged the 2nd battalion (leading Bn.) and at 10:30 A.M. was established on the objective. Left of the Bn. rested on the northern ledge of HATTONVILLE and extended along the ridge to the right for a distance of 650 meters.

The 2nd Bn., was placed immediately in support of the 3rd Bn. within the bounds of the regimental zone. The 1st Bn. which had now been released from division reserve was placed in rear of the 2nd Bn.

Information of an attack from the left flank caused an entire rearrangement of the two rear battalions. Each was faced to the left and entrenched with a view to defense against a flank attack.

- (g) At 7 P.M. orders from Brigade to move regiment to Bois VIGNEULLES. Right on ETANG VIGNEULLES (inclusive; left line HATTONVILLE -turn in VIGNEULLES - ST. BENOIT road - RUSSEAU de NANGEPONT

3rd Bn. entrenched along northern edge of Bois VIGNEULLES within regimental zone. Outposts established on VIGNEULLES-ST. BENOIT road. Liaison on right with the 166th Inf.; on the left with the 28th Inf.

2nd Bn. took up position of that portion of the BARRACK-SEBASTAPOL Ferme Road within regimental zone. Liaison was established with 166th on the right and 28th on the left.

1st Bn. held in Brigade reserve in Bois THIAUCOURT.

- (h) Regiment remained in above positions until ordered to move into billets in Bois BELLE OZIERE on 16 Sept., '18.

2. Character of terrain passed over.

- (a) Between jumping off trench and enemy 1st and 2nd line trenches, the ground was low and wet. Wire entanglements encountered, none of which were cut by artillery fire. Most of the entanglements were old and easily pushed over and trampled down. Wire no where proved to be a real obstacle.
- (b) No woods were encountered until the troops had pushed on from the 4th objective and were advancing toward the railroad. The Bois de LAMARCHE and Bois de VIGNEULLES proved to be a very real obstacle. They were dense and thick, making it necessary to adhere to paths and roads.
- (c) The remainder of the advance was over comparatively open country.
- (d) On the whole the terrain passed over by this regiment was open and not difficult.

3. Initial Dispositions.

- (a) General disposition by battalions (front 600 meters)
3rd Bn.- 1st line battalion

2nd Bn.- 2nd line battalion

1st Bn.- division reserve

(b) Disposition of 1st line battalion.

Two companies in the front waves, each side by side, each company with 2 platoons in the 1st wave and 2 in support, each platoon with one-half in the 1st line and one-half in the 2nd. Fifty meters was maintained between lines, 100 meters between waves.

Remaining two companies constituted the battalion support and followed at 400 meters.

The 1st wave only was deployed at the jump off. All others followed in small columns until actually forced to deploy.

(c) Disposition of the 2nd line battalion.

This battalion constituted the regimental support and followed the 1st line battalion at 600 meters. Small columns were used during the advance to the 3rd objective where the battalion passed thru the 3rd battalion, deployed its leading wave, attacked and captured the 4th objective.

(d) Disposition of divisional reserve battalion.

Small columns were used at all times by this battalion during the advance.

(e) Machine guns followed in each instance the support companies of the battalions and were used under the direction of the Battalion Commander. The Stokes [mortars] and 37mm guns followed behind the attacking waves and were used under the direction of the Battalion Commander.

Two wire cutting teams preceded the advance of each front line platoon of each Bn.

Bangalore and bridge building detachments from the engineers followed the attacking waves.

(f) At all times the regiment and each unit within the regiment adhered to a distribution in depth. Small columns in checker-board formation were used whenever possible.

4. Suitability of formations adopted.

The formation as described above was the best that could have been adopted for the capture of the first four objectives. Such a formation lends to strength and punch in the attack rather than mobility. After the capture of the 4th objective, it is believed that had the units been assembled in column, and strong advance guard thrown out that the advance would have been greatly facilitated and the objective more quickly reached.

5. Use of infantry weapons.

The rifle and bayonet proved to be the commonly used weapon in this operation. The resistance offered was so light and the advance so rapid that auxiliary weapons were scarcely needed. The chauchat rifles [French automatic rifles] of each company were organized into a 5th line and placed in charge of an officer. They were seldom fired and were carefully preserved at all times to place in defensive position during consolidation and to ward off any counter attack which might come.

A few hand grenades were used in mopping up, and only a few rifle grenades were used.

Machine guns, stokes and 37 mm guns were seldom needed and found difficulty in keeping up with the rapid advance of the infantry.

6. Artillery support.

The artillery support up to and during the capture and con-

solidation of the 4th objective was very good. No difficulty was had in following the barrage which was excellent.

Because of the small resistance encountered, very little need was found for the 75 mm's which accompanied the assault waves.

7. Passage of obstacles.

Wire entanglements were in poor condition and offered little resistance to the troops. The thick under-brush in Bois de LAMARCHE and Bois VIGNEULLES was a real obstacle. Roads and paths had to be used wherever possible. Small columns were used for the passage of all these obstacles.

8. Passage of Lines.

Executed on the 3rd objective by the second battalion. Squad columns were used for the movement.

9. Attack of Machine gun nests and strong points.

Only one real machine gun nest was encountered by this regiment. It was located midway between the 2nd and 3rd objectives and was reduced by working small groups to the flanks and finally to the rear.

10. Fighting in the intermediate zone.

The initial disposition was used until the capture and consolidation of the 4th objective; also for the advance of the 2nd battalion into the woods toward the railroad. The difficulties encountered by this Bn. in the thick brush caused the 3rd battalion in advancing over the 2nd Bn. to throw out an advance guard and march in column to the final objective on the outskirts of HATTONVILLE.

Subordinate commanders, many of whom were in a fight for the first time, led their units with force and determination, and conducted themselves excellently.

11. Organization of captured ground.

All objectives (1st and 2nd excluded) were immediately organized upon capture. Battalions were reorganized in depth. Special attention was given to the disposition of chauchat rifles to defend against any counter attack. The front was covered by small detachments and patrols.

12. Liaison.

Liaison throughout the early part of the engagement was excellent. Telephone communication was had from the 4th objective to the initial Regimental P.C. immediately upon its capture. The advance beyond the 4th objective was so far and so rapid that it was impossible to carry sufficient wire for telephone communications. T.S.F. [flares] worked with excellent results at all times. Runners were utilized with good results. Liaison between the front lines and the divisional aeroplane was good. Panels were displayed each time when marking was called for.

13. General.

On the morning of the 13th, while the regiment was in the Bois VIGNEULLES the 2nd Bn. (then the leading Bn.) was, by order of the Regimental Commander, leap frogged by the 3rd Bn., the Regimental Commander taking personal command of the latter. An advance guard was thrown out and the Bn. proceeded along a 60 cm. railroad due north. On emerging from the woods into comparatively open country a screen of 2 platoons preceded by the Bn. Scouts was used to cover the front, and the regiment advanced rapidly to HATTONVILLE where, on the ridge to the East of the town, two companies were deployed with extended intervals, both flanks refused and reinforced by auto rifles. Under cover of this the regiment went into position. At the

time of the arrival of the advance guard on the ridge East of HATTONVILLE, the Regimental Commander viewed the country in all directions. At this time there were no troops either friendly or enemy in sight. A French liaison officer, a Colonel, attached to an American division from the north, was encountered in VIGNEULLES at 11:15. He was informed of the relative position of our troops, and the number of this regiment was given him. He was searching for the American troops from the south, and the 26th Infantry was the first he had seen. He was greatly delighted to find that the two parties were connected, and went back to report to his superior. Sometime after the Operations Officer of the 26th Infantry located the 28th Infantry (Maj. Huebner's Bn.) and showed a Company Commander where the 26th was deployed. A short time later the 28th was brought up to its position. About an hour after the arrival of the 26th, Regimental Commander of the latter regiment found a company of the 28th whose Commander did not know where the remainder of his leading battalion was. He was shown exactly where to go to connect with the 26th. These were the first American troops, other than the 26th, seen by the Regimental Commander. Scouts and patrols sent to nearby towns, to the front, and to the flanks did not report any American troops. Capt. Youell (2nd Bn., 26th Inf.) with a part of his Co., gained the VIGNEULLES-ST. BENOIT road about 2 A.M., and from that time on captured groups of enemy troops moving toward him from his left during night. This led him, as well as myself, to believe that there were no other American troops on this road to the west of Capt. Youell.

From the above, it appears that the 26th and not the 28th was the regiment to arrive first.

If desired, certificates and affidavits to support the above conclusions will be forwarded.

Attention is invited to the report of Major Whitener, 26th Inf., hereto attached.


J. M. Cullison,
Col., 26th Inf.

France, Sept. 16, 1918

FROM: Major Whitener, 26th Infantry

TO: Commanding Officer, 26th Infantry

Subject: Report on action of Sept. 12-13, 1918

1. On Sept. 12, 1918, the 2nd Bn., 26th Inf., which I commanded, advanced promptly at 11:00 A.M. through the 3rd Bn., 26th Inf., at the third objective. The 4th objective was reached immediately behind the rolling barrage. There was close liaison with both the 28th Inf. and the 42nd Division. I immediately reported to the headquarters of the 26th Inf. by telephone and T.P.S. that the objective had been reached. The Brigade Commander was on the phone and gave me telephone information that the enemy was bringing up troops in trucks to be prepared for a counter attack. I later received orders to the same effect from the C.O., 26th Inf.

2. The battalion proceeded to dig in as shown on the attached sketch [not found]. Patrols were sent out into the woods in front (Bois LAMARCHE). There was

considerable firing of chauchat rifles throughout the afternoon, showing that enemy had been encountered. Captain Youill [sic], commanding E Company, reported to me that his patrols were in close contact with the enemy, and had reported a road running across our front that was not shown on the map.

3. About 5:30 P.M. I received orders to advance on the Decauville railway about 2.5 kilometers in my front, and from there to send forward a company to cut the VIGNEULLES-ST. BENOIT road. I summoned all my officers and gave the following verbal orders: "The enemy is in retreat all along the line. The battalion will advance in small columns in its present order, Cos. E and F assault companies, Cos. G and H in support, on the Decauville railway 2.5 kilometers in our front. Co. E will be the directing company and will advance with its right guiding on the railway spur on our right front. Direction, 20 degrees west of north. On reaching the railway, Co. H, Capt. Wortley, will continue on and will cut the main road from VIGNEULLES to St. Benoit."

4. My reason for advancing in small columns was that my patrols had reported that they were in close contact with the enemy. I expected enemy resistance in the woods. Further, the map showed roads, paths, and trails in my front in the woods, so I did not expect hard going.

5. The woods, which were rather thin at first, rapidly became thick and difficult. We could find none of the small paths so numerous marked on the map. Nor was the road my patrols had reported in existence.

6. The advance started at 6:00 P.M. Night came on rapidly and it rained. The woods were black with darkness and there was much under-brush and fallen trees. The way had to be found entirely by compass.

7. I and my headquarters detachment advanced in the center of the battalion, between the assault and support companies. We were following the rear of a column of men from Co. E, when, on a pig trail in the woods, the detachment in our front turned to the left, and I and the headquarters detachment went straight ahead. We were thus separated and forged on ahead. Soon the telephone wire gave out; we left a part of the signal men there with their telephone, and we went on ahead. The path lasted only a few hundred meters, so in this way the telephone was lost for the night.

8. I kept on going thru the underbrush and finally reached the railway with my headquarters detachment. I went up and down the railway but could find none of my men. I sent runners in both directions and we encountered no one. I was on the railway one or two hours before any of my battalion reached it. I established my headquarters at the junction of the road and the railway (as shown on the attached sketch) [not found] and sent a runner down the road to the nearest cross road to guide up any men he could find.

9. We could hear the Germans retreating somewhere to our left front. The rumble of wagons was continuous. I prayed to heaven for only a few men to send to cut them off.

10. In the dark we ran upon two companies of the 28th Infantry. They were lying down along the road sleeping.

11. By going up and down the railway track and whistling and calling I collected Capt. Youell and 16 men of E Co., and a sergeant and 30 men of G Co. I sent them over to the P.C. of the battalion of the 28th Infantry to tell the Battalion Commander that I was going to advance. I talked with Capt. Senzy of

the 28th Inf., who was in command, and he told me he had sent up a company to cut the road, but that they found the enemy in superior numbers and had them driven back. He said he had no report as to their present location.

12. My reason for getting in touch with the 28th Inf. was that I wanted the 28th Inf. to support Capt. Youill [sic] whom I intended to send forward.

13. I sent for Capt. Youill [sic] and told him that our mission was to cut the enemy's line of retreat on the main road, and that as long as I had a man who could walk we would do it. I ordered him to bring up 18 men, that I could direct him, and send up the men of Co. G afterwards. When his detachment came up, I directed him to move north on the railway (which turned in that direction at battalion headquarters) to go up the railway for a kilometer or a kilometer and a half, and to cut the main road at that point. He moved off.

14. I then sent for the detachment of Co. G. I sent them forward under Lt. Van Lopik, with additional instructions for Capt. Youill [sic], who had reported that he could find no road to cut. My instructions were "tell Capt. Youill [sic] he can hear the boche wagons on the road. Go over there and cut it."

15. Meanwhile I moved my headquarters up to a switch house on the R.R. that ran north, as shown on the sketch [not found]. I left half my headquarters detachment at the old location to guide up anyone that was looking for me. Men from both Maj. Travis and Maj. Wheeler [3d and 1st Battalion commanders] found my headquarters during the night, so I supposed we had proper positions, easily found. My reason for moving was to get into close contact with the only troops I then had, and with the 28th Infantry. Also, I could light a candle inside a house, and write messages.

16. Lt. Van Lopik returned with the information that Capt. Youill [sic] had sent out strong patrols to his left to cut the main road, also to his front. Lt. Van Lopik had 20 prisoners that he had captured himself, accompanied only by his orderly, in the dark. This was a very gallant action, and I will subsequently recommend this officer for citation.

17. I wrote a message reciting what had been done and where I was and sent the messages and the prisoners back to regimental headquarters under charge of Pvt. Smith, of Co. E, a runner. This runner was lost and wandered over into the 16th Inf. sector where he was wounded and evacuated.

18. Meanwhile, I had sent back a Corporal of the Signal Detachment with a second telephone. He was to call up the regimental headquarters and tell them that the railway and the road had been reached. Also, he was to bring up his men at the end of the line and to bring him back to the railway spur, when all could come back to Bn. Hq. together. All this telephoning was to be done by cutting into the line near the 4th objective.

19. As it began to be light, I was doubtful whether we had cut the right road. My instructions to Capt. Youill [sic] were based on the sounds of the enemy's retreat, such as the rumbling of wagons. With day light, I knew that men from my battalion would be coming out on the railroad. There were two things to be done; to reform the battalion, and to cut the VIGNEULLES-ST. BENOIT road if it hadn't been done already. In my judgement, the cutting of the ST. BENOIT road was of most importance so I gave instructions to Lt. Van Lopik and to Lt. Hendricks to send up the first 200 men they could get to Capt. Youill [sic], and to have the remainder of the battalion form on the railway running east and west as originally ordered. I myself went up to see where Capt. Youill [sic] was, and whether

any of the 28th had yet come up on his left.

20. I found out that the ST. BENOIT road had not been cut by Capt. Youill [sic], but that he was in close touch with the 28th who were then coming up. I was about to order Capt. Youill [sic] forward when I saw the 3d Bn coming up. I met Maj. Travis, who had orders I had not received. I read them over carefully, and was proceeding down to the railway to bring up my battalion, when I was met by the C.O., 26th Inf., placed in arrest, and relieved of my command.

21. My whole idea during the night was to get forward and to cut the enemy's retreat. I had detailed one company at the start to accomplish this task; when it failed to get thru the woods, I sent forward other men, every man I had, to gain this end. I kept liaison with the 28th and relied on them to support me.

22. We had to go by sound in the darkness. When the 200 prisoners were captured, we thought the enemy's main line of retreat had been cut. When I was placed in arrest I had only been up to see whether my mission has been accomplished, and whether the 28th had come up on my left. Their being on my left would help my further advance.

23. All night long I was going about in the woods along the railway and on the roads whistling and calling and sending runners to guide anyone who might come up. The troops were tired, and went to sleep in the woods before the railway was reached. Only some 50 or 60 men in the whole battalion ever reached the railway, and those men I sent forward.

24. I pushed ahead with a few men when the 28th told me they had been driven back. I believe my 50 men were the first in the division to cut the road on which we could hear the enemy's retreat. And we were not unopposed; Capt. Youill [sic] captured three machine guns that were in action against him. We had to fight to get there.

25. I believe that it was due solely to my being on the job all the time that some 200 prisoners, 15 or 20 machine guns, and a dozen wagons were captured.

26. I believe that I acted with energy and discretion, and that I accomplished all that anyone could have accomplished under the circumstances. I believe that I gave proper instructions, and that I used every man to gain the end desired.

27. I respectfully request that I be restored to command.

W.C. Whitener.
Major, 26th Infantry.

Following is the text of the Inspector General's report on his investigation into what happened within the 26th Infantry on the night of 12-13 September, supported by three contemporary maps that unfortunately are not part of the official records.

Headquarters, First Division,
American Expeditionary Forces,
Office of Division Inspector,
France, September 19, 1918.

From: Division Inspector

To: Commanding General, 1st Division.

Subject: Investigation of movements of the 26th Infantry on 12th-13th September

1. The investigation into the movements of the 26th Infantry bore particularly on the following points:

(a) Did the 26th Infantry, the afternoon or evening of the 12th Of September advance to the Decauville Railroad? And further did the 26th Infantry, as ordered, push a company up to the VIGNEULLES-ST. BENOIT road?

(b) When did the 26th Infantry enter the BOIS DE VIGNEULLES?

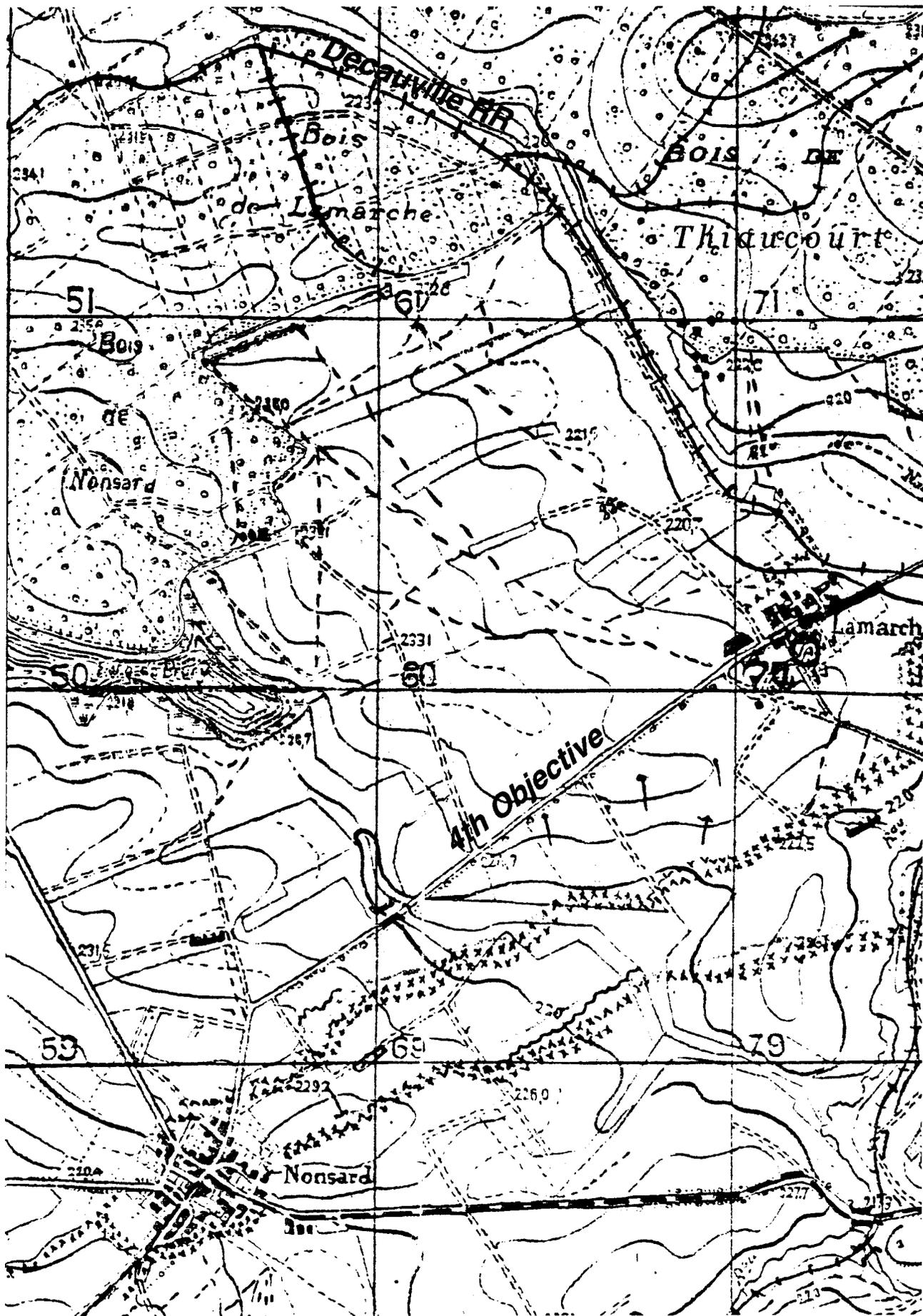
(c) Were orders given at about midnight, 12th-13th September, for the 26th Infantry to push the whole thing through to HATTONVILLE?

(d) Why was Major W. C. Whitener, 26th Infantry, placed in arrest by the Commanding Officer, 26th Infantry?

F I N D I N G S.

(a) Yes, so far as concerns the advance to the Decauville Railroad. The Battalion, receiving orders about 6:00 P.M., 12th September, to advance to the Decauville Railroad, about 16 men under Captain Youell, commanding a company of the Second Battn., 26th Infantry, plus some thirty men of another company under a Sergeant, arrived at the Decauville Railroad about one kllometer northwest of the southeastern border of the BOIS DE LaMARCHE at a time between 12:00 midnight and 1:00 A.M., 12th-13th September. It is to be noted that this railroad is about two and one-half kilometers from the line from which the Second Battn., 26th Infantry advanced at 6:00 P. M.; also that the time required by fragments of the battalion to advance this distance was same six hours. Co. H, of the Second Battn., 26th Infantry, was ordered at about 6:00 P.M., 12th September, to advance to the VIGNEULLES - ST. BENOIT road, but failed to get to the point until about 7:00 A.M., 13th September. However, the detachment of some forty-five men under Captain Youell did advance in a northwesterly direction from the Decauville Railroad and did cut the "BAYERNSTRASSE" some time between 3:00 A.M. and 5:0D A. M., 13th September, receiving thereby some prisoners and enemy property.

In connection with Co. H, it is to be noted that the Commanding Officer of this Company kept it together in column of files moving through the woods. He annexed the Machine Gun Company attached to the Second Battn., 26th Infantry, and brought these two companies intact, through the woods. At about 3:00 A.M, the Commanding Officer, Co. H, received from the Adjutant, 26th Infantry, a change in his mission, i.e., that he was to move on HATTONVILLE. This movement was begun, and the Decauville Railroad was reached at 5:00 A.M., 13th September, H Company having been employed in passing northwest from the Fourth Objective, through the woods prlor to that time. The Company Commander states the time expended was due to the necessity of assembling his Company (after having progressed through the woods sufficiently far to make it clear he would lose his Company had he continued to advance in line of combat groups), and the darkness, coupled with the dense nature of the woods. Co.H advanced northwestward from the Decauville Railroad at 6:00 A.M., 13th of September an hour having been used in



picking up other elements of the battalion and in trying to get in touch with Major Whitener, commanding Second Battn., 26th Infantry. Why it required eleven hours for the Commanding Officer, Co. H, 26th Infantry to move from the Fourth Objective to the Decauville Railroad, a distance, of three kilometers, is not apparent, even with due allowance being made for the fact that his was a support Company and that he brought his Company through intact.

(b) Some forty-five men, leading elements of the Second Battn., 26th Infantry, arrived at the Decauville Railroad, which roughly marks the southern border of the BOIS DE VIGNEULLES, at a time between 12:00 midnight and 1:00 A.M., 13th September.

(c) Orders were received at Regimental Headquarters, 26th Infantry, at about 2:30 A.M. 13th, September, to push the regiment on HATTONVILLE. These orders were delivered to the Commanding Officer, Third Battn., 26th Infantry, between 3:30 A.M. and 5:30 A.M., 13th September, and this battalion moved on HATTONVILLE, occupying its southern edge at about 10:25 A.M. The Adjutant and the Operations Officer of the 26th Infantry state that the order to advance on HATTONVILLE was given the Commanding Officer, Third Battn., 26th Infantry, at 3:30 A.M. The Commanding Officer, Third Battn., 26th Infantry, states that the order was received at 5:30 A.M., 13th September. The elapsed time between receipt by the 26th Infantry Headquarters of the order to advance on HATTONVILLE and the time (3:30 A.M. or 5:30 A.M.) of receipt by the Commanding Officer, Third Battn., 26th Infantry is explained by the Adjutant and the Operations Officer of the 26th Infantry to be due to:

1. Lack of sufficient telephone wire to maintain communication.
2. Non-functioning of the T.P.S. from the Battalion P. C. to the Regimental P.C.
3. Density and darkness of the woods, necessitating long search by runners and officers bearing orders.

(4) Major Whitener, commanding Second Battn., 26th Infantry, was placed in arrest by his Regimental Commander, because he, Major Whitener, was out of touch with his battalion during the night, 12th-13th September, and consequently unable to control its movements. Major Whitener is a brave man, conscientious in the performance of his duties, an energetic man; but it is the consensus of opinion that he is unfit to command a battalion. He has not the confidence of his juniors, his seniors, nor do I believe he has confidence in himself.

2. Following is a list of officers upon whose testimony the above findings are based:

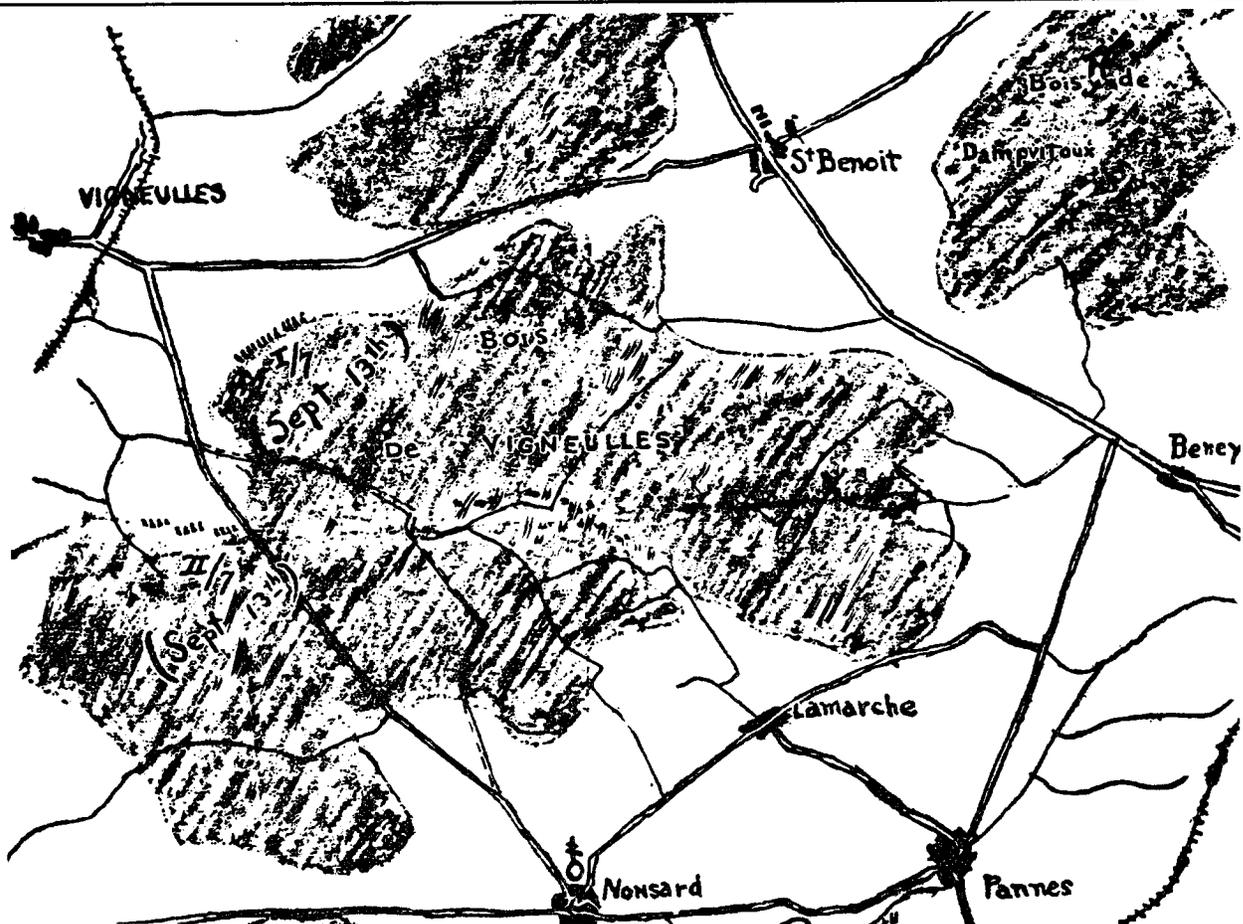
Colonel J.M. Cullison.	Capt. J.A. Edgerton.
Major J.J. Travis.	Second Lieut. A. Van Lopik.
Major W.C. Whitener.	Second Lieut. H. Seigh.
Captain A.R. Wortley.	Captain B. R. Legge.
Captain R.M. Youell.	Lieut. E. H. Pool.
All of the 26th Infantry.	

Of these, five are officers in Major Whitener's Battalion.

W. R. Wheeler,
Major, Infantry,
Division Inspector

WRW/cw.

The following documents illustrate that whether the Cullison and Whitener reports were accurate or not, they did not coincide with Major General Summerall's understanding of when and how juncture with the 26th Division occurred. The first map shows the positions of the 7th Artillery Regiment, the two 75mm gun battalions for direct support of the 26th and 28th Infantry of Second Infantry Brigade — there is little coverage for the eastern portion of zone. The Division G-3's check on the matter shows the 26th to be a late-comer. The second map General Summerall chose to include in his History of the First Division.



G - 3. Hqrs. 1st Division, A.E. F.
France, September 16, 1918.

Memorandum for the Chief of Staff:

The provisional squadron 2nd Cavalry encountered strong machine gun fire half-way between NONSARD and VIGNEULLES at 4:30 P.M. September 12th. Authority: Col. Hazard

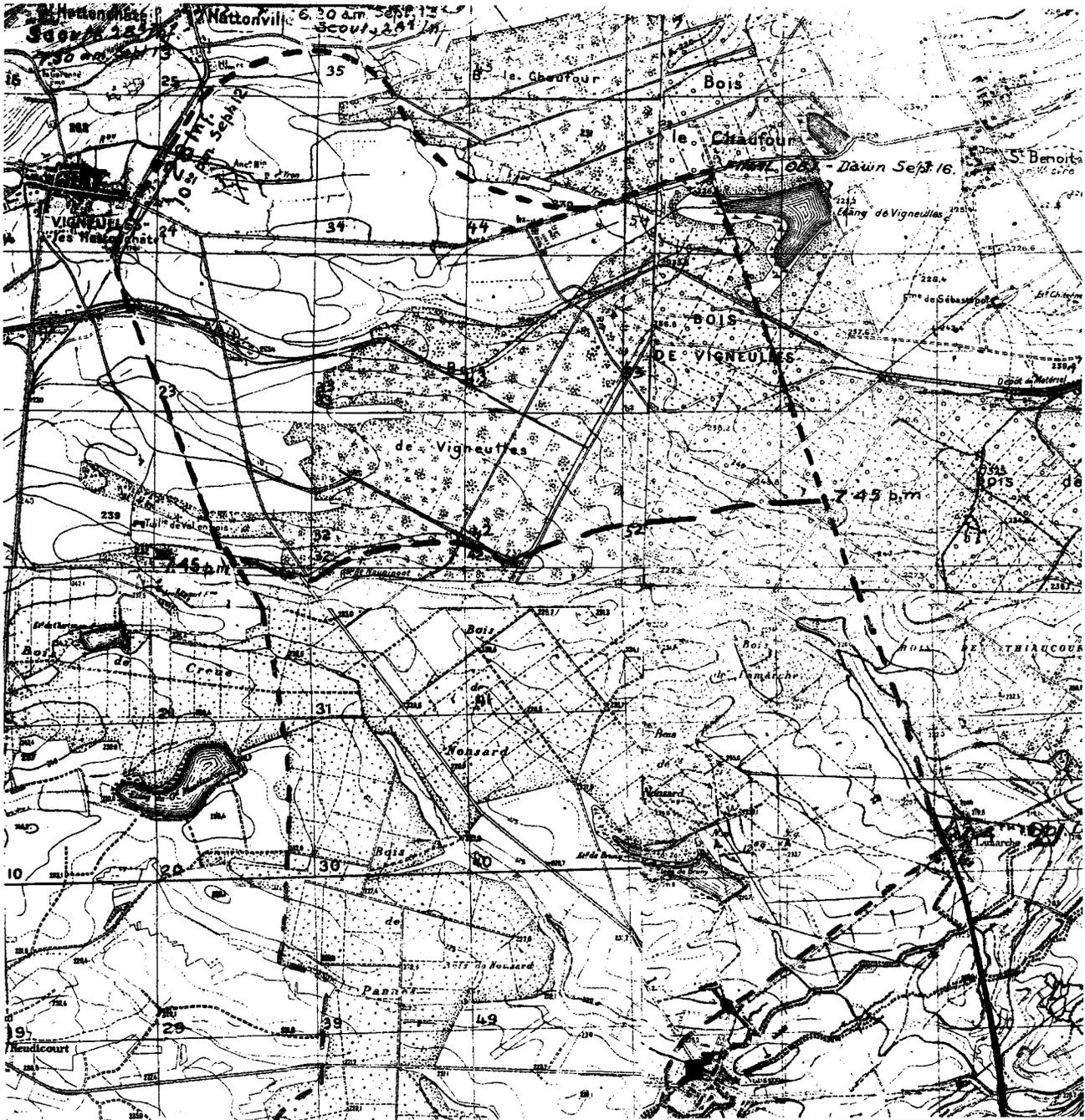
The leading elements of the 28th Infantry crossed the narrow gauge railroad at 7:00 P.M. September 12th. Authority: Adjutant 28th Infantry.

The leading elements of the 28th Infantry reached the VIGNEULLES-ST. BENOIT road at 10:00 P.M. September 12th. Authority: Adjutant 28th Infantry

The provisional squadron 2nd Cavalry reached VIGNEUELLES at 9:30 A.M. September 13th. Authority: Col. Hazard.

The 26th Infantry reached HATTONVILLE at 10:25 A.M. September 13th. Authority: Commanding Officer 26th Infantry.

B.F. Caffey, Jr.
Capt., Infantry
Ass't. G-3



In the event, General Summerall moved Cullison to the division staff, and transferred Whitener to the Services of Supply [i.e., ordered him to Blois for reclassification; in the parlance of the A.E.F., he was "sent to Blooey."]

George C. Marshall: War is a ruthless taskmaster, demanding success regardless of confusion, shortness of time, and paucity of tools. Exact justice for the individual and a careful consideration of his rights is quite impossible. One man sacrifices his life on the battlefield and another sacrifices his reputation elsewhere, both in the same cause. The hurlyburly of the conflict does not permit commanders to draw fine distinctions; to succeed, they must demand results, close their ears to excuses, and drive subordinates beyond what would ordinarily be considered the limit of human capacity. Wars are won by the side that accomplishes the impossible. Battles are decided in favor of the troops whose bravery, fortitude, and, especially, whose endurance, surpasses that of the enemy's; the army with the higher

breaking point wins the decision.

Summerall: ...On the second day [of the battle of Soissons] I was informed that General Pershing and the French Army Commander would visit the division headquarters during the afternoon. I left early [to visit the front lines] and told the Chief of Staff to tell them I was compelled to see the troops. One brigade had not reached its objective. On leaving the division command post, I met the lieutenant colonel of a regiment in this brigade. He told me that he was taking supplies to the regiment. I told him to come with me. His brigade had not reported taking the objectives. On reaching the brigade command post, I found the brigade commander much confused and worn. I told him to get some rest, that the attack would be resumed the next morning and that he would lead the attack. On reaching a regimental command post, I found the colonel exhausted. He was sullen and defiant. I asked him why his regiment had not attacked. He replied: "The order was impossible and I did not try to obey it." I could have relieved him but it was evident that he was overwrought and scarcely responsible. The strain had been too great for him. I told him that I had brought the lieutenant colonel who would be on duty while he rested. The colonel was killed the second day after this. ...

I took a young captain to guide me to the lines....I found the men in good spirits. I explained the situation and the necessity of taking the objective of Berzey-le-Sec in the attack next morning. They said they would take it if I would give them our own artillery fire. They did not like French artillery. I told them I would do so. It was here that I first adopted the method of advancing in two or three successive echelons and leading each echelon with a barrage from all of our guns [Summerall has been credited with thus inventing massed artillery fires for infantry support]. This method was used in all my subsequent attacks by the First Division. The next morning the advance was successful but the lieutenant colonel whom I took to the lines was one of the first men killed....

I have mentioned these cases of neurosis of a few officers and men to show what must be expected and how I dealt with them. Later, I had similar trouble in the Corps which I commanded. The great mass of officers and men will overcome their fears and the further they are to the front the less they fear. At one time, the Division Judge Advocate brought to me five sets of charges against men for cowardice. I told him to destroy the charges and send the men to their colonels who would at once place them in the front lines where the other men would take care of them. The difficulty disappeared as the men had more experience in battle. I have said that failure in battle results not so much from the resistance of the enemy as from the state of mind of officers and men which deprived them of a desire to fight. A leader must by personal contact and assurance inculcate a will to win in every member of his command. I have never tried a man for cowardice.

[In the Battle of St. Mihiel] the division on our right bore away and created a gap of several miles. Portions of the 3d Division were attached to the First to cover [the gap]. A division sent its trains over our communicating road thus depriving us of its use and causing great inconvenience. We adopted other means and I never complained. It was a rule of the First Division never to criticize other troops. I always felt that I was fighting Germans and not Americans and I never criticized other troops as other commanders did....

The movement of the troops through the strange, dense forests in the darkness was a feat that compares favorably with their best accomplishments. Directions could only be kept by the compass and liaison was impossible in line formation. The different elements were placed in column in single file and each followed its leader to the objective. To make the task more confusing, the forests were found filled

with enemy billets and obstructions that required constant detours. Along the roads and trails detachments of the enemy continued to resist with rifle fire and machine guns and inflicted casualties throughout the advance. The pursuit of the enemy was so close that many of his detachments were cut off. An entire machine gun company, including one officer and over one hundred men, were made prisoners, and in another position eight men were killed and more than one hundred officers and men were captured. The enemy's confusion was shown by the appearance of the officers and enlisted men of a battalion staff who sought within the American lines the rendezvous designated for the battalion....

During the operations the Division advanced fourteen kilometers in nineteen hours. Small elements advanced nineteen kilometers in thirty-two hours. These remarkable gains were made over a country which was dotted with marshes, traversed by small but difficult streams, cut up by dense woods and organized for determined resistance with masses of wire and a network of trenches that were the result of four years' labor. Throughout, the troops maintained perfect formation, and all resistance was overcome with a rapidity and dash that gave proof of the high morale that prevailed....

The Division captured five officers and eleven hundred and ninety men, thirty field guns and howitzers, fifty machine guns and large quantities of ammunition, small arms, stores and equipment, including locomotives, trucks, wagons, horses, forage, and artillery carriages.

The [First Division's] losses were:

Killed or died of wounds3 officers, 90 men
Wounded10 officers, 431 men
Missing 5 men
Prisoners 5 men
Total13 officers, 531 men

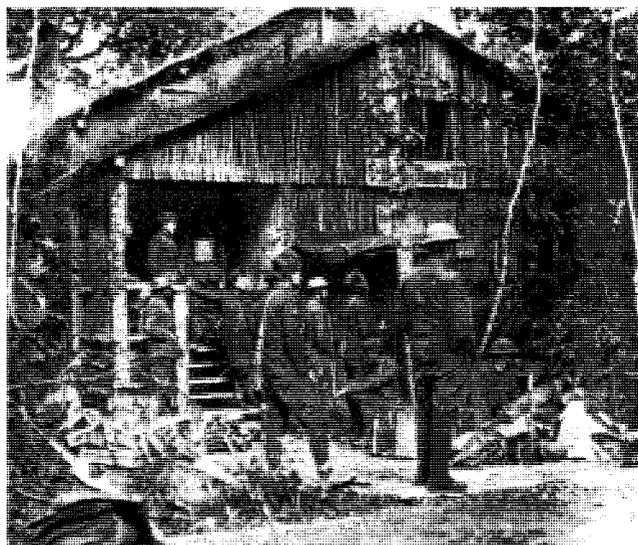
On September 13th all attached units from other commands were relieved. During the night, in accordance with orders from the Corps, the Division was pinched out by other units. On September 14th it was regrouped in reserve in the area, Nonsard-Bois de la Belle Ozière-Étang de Pannes. At the same time, Division Headquarters moved to the former German rest camp in the Bois de la Belle Ozière.

The road from Beaumont by Seicheprey and St. Baussant was the only one that led to the front of the Division's zone of action and it was assigned to the First Division for its communications. The 1st Engineers organized to repair it and to throw a bridge over the Rupt de Mad. Shell holes, trenches and masses of wire had already made it impassable and the traffic converted it into a veritable slough. The transport of the neighboring division began to enter it early on September 12th, and before



noon it became so congested that nothing could move. Extra military police and all available staff officers were sent to help the engineers in opening a passage, but the congested conditions were not relieved until September 13th.... The 1st Supply Train reached Nonsard on the afternoon of September 13th and the kitchens and water-carts arrived at about the same time. As soon as possible, hot food was prepared and sent to the lines....

It was a novel sight that was presented to the tired men when they looked around them on the morning of September 14th. The extensive woods in which they found themselves had been converted into an attractive rest camp by the Germans. There were billets and recreation rooms and the most artistic cottages and bungalows elaborately furnished from the homes in the defenseless villages. Club-houses for officers and men, with pianos and moving picture machines, gave evidence of the pleasure that was afforded. There were extensive and well-fitted stables, and forage in abundance for the officers' chargers, some of which were left in the hasty flight. Other evidences that the comfortably housed garrison did not expect the Americans to advance so rapidly were the uniforms and personal effects of officers, including their arms, and freshly cooked food.....



German "club" near Nonsard

All efforts were now devoted to making the troops comfortable and to conditioning the horses. Delousers were installed and the companies went in turn to have their clothing freed from vermin. The equipment and ammunition lost or expended in the battle were replaced and the Division was rapidly prepared for the next call, whatever it might be. The weather was cold and rainy, but cheerfulness prevailed, and even the German prisoners enjoyed playing their pianos for their kindly captors.

A conference was held at Division Headquarters to discuss the manner in which the advance had been executed, with a view to profiting by the experience in future operations. General Pershing visited the command and congratulated the Division upon its performance. When Sunday came, the chaplains conducted impressive services in the beautiful woods and gave thanks for the victory. With the passing days there grew a strong sentiment of attachment for those wonderful woods, with rest and luxury the like of which had not been seen in France.



Division G-2, Major Gowenlock, and his officers with PW, vicinity Nonsard

Mails were delivered and many letters were written. Excursions were made to Montsec and Hattonchâtel, from whose heights could be seen the panorama of the battlefield. The roar of guns and the periodical harassing shells that fell even in this new-found resting place were constant reminders that the world was still at war and that destiny still held a part for the First Division. The advance at St. Mihiel, with its sweeping victory and small losses, followed by those days of happy relaxation, were like a dispensation of Providence to fit the men for the supreme effort that lay before them. With ripe experience, superb morale and hardened bodies, the First Division was at the height of human efficiency.



American Red Cross and Salvation Army passing out chocolate and tobacco, Nonsard, 13 September

The Twenty-Sixth Infantry in France: The St. MIHIEL Salient, that needle point on the Western Front for four long years, had been nipped off. The First Army, but recently come into being, gave to the world tangible evidence of America's power....

The Division having accomplished its mission, the line having been appreciably shortened, it fell back in reserve, its front being taken over by the 42nd Division. For six days the regiment bivouaced in the BOIS de NONSARD, where the boys had nothing more to do than

“swap” souvenirs. Due to the condition of the one road leading to our area it was some 48 hours before our straggling transportation had all rejoined us. During the interim Regimental Headquarters, which was very comfortably housed in a German Officer's Club, had the pleasure of eating some excellently prepared meals served by a German Mess Sergeant who had been taken with his kitchen and larder complete. Needless to say he sampled all victuals before serving them.



Troops of the First and Twenty-Sixth Divisions rename the main road through Vigneulles, 13 September, 1918

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