

CHAPTER XVI

BATTLE FOR THE OUTWORKS OF THE HINDENBURG LINE



IN the previous chapter an account was given of the numerous and unsuccessful attacks made by the III British Corps to take the outer defenses of the Hindenburg Line. The narrative also included the conferences which led up to the order for the 106th Infantry, supported by the 105th Infantry, to make the attack to capture these outworks on September 27th.

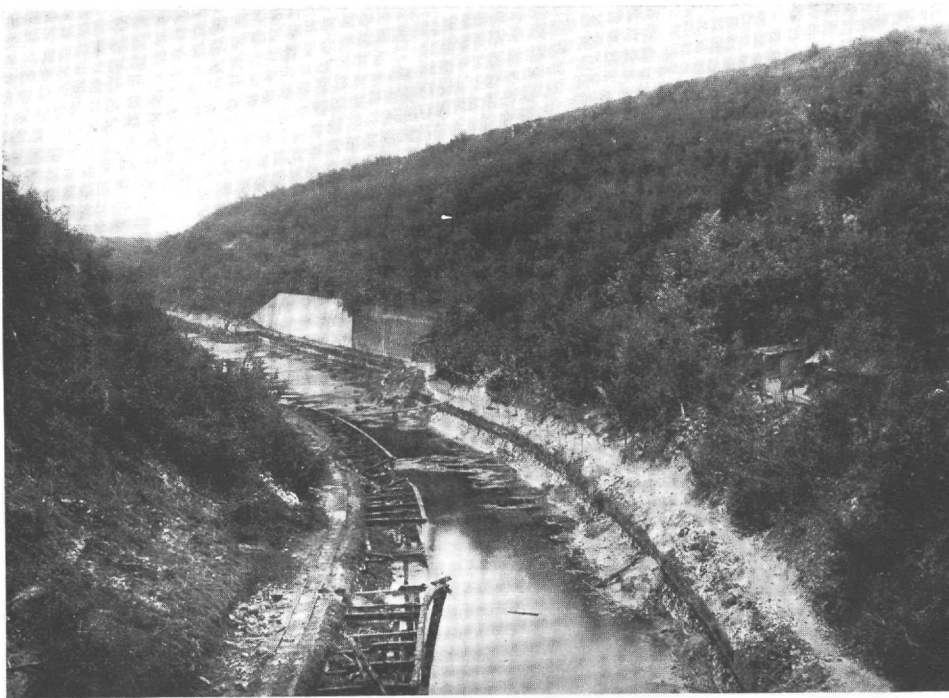
Perhaps this would be the logical place to describe the character of the defenses that constituted the so-called Hindenburg Line. In a general way they have already been described as consisting of a main defensive system along the St. Quentin Canal, protected by a line of outworks, these two systems of defensive works being supplemented by the so-called Beaurevoir Line in the rear.

The Hindenburg Line was originally organized for defense toward the end of the year 1916, and work was continuous in its preparation for a long time thereafter. It will be remembered that in March, 1917, following the British offensive on the Somme, the Germans made what they called a strategic retirement in order to shorten their line. This retirement was to the Hindenburg Line. In March, 1918, occurred the German offensive, which took the Germans out of their defensive system in their drive through the British 5th Army, already referred to. The power of the defensive was well understood by the German High Command. They expected to win the war by offensive action, but failing in that, it was their plan to fall back behind the impregnable defenses of the Hindenburg Line, and as a result of unsuccessful attacks against it to make peace upon terms satisfactory under the conditions, though not of course as satisfactory as could be made following a completely successful offensive.

In the battle of August 8, 1918, already referred to, the British captured from a German Corps Headquarters an undated document describing in detail many of the features constituting the Hindenburg Line defenses. The document showed the trenches and wire, the positions and calibers of batteries, the approach lines and observation posts. There were also indicated the location of artillery and infantry headquarters and all battle stations, as well as concrete dugouts and machine-gun emplacements.

The following is an extract from this document. The Siegfried Line referred to was part of the Hindenburg Line in the tunnel sector:

"The Siegfried Line makes full use, along extended stretches, of the front line of defenses afforded by the Bellicourt-St. Quentin Canal. . . . The strength of these defenses, increased as it is by inundated areas, the very extensive possibilities of mutual flanking support by the different



View of St. Quentin Canal



View of St. Quentin Canal Tunnel

sectors, and the generally considered good artillery observation, render the line very strong. Added to this is the advantage that the Siegfried Line, having been reconnoitered without interference from the enemy, and plans having been drawn up for its occupation by troops of all arms, a systematic withdrawal from the outpost can be effected.

"The Siegfried Line is considered to afford the most favorable conditions for a stubborn defense by a minimum garrison. It is therefore adapted to the requirements of obstinate close combat.

"Its position behind the natural defenses offered by the Bellicourt-St. Quentin Canal affords the enemy free use of many favorable points of observation close in front of it.

"The use of these points by the enemy must be hindered as long as possible. For this reason outposts will be established before the Siegfried Line, with the object of maintaining contact with the enemy and obstructing his reconnaissance. These will retire on the Siegfried Line before an enemy attack. It is the duty of the command to prevent any decisive action being fought further forward than the first line of defense of the Siegfried Line, which is prepared for a stubborn defensive. It must be clearly understood by units of all arms that the battle will be fought from the first line trenches of the Siegfried Line."

Since the captured plan was made, German methods had been materially modified as a result of experience. The original idea of strong defense on the extreme front line, supplemented by close support, had been modified in favor of the theory of dispositions of defensive troops in depth, which has already been explained in the account of the service of the division in the East Poperinghe Line.

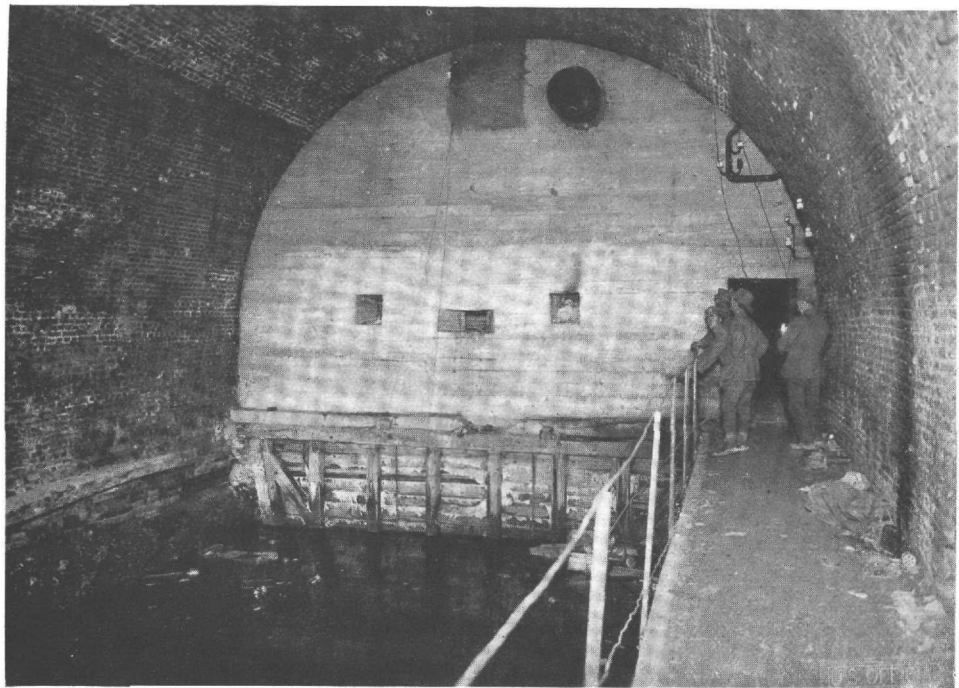
The St. Quentin Canal in the area of the 4th British Army ran generally in a north and south direction, with the flow of water from north to south. It constituted a formidable obstacle. The best feature of its defensive quality was that tanks could not cross it. A short distance south of the town of Bellicourt, the canal, meeting the high ground of that region in its trace toward the north, enters a tunnel, from which it does not emerge until it has traversed a distance of 6,000 yards. The point of exit is situated about 1,000 yards west of the village of Le Catelet. Shortly after leaving this northern exit the canal turns in a northwesterly direction and passes through the town of Vendhuile, having cleared which, it again turns to the north. As a result of this turn at Vendhuile, the canal as it proceeds north from that town follows a trace approximately 2,000 yards farther west than the trace of the canal through the tunnel. By holding the line of the canal at Vendhuile, the Germans, in the event of an advance against the tunnel south of that point, would hold an important flank position against an enemy making such an advance. It would be well for the reader interested in the operations against the Hindenburg Line to glance at the map and note the importance of this flank position for purposes of enfilade fire and for flank counter-attack against forces moving in an easterly direction against the tunnel defenses.

The average width of the canal at the surface of the water is 39 feet,



Boats about to enter the northern entrance of the St. Quentin Canal, taken during the summer of 1920. Note the chain

the average width at the bottom 32 feet 10 inches, and the depth of water 6 feet 6 inches. A tow-path exists on either side of the canal, which for a considerable distance both south and north of the tunnel exits runs through deep cuts, which consequently provide very high embankments adapted



View of interior of St. Quentin Canal Tunnel, south end

for defensive purposes. The canal was constructed in the early part of the nineteenth century and was one of Napoleon's projects.

Canal boats are towed through the canal in rather an unusual manner. A heavy iron chain lies along the bottom of the canal from end to end. The canal boat that supplies the pulling power to the column of boats to be towed, is provided with a heavy windlass, operated by electric power. The electric current is taken by means of a trolley pole on the boat from a wire along the tow-path. The heavy chain is passed over the windlass from a hawsehole in the bow provided with a roller over which the chain moves. Upon leaving the windlass the chain passes over another roller and hawsehole at the stern of the towboat, from which it drops back into the bottom of the canal. When the power is applied the windlass turns, and winding and unwinding the chain, pulls itself forward. The following boats are connected to the towboat by lines, the leading boat in the column having lines to the towboat of such length that there is no interference with the drop of the chain into the canal from the stern of the towboat.

During the war, with the preparation and occupation of the Hindenburg Line, the canal was not in use.

South of Bellicourt and near Bellenglise the canal had been dammed in order to keep a sufficient depth of water in the canal north of that place, which included the area between Vendhuile and Bellicourt. The normal flow of the water in the canal was, as has been stated, from north to south.

The main defenses of the Hindenburg Line in the tunnel sector were a short distance west of the tunnel. These defenses consisted generally of three strong lines of trenches, protected by an extraordinary mass of wire. The roof of the tunnel averaged fifty or sixty feet below the surface of the ground. In the construction of the tunnel, shafts had been sunk through the ground to the roof of the tunnel for the purpose of providing air. These air shafts were about 100 yards apart. Early in 1918 there were twenty-five barges in the main tunnel and these were used by the Germans as billets for reserve troops. There were a number of chambers connected with the tow-path within the tunnel, which were used in the operation and maintenance of the canal. Some of these were for storage and others for electric power production. These chambers were supplemented by others built by the German troops when the defenses were under construction. Along the easterly side of the tunnel there had been sunk through the ground above a number of approaches to the tunnel tow-path. These approaches resembled dugout stairs. They enabled troops to have ready access to and from the tunnel and the defiladed ground immediately to the east of it. In similar manner passageways had been excavated from the westerly side of the canal within the tunnel to the main line of resistance constructed in the ground above and a short distance westerly of the line of the tunnel. No bombardment, no matter how severe, could affect reserve troops stationed or billeted within the tunnel. The entrances to the tunnel were blocked by heavily reinforced concrete walls, defended by machine guns.

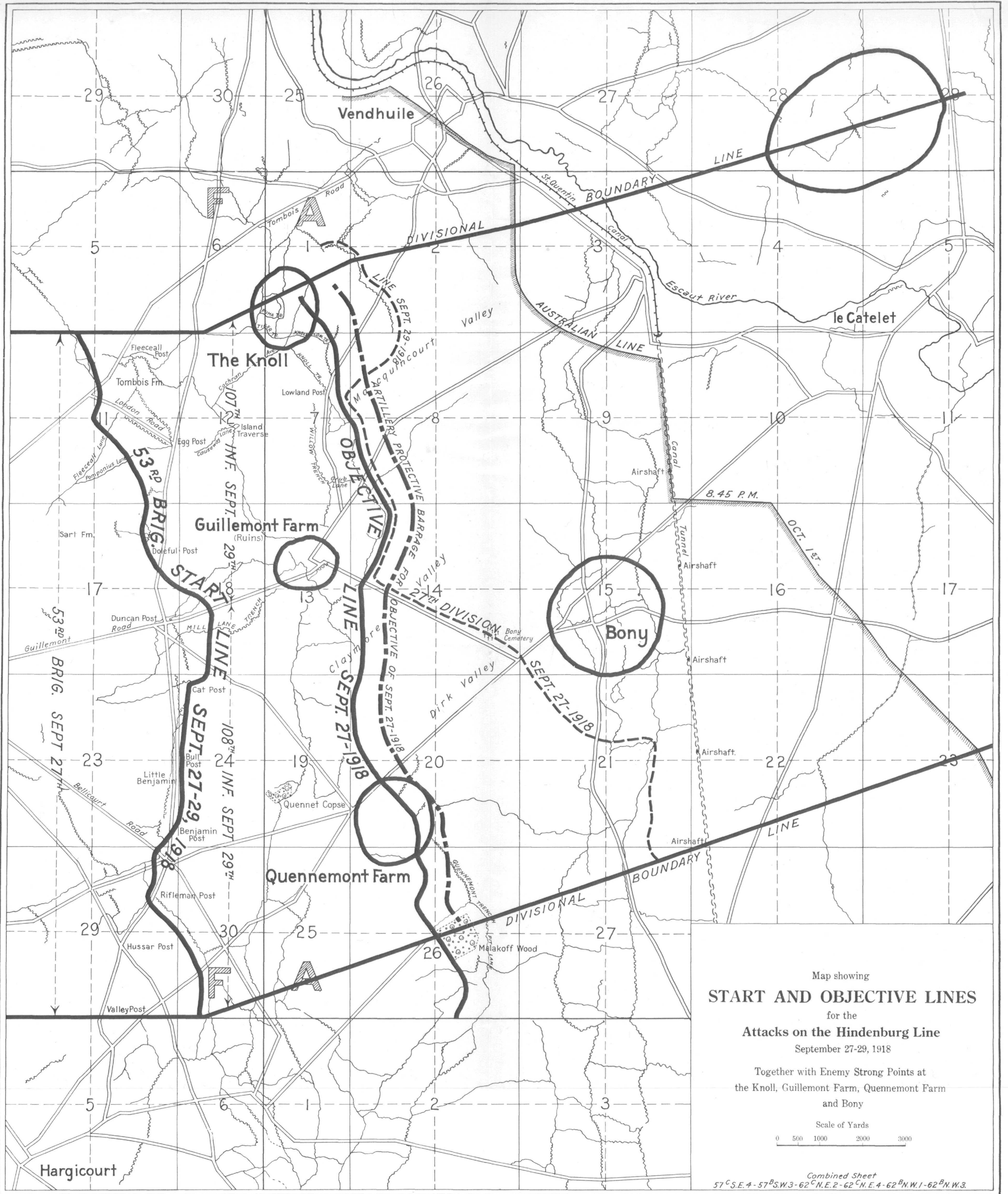
No German map was available showing the details of galleries leading



Another view of interior of St. Quentin Canal Tunnel, showing barges used as billets by the Germans. The tunnel at this point is 300 feet underground

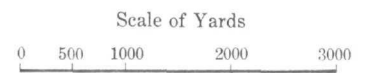


One of the many passages cut from the tunnel to the trenches



Map showing
START AND OBJECTIVE LINES
 for the
Attacks on the Hindenburg Line
 September 27-29, 1918

Together with Enemy Strong Points at
 the Knoll, Guillemont Farm, Quennemont Farm
 and Bony



Combined Sheet
 57^CS.E.4-57^BS.W.3-62^CN.E.2-62^CN.E.4-62^BN.W.1-62^BN.W.3.

to the tunnel between Bellicourt and Vendhuile. Among the prisoners taken by the British prior to the operations against the Hindenburg Line was one who had served as an electrician in the engine room of one of the chambers which had been cut into the east wall of the tunnel near Bellicourt. From him some information had been secured concerning the details of the tunnel. From other prisoners it was learned that there were at least fifteen underground galleries leading from the Gouy-Bellicourt Road into the tunnel, which would enable troops to enter or leave the tunnel unobserved. These entrances, later inspected, did not show in early photographs, as they were camouflaged with brushwood. From other prisoners it was learned that there were nine galleries leading from the tunnel toward Bellicourt and Bony. With the tunnel a safe haven for reserve troops, it became possible to maintain such reserves in perfect security during the height of the battle close to the point where they would be needed for reinforcement or to counter-attack, until required for such purposes, when they could be fed through covered ways into the trenches on their immediate front. The block walls at the exits of the tunnel were built of thick ferro-concrete, containing an upper chamber with a platform. The blocks were provided with slits for machine guns to command the entrance and were each equipped with a ventilating shaft containing an electric fan.

On the easterly side of the tunnel and directly in rear of the strong point at Bony, there was a quarry which had been organized for the accommodation of at least a battalion of troops. This accommodation included a large gallery with three entrance shafts and three large rooms. Several dugouts had been constructed in the westerly face capable of holding a considerable number of men.

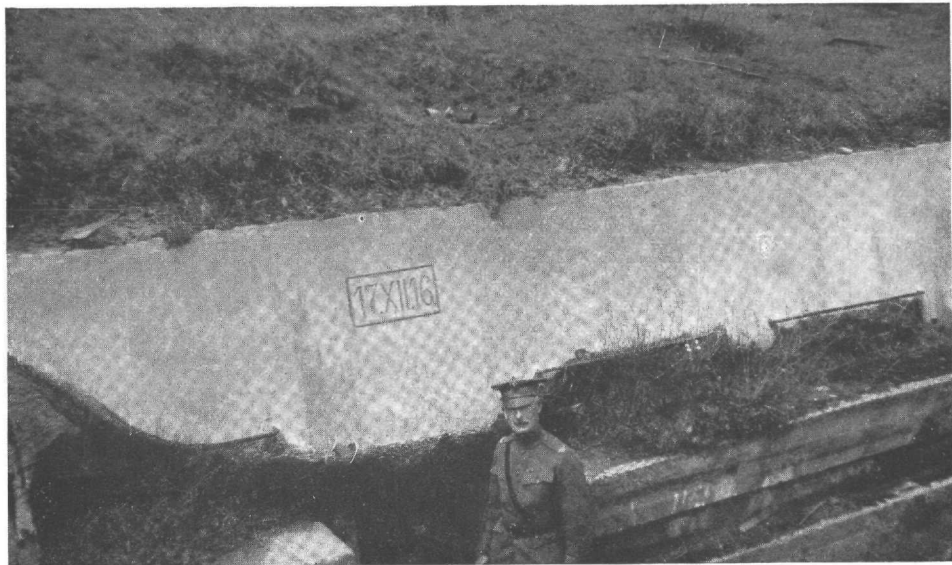
If the reader will again glance at the map it will be seen that Bony was about midway between the northern and southern portals of the tunnel, but nearer the northern exit. With its stone buildings and its commanding position it was ideal for organization as a field fortification to stiffen the line. Its fire commanded a wide front, including Dirk Valley, Claymore Valley and part of Macquincourt Valley, with the ridges between, while at the same time it afforded observation of the forward strong points at The Knoll, Guillemont Farm and Quennemont Farm. It will also be seen that the main defensive system was connected with the outer system by numerous communicating trenches which took full advantage of the ground in the trace followed by them.

General Monash has the following to say in relation to the strength of the Hindenburg Line defenses in the tunnel sector between Bellicourt and Vendhuile:

"The great Hindenburg system, by which name it has come to be known to English readers, or the 'Siegfried Line,' as it is called by the Germans, was brought into existence during the winter of 1916 and early spring of 1917 in order to fulfil a very definite strategic purpose. Thus was put into effect, on a stupendous scale, a very elementary principle of minor tactics, namely, that field works are constructed for the purpose of reducing the number of men required to defend a given front or locality.



One of the air shafts of the tunnel near Bony. Colonel Hallahan, Division Signal Officer, on right



A type of dugout in the Hindenburg Line defenses made of ferro-concrete. Colonel Wainwright, Division Inspector, in foreground

"In themselves, field fortifications have, of course, no offensive value whatever, but their use permits a reduced number of men to defend one place in order that a greater number of men may be available to attack another place.

"The German High Command proceeded to make use of this principle on a scale previously unknown in history. The whole of the Western Front, in Belgium and France, was to be held defensively throughout 1917. The military resources required to defend that front were to be reduced to a minimum by the provision of a line of defenses protected by powerful field works, believed to be impregnable. This would liberate the greatest possible resources for the Eastern Front, where an end could be made of the Russians and Roumanians there. As soon as these were disposed of, those troops, guns and aeroplanes, could again be transferred to the West, in order, similarly, to dispose of the remainder of our Alliance.

"This great strategic plan was carried out in its entirety until the middle of 1918. It was the great Hindenburg Line which had been the kernel of the whole conception, and until the days which we are now approaching, it had remained practically over its whole length an impregnable barrier against the assaults of the French and British.

"It is to be remembered that the very basis which justified the expenditure of such enormous labor on the erection of these defenses was the saving in man-power. It is an accepted principle of tactics that in any given battle the advantage always rests heavily on the side of the defense. Where numbers, resources and morale are equal no attack can hope to succeed.

"If, in the teachings before the war, it was correct to say that a Commander should hesitate to attack unless he had a preponderance of men and guns of at least two to one, such a dictum assuredly did not take into account field defenses of the permanent and elaborate character of the Hindenburg Line. I should hardly venture to fix a ratio of relative strength appropriate in such circumstances.

"But this much is clear. The Germans had once already relied successfully upon the impregnability of this great work. They had every justification for believing that it would once again serve them to keep us at bay for just a few weeks longer. Winter was very near and the Entente peoples might not have been able to hold together to face another year of war.

"We, on our part, had as much justification for the resolve that every sacrifice must be made to overthrow these defenses before the end of 1918 and for believing that it would require a great, concerted and intensive effort to succeed in this.

"It is quite necessary, for a due appreciation of the magnitude of the effort which was actually made, and of the wonderful success with which it was rewarded, that the nature of the defenses of the Hindenburg Line should be clearly understood. This can best be done, I think, by making an endeavor to realize the sense of security which the possession of such a line of defense must have afforded to the enemy. We are here inter-

ested only in that portion of the line which extends from St. Quentin northward toward Cambrai.

"Between these two cities the country is higher than that adjoining it on the north and the south. It forms, therefore, a watershed, dividing the basin of the Somme from that of the Scheldt. Early in the nineteenth century Napoleon realized the ambitious project of connecting these two river systems by a great canal scheme, cutting right through this high country from south to north.

"The canal is called, in its southern reaches, Canal de St. Quentin. Before Cambrai is reached it merges into the Canal de l'Escaut. Throughout the whole of that portion which concerns us, it runs in a deep cutting, reaching for great stretches a depth of fifty to sixty feet. In certain places where the ground rises still higher, the canal passes through in great tunnels. The southernmost, or Le Tronquoy Tunnel, near St. Quentin, is but short; the northern, boasts of the imposing length of 6,000 yards, and extends from Bellicourt, at its southern portal, to Le Catelet, at its northern one. From that point northward the canal flows in 'open cut,' which gradually becomes shallower as Cambrai is approached.

"The canal excavation—except where the tunnels occur—itself affords an excellent military obstacle, the passage of which could be stoutly contested by resolute troops well dug in on its eastern banks, for the descent and ascent of the slopes could be obstructed by wire entanglements and swept with fire. The water alone, which is too deep to be waded, would seriously impede infantry, while the passage of tanks, guns and vehicles would be impossible, once the few high level bridges over the canal had been destroyed.

"Such an obstacle would not, however, of itself fulfil the requirements of modern war, with its searching and destructive artillery fire. It was to be regarded as the foundation upon which a complete system of defenses could be built, and as a last line of resistance *a l'outrance*.

"The canal had been, naturally, located by its engineers in the lowest ground available, so that its course closely follows the lines of the minor valleys and depressions of the ground. On both sides, therefore, the canal is flanked by somewhat higher ground, from which its immediate banks can be overlooked. On the western side particularly, there is a regular line of such higher plateaus on which the villages of Villeret, Hargicourt and Ronssoy once stood.

"It was clearly desirable both to deprive a besieger of such vantage ground, and also to provide the canal defenses with a stout outpost defense. For these reasons the Germans had constructed an elaborate system of trenches on a line generally parallel to and on the average a full mile west of the canal. These trenches had been perfected with dugouts, concrete machine-gun and mortar emplacements and underground shelters. They were protected by belt after belt of barbed wire entanglements, in a fashion which no one understood better or achieved more thoroughly, than the Germans.

"But much more remained. Deep communication trenches led back

106th Infantry—Assaulting Troops Covering Entire Front of Division Sector

K Capt. Harry F. Sullivan (w) (e). 2d Lt. Willard M. Webster (k).	I 2d Lt. Louis Peterson (k).	L 2d Lt. Frederick W. Rozeck (k).	F 1st Lt. Alfred J. Hook (k). 2d Lt. York W. Brennan (w).	H 1st Lt. Lennox C. Brennan (w).	C 2d Lt. James A. Malloy (k).	B 1st Lt. Charles Ostberg (k).	A 1st Lt. Gilbert P. Rudkin (k).
M Capt. John F. Callahan (k). 2d Lt. Horace B. Scanlon (k).			E 1st Lt. Thomas F. Ward, Jr. (w). 2d Lt. William H. Boulee (w).	G Capt. John C. Hardy (k). 2d Lt. Lane S. Anderson (k).	D 1st Lt. Matthew J. A. Wilson (w). 1st Lt. Edward L. Ryan (w).		
3d Battalion Capt. William E. Blaisdell. 1st Lt. Chester P. Jones, Adj.			2d Battalion Major James L. Kincaid. 1st Lt. Albert G. Reinert, Adj.		1st Battalion Major Ransom H. Gillet. 1st Lt. Ames T. Brown, Adj.		ATTACHED 4 M. G. 1st Lt. Leaman S. Broughton. 2 T. M. 1 37mm. (Pimple Post)
ATTACHED 4 M. G. 1st Lt. Ivan L. Smith. 2d Lt. James F. Curtis (k). 2 T. M. 1 37mm. (Lemphire Post)			ATTACHED 4 M. G. 2d Lt. William B. Behrens (k). 2 T. M. 1st Lt. Franklin J. Jackson (k). 1 37mm. (Duncan Post)		ATTACHED 4 M. G. 1st Lt. Leaman S. Broughton. 2 T. M. 1 37mm. (Pimple Post)		
Colonel William A. Taylor. Capt. Murray Taylor, Act. Adj. Capt. Arthur V. McDermott, Op. Off. 1st Lt. W. A. Hunter, Jr., Int. Off.				Capt. George E. Bryant, M. G. Co. (k). 2d Lt. Frank S. Paris, Sup. Off. (k).			

2 Companies 105th Infantry		Flank Protection	
K 1st Lt. John D. Snedeker. 2d Lt. Walter W. Slayton.		M 1st Lt. William B. Turner (k). 2d Lt. John J. Rudin (k).	
Reinforced 3:00 p. m. by balance 3d Battalion.			

Det. 102d Engineers
1 officer, 71 men D Co. for wiring. No wire placed. Used for stretcher bearers and ammunition supply. 1st Lt. Edgar M. Whitlock (k). 3 squads E Co. finding and clearing dugouts for Bn. P. C.'s.

12 Tanks of 4th Tank Battalion B. E. F.
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105th Infantry		Support			Co. H to support 2d Battalion 106th Infantry			Co. B to support 2d Battalion 106th Infantry							
L 1st Lt. Thomas G. Carlin. 2d Lt. John C. Cipperly.	I 1st Lt. Alexander Granat. 2d Lt. Harold J. Hobbs.	H Capt. Raymond F. Hodgdon. 1st Lt. James T. Bergen.	G 1st Lt. Earl W. Maxson. 1st Lt. Edward Warschauer.	F Capt. Frank R. Potter. 1st Lt. Lawrence P. Clarke. 2d Lt. Henry E. Van Holland.	E Capt. James S. Slosson. 1st Lt. Eben P. Armstrong (w).	D 1st Lt. Leo F. Giblyn. 2d Lt. Frank J. Baumert.	C 1st Lt. Harry Merz. 2d Lt. Clement A. G. Feldt.	B 1st Lt. Kevney O'Connor. 2d Lt. John T. Clissett, Jr.	A 1st Lt. John J. Callahan. 2d Lt. Stephen B. Elkins.						
3d Battalion Capt. Stanley Bulkley. 1st Lt. Carl G. R. Ross, Adj. 1st Lt. Cary Walradt, Int. Off. 2d Lt. Frank B. Howe, Jr., Trans. Off.		1st Lt. Leonard J. Howard, Sig. Off. 1st Lt. James R. Liss, M. C. 1st Lt. James R. Haigler, M. C. 1st Lt. H. E. Burke, 37mm. (k).		2d Battalion Capt. Charles A. McArthur. 1st Lt. Robert Williamson, Adj. 2d Lt. Llewellyn H. Davis, Int. Off.		2d Lt. Frank P. Buck, Gas Off. 1st Lt. Charles G. Dodd, Trans. Off.		1st Lt. Elmer H. Ormsby, M. C. 1st Lt. Maurice Exiner, M. C.		1st Battalion Capt. Henry Maslin 1st Lt. Ogden J. Ross, Adj.		1st Lt. Harold O. Blakely, Gas Off. 2d Lt. Charles J. Doyle, Int. Off.		1st Lt. James C. Donovan, M. C. 1st Lt. Donald D. Campbell, M. C.	
Colonel James M. Andrews Capt. John W. Frost, Op. & Int. Off. Capt. Lewis H. Gibbs, Adj. Capt. Stephen H. Field, Pers. Adj.		Capt. Robert S. Hall, Attd. Capt. George W. Papen, Jr., M. C. 1st Lt. James C. Donovan, M. C. 2d Lt. Paul A. Florian, Sig. Off.		Capt. Roscoe B. Trumble, Sup. Off. 1st Lt. John F. Mahoney, Sup. Co. 1st Lt. Arther H. Norris, Sup. Co.		1st Lt. George F. Ramsey, Sup. Co. 1st Lt. Michael J. Connery, Sup. Co. 1st Lt. Leonard J. Howard, Sup. Co.		M. G. Capt. Howard Bird 1st Lt. Lester C. Higbee 2d Lt. Archibald B. Gwathmey 2d Lt. Glenn H. Wasson 2d Lt. George F. Evans							

105th Machine Gun Battalion		M. G. Barrage and Special Target Fire	
A (62C. F.17.a.) Capt. Lucius H. Biglow, Jr. 1st Lt. Joseph F. Cook. 2d Lt. Harold L. Downey. 2d Lt. Harry B. Jennings.	B (F.10.b.) Capt. Nathaniel H. Egleston. 2d Lt. George Matthews, Jr. 2d Lt. Richard G. Lyon. 2d Lt. Richard D. McCaskey.	D (F.17.b.) Capt. Stanton Whitney. 1st Lt. Alwyn Ball, 3d. 2d Lt. Bert R. Anderson.	C (F.10.c.) Capt. Robert R. Molyneux. 1st Lt. Edward Flash, Jr. 2d Lt. Joseph G. Galvin.
Major Kenneth Gardner. 1st Lt. Theodore Crane, Adj.	1st Lt. Knowlton Durham, Int. Off. 1st Lt. Raymond A. McLeer, Sup. Off.	2d Lt. Fred. Snare, Jr., Trans. Off. 1st Lt. Archer B. Bass, Chaplain.	Capt. Chas. D. Kayser, M. C. 1st Lt. Joseph Mulcahy, D. C.

106th Machine Gun Battalion		M. G. Barrage and Special Target Fire	
D (Benjamin Trench) Capt. Charles N. Morgan. 1st Lt. George C. Donnelly. 2d Lt. Reginald H. Wood. 2d Lt. Everett B. King.	C (Switch near Bellicourt Road) 1st Lt. Nicholas E. Devereux, Jr. 1st Lt. Walter L. Glass. 2d Lt. John S. Perkins. 2d Lt. Horace Zimmer.	B (Switch near Artaxerxes Alley) Capt. Harold W. Bousfield. 2d Lt. Randolph M. Fuller. 2d Lt. Paul D. Selby. 2d Lt. Harry Von Der Leith.	A (Artaxerxes Post) 1st Lt. Edgar T. Beamish. 1st Lt. Roger R. Wellington. 2d Lt. Myles McDonell. 2d Lt. Earl G. Hawkins.
Major Mortimer D. Bryant. 2d Lt. Lawrence Beattie, Jr.		1st Lt. Harry K. Tebbut, D. C. 1st Lt. Clarence H. K. Blauvelt.	

107th Infantry	Div. Res.
From Haut Allaines (11:00 a. m.) to Ronssoy (11:00 p. m.)	
Colonel Charles I. DeBevoise.	

108th Infantry	Div. Res.
From Tincoirt (11:00 a. m.) to Templeux le Guerard (5:30 p. m.)	
Colonel Edgar S. Jennings.	

104th Machine Gun Battalion	Div. Res.
A 1st Lt. Joseph B. Vanderbilt. 2d Lt. John B. Cummings.	B 1st Lt. Harley W. Black. 1st Lt. Clarence E. Hancock. 2d Lt. Donald Armstrong.
Ste. Emilie	
Major Chester H. King.	

102d Engineers					
F Preparing 2 Reg. P. C.	E (Roisel) 3 squads to 106th Inf.	D 1 off., 71 men to 106th Inf.	C	B	A
2d Battalion Capt. Geo. D. Snyder			1st Battalion Major Harvey Garrison		
Lt. Col. William S. Conrow					

Order of Battle
PRELIMINARY OPERATION
HINDENBURG LINE
SEPTEMBER 27, 1918

K—Killed or died of wounds W—Wounded
C—Captured

to the canal banks, in the sides of which tier upon tier of comfortable living quarters for the troops had been tunneled out. Here, support and reserve troops could live in safety, and defy our heaviest bombardments. They could be secretly hurried to the front trenches whenever danger threatened.

"There was, indeed, a perfect tangle of underground shelters and passages. Roomy dugouts were provided with tunneled ways which led to cunningly hidden machine-gun posts, and the best of care was taken to provide numerous exits, so that the occupants should not be imprisoned by the blocking of one or other of them by our bombardment. But it was the barbed wire which formed the groundwork of the defense. It was everywhere, and ran in all directions, cleverly disposed so as to herd the attackers into the very jaws of the machine guns.

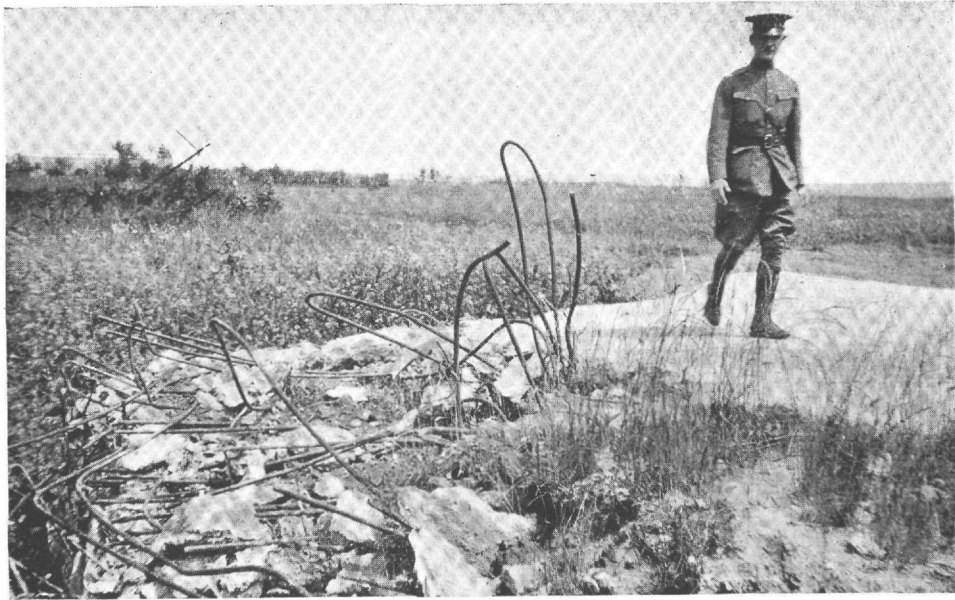
"The Germans had collected large numbers of canal barges and had towed them into the interior of the tunnel, mooring them end to end. They served as living quarters and as depots for stores and munitions. It was no great business to provide electric lighting for the tunnel. Indeed, the leads for this purpose had been in existence before the war. Here again underground shafts and ways were cut to enable the troops rapidly to man the trenches and machine guns, and as rapidly to seek a safe asylum from the heaviest shell fire.

"The whole scheme produced in fact, a veritable fortress—not one, in the popular acceptance of the term, consisting of massive walls and battlements, which as was proved in the early days of the war at Liege and Namur can speedily be blown to pieces by modern heavy artillery, but one defying destruction by any powers of gunnery and presenting the most formidable difficulties to the bravest of infantry."

It will be remembered that the 106th Infantry in preparation for the attack on the outworks took over the entire divisional front. In order to visualize the disposition of the troops of the 53d Infantry Brigade, the reader is referred to the accompanying graphic chart, showing the order of battle of the 106th and 105th Infantry Regiments on the day of the attack.

From this it will be seen that the 1st Battalion, under command of Major Ransom H. Gillet, covered the right third of the divisional sector, with three companies in line and one in support; that the 2d Battalion, under command of Major J. Leslie Kincaid, with two companies in line and two in support, held the center of the regimental line; while the 3d Battalion, commanded by Captain William E. Blaisdell, with three companies in line and one in support, faced The Knoll on the left. The regimental machine-gun company was commanded by Captain George E. Bryant, who was killed in the afternoon of September 27th; the Stokes mortar platoon by First Lieutenant Franklin J. Jackson, also killed on the 27th; the 37 m.m. platoon by First Lieutenant Emann Brandt, wounded on September 29th. The regimental operations officer assisting Colonel William A. Taylor was Captain Arthur V. McDermott; the Acting Adjutant, Captain Murray Taylor, and the intelligence officer, First Lieutenant William A. Hunter, Jr.

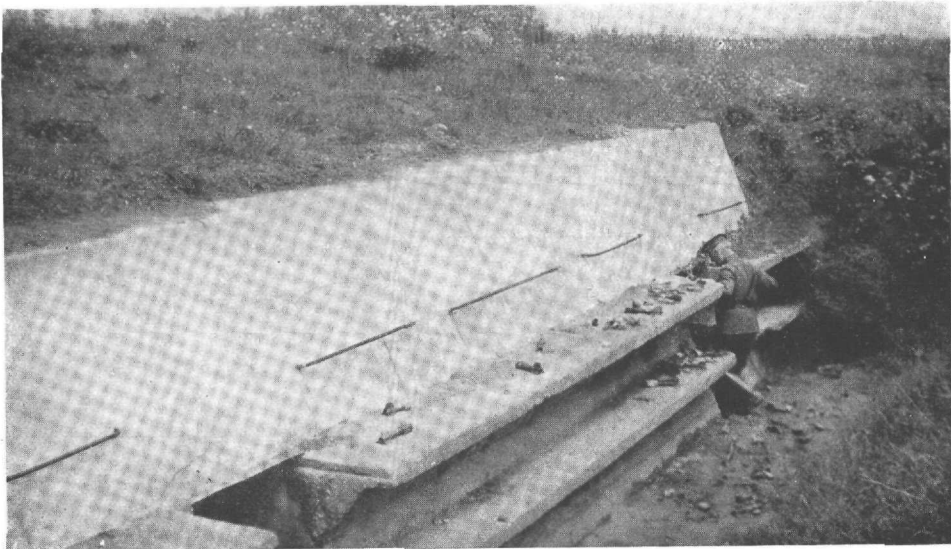
The 105th Infantry, as will be noted from the diagram, had furnished Companies K and M to cover the left of the advance of the 106th Infantry,



Ferro-concrete cap on ground above dugout to make shells burst

the remaining companies of the 3d Battalion, which was commanded by Captain Stanley Bulkley, being held in support, with the remainder of the regiment constituting the brigade reserve.

The attack was to be supported by the 105th Machine Gun Battalion, under Major Kenneth Gardner, and the 106th Machine Gun Battalion, commanded by Major Mortimer D. Bryant. Twelve tanks of the 4th Tank Battalion were to advance with the leading infantry waves, while a detachment of one officer and seventy-one men from Company D, 102d Engineers,



Another type of dugout used in the Hindenburg Line defense near Bony

under First Lieutenant Edgar M. Whitlock, and a detachment of Company E, of the same regiment, were to aid the infantry in consolidating their positions and in the clearing and preparation of dugouts for battalion posts of command. A detachment of the 102d Field Signal Battalion was assigned for the maintenance of communication, repair of wires, etc.

For the benefit of the reader who has not the time nor the inclination to study the orders covering the attack, and which appear in the Appendix, the following summary is given of the features of the attack:

1. The start line for the attack, the objective line and the sector boundaries are shown on the accompanying barrage map. Zero hour was fixed at 5:30 A. M., September 27th.

2. The artillery barrage fired by nine brigades of field artillery, to advance at the rate of 100 yards in three minutes, was to consist of 50 per cent. shrapnel, 35 per cent. high explosive shells and 15 per cent. smoke.

3. The artillery barrage was to be supplemented by a machine-gun barrage fired by two machine-gun battalions of ninety-six guns.

4. Upon the attainment of the objective, the artillery was to provide a protective barrage lasting for thirty-nine minutes to allow for consolidation of the position.

5. Each battalion commander was required personally to see that his start line was marked by tape pegged to the ground. This was to be done under the supervision of the regimental operations officer, the workers being protected by strong patrols along the regimental front. These patrols were to remain out until fifteen minutes before the zero hour, when they were to be withdrawn.

6. Mopping-up parties were detailed from the battalions to deal with machine-gun nests, strong points and dugouts passed over by the advancing troops.

7. The 37 m.m. guns and Stokes mortars were directed to advance with the battalions, so that the fullest use might be made of these auxiliary arms.

8. The supporting machine-gun battalions were to advance their barrage in 200-yard lifts. Four guns from the Machine-Gun Company, 106th Infantry, were to accompany each of the battalions in the advance.

9. Twelve tanks were to move, three with the leading elements of each battalion, and one in close support.

10. Battalion commanders were to select advanced posts of command close to the then present front line, which would be suitable as posts of command after the attainment of the objective.

11. A regimental message center was established in the area of the center battalion.

12. A contact aeroplane was provided to fly over the objective line one and one-half hours after the zero hour, to report position of the leading troops, who were directed to indicate the same by red ground flares, flashing of tin disks and groups of three or four rifles laid parallel across the trench and about one foot apart.

13. Ground taken was to be occupied and organized in depth.

14. Picks and shovels were to be carried in every squad for purposes of consolidation.

15. All extra property, such as overcoats, blankets, shelter halves, extra shoes, etc., were left at company headquarters. Each individual man carried the following:

200 rounds of small arms ammunition.

6 grenades in pockets.

4 sandbags.

1 pick or shovel.

1 extra water bottle filled.

In addition to the foregoing, each company carried a supply of flares, rifle grenades and S. O. S. rockets.

16. Wagons were detailed to the regiment from the divisional trains for the purpose of conveying ammunition from regimental dumps to the battalions in the line at the rate of four L. G. S. wagons per battalion.

17. Main dressing station was established by the 105th Field Hospital, commanded by Major Moses A. Stivers, at Driancourt.

18. Advance dressing stations were established at St. Emilie, by Ambulance Companies No. 106 and 107, and were in charge of Major William J. Cranston.

19. Regimental aid posts were established on the right, two at f.28.a, two at F.28.d, one at L.b.4; and on the left, one at f.16.b, one at F.22.d and two at f.21.b. The station for walking wounded was established at F.13.c.02. See map.

20. Prisoners were all to be conducted to regimental headquarters, from which point they were to be turned over to Military Police detachments, to be marched to the prisoner-of-war cage.

21. Watches were to be synchronized twice the day before the attack.

22. Success signals, consisting of rifle grenades bursting into three white lights, were issued for use, to be fired by officers when troops had arrived at objective.

23. Brigade Headquarters were established at the old post of command of the 106th Infantry, at F.21.b.2.1. at Ronssoy.

In accordance with the program strong patrols were pushed out during the night of September 26th and the tape was laid as prescribed. Watches were synchronized, extra property stored, and necessary supplies, tools and ordnance stores issued. Zero hour was fixed at 5:30 A. M. on the morning of September 27th. At 4:30 the troops were on the tape ready to advance. While going over this battle-field last summer (1920) the writer found a piece of the start-line tape, still stretched out where it was placed on the night of September 26th. A twenty-yard strip of it was kept as a memento. The tape found, stretched along the front of Benjamin Post. It was precisely where it was prescribed by orders to be placed.

At zero hour the ninety-six heavy machine guns of the 105th and 106th Machine Gun Battalions began to fire the machine-gun barrage, each gun firing at the rate of 200 shots per minute. The output of these ninety-six machine guns must have sounded like the buzzing of millions of wasps as they passed over the heads of the infantry lying on the start line. At least this deluge of bullets would have sounded in such manner except for the fact that at the same instant the machine guns opened fire, nine brigades of supporting British artillery flashed out the announcement that the barrage was falling. It may be stated here that German prisoners taken in this attack reported that this combination artillery and machine-gun barrage was very demoralizing to them, as a perfect rain of bullets and shrapnel, accompanied by high-explosive shells, kept them under cover. The eighteen-pounders fired at the rate of three rounds per minute, while the 4.5 howitzers fired at the rate of two rounds per minute.

The 106th Infantry, up to the time of the start, had fared rather fortunately. They went into the battle about 2,000 strong. They had sustained casualties during the taking over of the line and during the day preceding the attack, but these casualties, when one considers how formidable was the position they faced, and how aggressive and determined was the enemy resistance, were not considerable. They were considerable, however, when one considers the regiment's available numbers for the task it was called upon to perform.



One of the British guns at Division Headquarters in the St. Emilie Quarry, firing on the Hindenburg Line



Another of the big guns firing on the Hindenburg Line

Simultaneously with the falling of the barrage, the smoke from the bombs began to mix with the mist rising from the ground, and soon the advance was smothered in a heavy pall of misty smoke, which rendered visibility impossible. All reports indicate that all the companies got away on time and in good spirit.

As soon as our barrage fell, the enemy's S. O. S. rockets, calling for their protective barrages, went into the air. The enemy had been expecting an attack for several days and had kept the foreground well illuminated with star shells during the hours of darkness. In accordance with instructions, the support and mopping-up parties in forming up, were close to the leading elements, in order to avoid, if possible, the effects of the enemy counter-barrage, and in the hope that it would fall behind them. In most parts of the line this resulted.

It is obviously impossible to attempt to describe in any detail or sequence, or with any accuracy, the events which transpired in each platoon during the advance that followed. No survivor of the battle can even attempt to tell what transpired except within the range of his own vision. Throughout the advance the range of vision of the participants was practically nil, due to the mist and smoke. Officers had been provided with luminous compasses, in order to aid them and their commands in maintaining the proper direction. A connected account of the battle of September 27th, so far as details of the fighting are concerned, can only be given by piecing together and analyzing the messages as they came in, the later reports of platoon, company, battalion and regimental commanders, conversations with wounded and prisoners, and the results accomplished.

It might be said at the outset, and speaking generally, that the tanks failed. Those assigned to the division in this battle were British tanks manned by British personnel. In the main attack of September 29th British tanks manned by American personnel were employed. Those assigned to the right battalion failed to get into action. Those assigned the other battalions got into position, but accomplished little. One or more of them with the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 106th Infantry moved around Guillemont Farm and The Knoll and then returned.

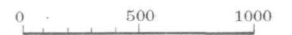
The first message of importance received at Division Headquarters was from the 53d Infantry Brigade Headquarters at 6:46 A. M. September 27th. This message reported that the left battalion had fired its success signal from The Knoll. At 8:40 A. M. another message from the same source, timed at 7:15 A. M., confirmed the first message and reported that 125 to 150 prisoners were coming in. About the same time another message from the same source reported that enemy artillery retaliation on the 106th Infantry was heavy. At 9:30 A. M. a message was received stating that the right and center battalions were on their objectives, but that heavy fighting was going on about Guillemont Farm and Quennemont Farm. Messages also stated that bombing in these localities was continuous. At 9:25 A. M. an observer from the 4th Australian Division, with the left battalion of the 106th Infantry, reported 130 prisoners coming

BARRAGE MAP

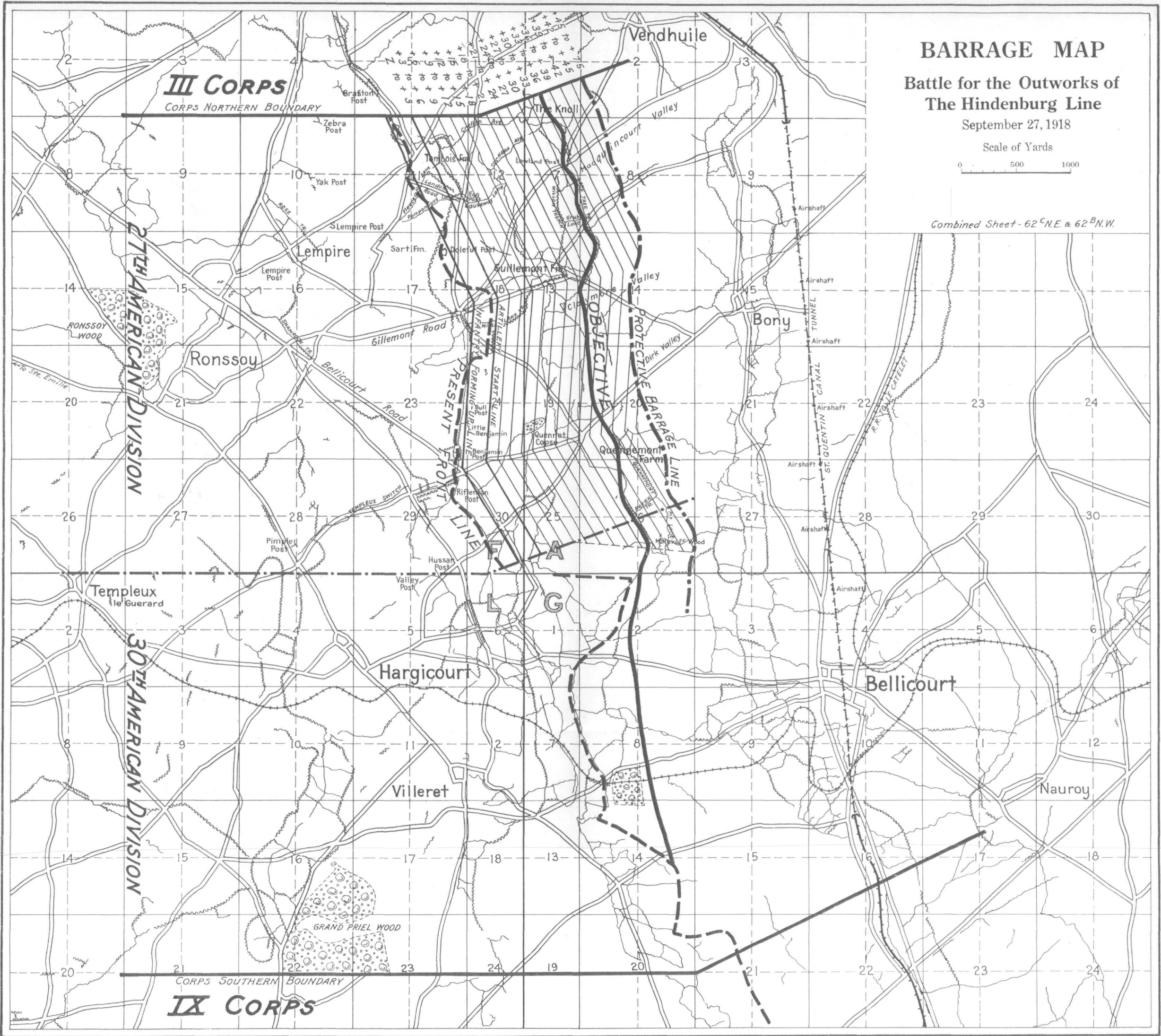
Battle for the Outworks of The Hindenburg Line

September 27, 1918

Scale of Yards



Combined Sheet - 62^{C.N.E.} & 62^{B.N.W.}





One of the tanks which started with the 106th Infantry on September 27th



German machine-gun pit in outpost of Hindenburg Line defense

in. At the same time reports from another Australian observer with the right battalion showed troops of that battalion on the objective in trenches running from A.26.c. to A.26.a, north to the grid line between A.20 and A.26 on the map, but that bombing and hard fighting were still going on. At 11:40 A. M. word was received that the enemy had appeared in force in Guillemont Farm and to some extent in the south Guillemont trenches. At noon Major Kincaid's battalion reported that they occupied Claymore trench from A.19.a to A.20.a, but that Guillemont Farm had not been cleaned up and was giving them trouble; that mopping-up detachments were trying to clear the situation. At 12:20 P. M. the left battalion occupying The Knoll were heavily counter-attacked and driven back, taking up a line in Tombois Farm. Following this, supporting artillery and machine-gun fire was brought to bear on the sunken road in F.12.a. The 106th troops of the left battalion then counter-attacked and drove the enemy into Tombois trench at 12:50 P. M. At 1:25 P. M. the 106th Infantry Headquarters reported that the enemy had counter-attacked the right battalion twenty minutes before and that the situation was not yet clear. In the afternoon the contact aeroplane reported that at 11:15 A. M. it had called for flares, but that none were seen.

The situation along the front continued to be obscure for some time. All reports and observations indicated that very heavy fighting was continuous along the front. This fighting largely consisted of rifle and machine-gun fire and bombing combats. It became obvious that in addition to numerous counter-attacks which had been made by both sides, there were being carried on throughout the acres of the enemy's complicated system more or less continuous combats between small detachments of the 106th Infantry and enemy detachments which had come out from cover after the attacking waves had passed over, or which had been fed into such positions aided by covered ways and the heavy smoke which obscured the field.

Operations officers in forward positions checked by their observations the organization reports received. At 6:30 P. M. one of these officers definitely stated that at 5:00 P. M. The Knoll was again in our possession, as were also Guillemont Farm and Quennemont Farm, but that in all of these places pockets of the enemy remained and were still to be dealt with.

The leading companies in each battalion had followed the barrage to the objective. It might be stated more correctly that the survivors of the leading waves followed the barrage to the objective, for there were many casualties en route, which sadly thinned the line. Due to the heavy fire about Guillemont Farm, the farm itself was rather enveloped than entered, the men getting into the trenches about this place. Usually they were counter-attacked by enemy bombing parties.

From the best information at hand The Knoll was taken three times by the left battalion of the 106th Infantry, aided by Companies K and M of the 105th Infantry, and later by the remaining companies of the 3d Battalion of the latter regiment.

There is no doubt whatever that the survivors of the leading elements gained the objective along the entire front. Numbers of those who went

through the fight reported that they found consolidation extremely difficult, due to the sparsity of their numbers, and the intensity and frequency of the counter-attacks to which they were subjected. In many instances the groups which gained the objective line held on with the greatest tenacity and courage against great odds. In some cases, more particularly on the left, where the fighting was heaviest, some of these groups were surrounded, bombed into submissiveness and taken prisoners. Other groups counter-attacked enemy groups, destroying them, or where possible, taking prisoners.

The objective line, which was attained on the morning of September 27th, was not, however, consolidated, held and made good throughout its length. This comment applies to the 106th Infantry, and as well to the battalion of the 105th Infantry which was to take and hold the trench known as Crellin Avenue in order to protect the left (northern) flank. Whether or not the failure of these units to hold their gains constitutes a ground for criticism of them is another matter; but the fact is that on the night of September 27th a consolidated line had not been established on the objective. The situation along the front out to the objective line might be likened to an inferno, dotted with opposing groups of fiercely contending men. Some of these groups were in the remains of trenches. Some were in concrete pits. Others fought from scattered shell holes.

One explanation of the failure to hold and consolidate the objective line is that the regiment did not completely mop up the territory covered by its advance. This is true. They did not mop up completely or adequately for the following reasons:

The front to be covered, 3,500 yards, necessarily made the leading waves very "thin." As these waves advanced, followed by succeeding waves and the mopping-up parties, and heavy casualties began to be inflicted, gaps were caused in the line, which were filled up by men from the succeeding waves and probably in places by men from the mopping-up parties as well. In some cases this resulted from the action of succeeding elements following on through the heavy smoke screen without encountering others of their own command in advance of them. In other cases the action was probably the result of orders given by platoon commanders in order to prevent too great gaps in the line. Again, the regiment in its forward movement was traveling through such a torrent of machine-gun bullets, shrapnel and shell fragments that the losses were sufficient to practically obliterate some of the mopping-up detachments and in other cases to reduce their combat power to a minimum. These circumstances in themselves would explain the failure of some of the mopping-up parties to cover the areas assigned them.

As has already been pointed out, the regiment was attacking what was probably the most formidable field fortification ever constructed, and which had successfully resisted all previous attempts for its capture. Its defense contemplated that numerous groups of its defenders, occupying screened vantage points, would keep under cover during the artillery bombardment and the passage over them of the leading attacking elements, so that they

might deal effectively from their hidden positions with the very mopping-up parties whose duty it was, advancing in more or less exposed fashion, to locate and destroy them.

Quennemont Farm on the right presented very great difficulties, but due to its distance from the strong flank position at Vendhuile, there was lacking on its front the same intensity of enflading fire that swept the ground about The Knoll and Guillemont Farm. Three companies of the 3d Battalion of the 106th Infantry, namely, Companies C, B and A, in the order named from north to south, attacked on the right battalion sector. They were supported by Company D, which furnished the mopping-up parties across the battalion front. The battalion line extended from Malakoff Farm on the south to Cat Post on the north, both exclusive. It later developed that the mopping-up company had been reduced by one platoon, which had been fed into Companies C and B by the battalion commander in order to furnish replacements to enable the leading companies to cover their front. The leading companies shortly before the attack had sustained a number of shell casualties, which apparently made this action on the part of the battalion commander necessary. Company A and the right platoon of Company D found themselves under terrific fire from Malakoff Wood, as they neared the objective line. Most of the wood was outside the divisional sector and immediately forward of the objective line. They found it necessary to mop up this position in order to insure consolidation. This was done successfully, but First Lieutenant Gilbert F. Rudkin, commanding Company A, was killed while directing a patrol to connect up with the 30th American Division on the right.

One group of Company A, composed of Sergeant Minder, Corporal Arthur L. Giles, Mechanic Gidian Anderson and Privates Walter H. Burry and Leon Davidman, reached the junction of Paul trench and Quennemont Pit Lane at A.20.c.81. They held this piece of trench until Sunday morning, September 29th, at 7 o'clock, when the 108th Infantry passed over them on the way to the tunnel, and they were relieved.

First Lieutenant Matthew J. A. Wilson, commanding the mopping-up company, was wounded about thirty yards in front of Zoo trench, south of Quennemont Farm. Company C, which held the left of the battalion line, and the left platoon of the mopping-up company which followed it, had hard fighting at Quennemont Farm proper. Second Lieutenant James A. Malloy, who commanded Company C, was killed while establishing an out-guard to block one of the trenches. Captain Ostberg, commanding Company B, was killed, and Lieutenant Wilson, commanding Company D, was wounded. In fact, all company officers of the battalion were killed or wounded except Lieutenant Ryan, who went through and somewhat beyond the objective. Lieutenant Ryan had succeeded to the command of Company D when Lieutenant Wilson was wounded. His group were counter-attacked from front and flanks and fell back to trenches and shell holes a short distance west of the first position and there held on.

Major Ransom H. Gillet, commanding this battalion, and his Adjutant,

First Lieutenant Ames T. Brown, had carefully supervised the preparations of the right battalion for the attack.

In the center battalion, Major J. Leslie Kincaid and his Adjutant, First Lieutenant Albert G. Reinert, in like manner had supervised all details affecting a proper start for the battalion. Guillemont Farm was the critical place to be faced by this battalion. Major Kincaid's post of command was at Duncan Post. At one time during the day an enemy counter-attack came through a gap in the decimated line of this battalion, but was stopped by fire action of Major Kincaid's headquarters group, Major Kincaid himself firing a Lewis gun.

Major Kincaid for his exceptionally efficient and meritorious service in this battle was awarded the Distinguished Service Order by the British authorities and the Order of the Crown by the Belgian Government.

During the battle of September 27th the division lost a very capable and brave officer, when Captain John C. Hardy of the 106th Infantry was killed. Previous to the war Captain Hardy, while commanding a company of the 14th New York Infantry during maneuver exercises at Pine Plains, N. Y., was awarded the New York State Medal for Valor for rescuing a soldier from drowning at the risk of his own life. At the time he was killed he was commanding Company G. The only other officer with the company was Second Lieutenant Lane S. Anderson, a very gallant young officer, who was mortally wounded and shortly thereafter died. He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his conduct on this occasion.

In Company F of this battalion First Lieutenant Alfred J. Hook, commanding the company, was killed and the remaining officer with the company, Second Lieutenant York W. Brennan, was wounded. In Company H First Lieutenant Lennox C. Brennan, the only officer with the company, was wounded. In Company E the two officers, First Lieutenant Thomas F. Ward and Second Lieutenant William H. Boulee, were both wounded.

No reports of the battle were made by company officers of the 2d Battalion after the battle, for the reason that all of them had been killed or wounded. In the same battle Lieutenant William B. Behrens, commanding the four machine guns assigned the battalion, and First Lieutenant Franklyn J. Jackson, commanding the Stokes mortars, were both killed.

On the left, the alert young Captain Blaisdell, who commanded the 3d Battalion, was confronted with the most difficult of all the problems as the situation developed, namely, the taking and holding of The Knoll. The Knoll is not an abrupt elevation, but a great flat-topped rise of the ground, nearly every part of which can be dominated by fire from the heights northeast of Vendhuile, while from Vendhuile itself reinforcements could be conveniently fed when counter-attacks were to be made. The battalion post of command was located in a dugout on the southeast side of Lempire Road in F.16.a.19.

First Lieutenant Chester P. Jones was Adjutant of this battalion. He reported that the first message received at the Battalion Headquarters was from Captain John F. Callahan, commanding the mopping-up company of the battalion, one short hour after zero. The message stated that

Company K on the extreme left of the line was badly shattered and that he was moving forward to their support. During the early morning Lieutenant Jones observed the attack from Rose trench at P.10.c.5.5. He later made a personal reconnaissance as far forward as Tombois Road northwest of The Knoll, arriving there at noon, where a considerable portion of Company M were found dug into the bank on the southeast side of the road facing The Knoll. Men of the 105th Infantry were also in this group. Upon returning to the battalion post of command after covering other parts of the line, he found the Battalion Commander had just left to make a personal reconnaissance. When Captain Blaisdell returned he informed Lieutenant Jones that he had gotten shortly beyond Tombois Road and had personal contact with the enemy. It was this part of the line that was subjected to the heaviest counter-attacks.

In the course of one of these counter-attacks Captain Callahan was killed. His body was not found by the burial parties which later went over the field. The current belief is that it was either obliterated or buried by a heavy shell.

Captain Stanley Bulkley, who commanded the 3d Battalion of the 105th Infantry supporting the advance, displayed in this battle the same coolness, force and determination which had characterized his work in Flanders.

Company K of the 105th Infantry, commanded by First Lieutenant John D. Snedeker, which was the left of the two leading companies of the 3d Battalion of that regiment, left their dugouts south of Ridge Reserve, which was immediately north of Ronssoy in F.15.a. and b, at 3:15 A. M., on September 27th. They moved down the trench known as St. Patrick's Avenue, running northeast from Lempire through F.10.a and c. When about one hundred yards past Zebra Post the company left the trench and assumed their attack positions, extending from Braeton Post in F.5.c, to about the northern divisional boundary line. The company therefore was substantially within the area of the 12th British Division on the left. The company connected on the right with Company M of their regiment. Lieutenant Snedeker reported that as the barrage fell and began to move forward, the two companies of the 105th followed it successfully to the objective line, and that he personally sent up the success signal already referred to at 6:05 A. M. They maintained themselves in position throughout the morning. At 11:55 A. M. he received word that the enemy were preparing to counter-attack and almost at the same time our defensive barrage came down. Lieutenant Snedeker, however, reported that the counter-attack did not materialize. He reported that the company was considerably harassed by low-flying enemy planes which shot up their position with machine-gun fire. About noon he received a message from Lieutenant Walter W. Slayton, the other officer with the company, and in response he crawled to Tombois Road and was informed by the lieutenant that the 3d Battalion of the 106th Infantry was disorganized as a result of the attack, and that he, Lieutenant Slayton, was holding Tombois Road with a number of Lewis guns and about thirty riflemen. Later it was found, according to

Lieutenant Snedeker, that his company was well in advance of the British on the left and of the remainder of the battalion on the right; that he feared a counter-attack on the flank would cut them off and enable the enemy to get into the trenches behind them running from Tombois Farm to Braeton Post; that shortly thereafter the Battalion Commander, Captain Bulkley, with Lieutenant Carl G. R. Ross, his Adjutant, reached his position and he secured the Battalion Commander's consent to withdraw his company to the trench immediately in his rear, so as to connect up with the units on his right and left. It is not clear what trench the report refers to, but apparently it is Tombois Road.

Officers of this supporting battalion report that one of their embarrassments was the failure of the left battalion of the 106th Infantry to make good the possession of The Knoll, which left their right uncovered. Reports referred to enforced retirements of detachments of Companies K, M and I of the 106th Infantry. On the other hand, officers of the latter companies report that their difficulties were added to by the failure of Companies K and M of the 105th Infantry to protect their left flank in accordance with the requirements of the mission assigned them.

These divergent views seem to be inseparable from a hard-fought battle. The reports submitted by the battalion did not, however, seem to justify the withdrawal of Companies K and M of the 105th Infantry.

During this battle the 53d Brigade was commanded by Brigadier General Albert H. Blanding, formerly of the Florida National Guard. His Adjutant was Captain Davis T. Dunbar. Both of these officers, as well as Captain Euston F. Edmonds, who was detailed to Brigade Headquarters, performed their battle functions in most determined and satisfactory manner. General Blanding, who also participated in the other battles and engagements of the division, and who remained with the division until about the time of the Armistice, was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for his distinguished and exceptionally meritorious services.

The intensity of the fighting may be sensed from the losses among the officers of the 106th Infantry and the battalion of the 105th Infantry supporting the attack on the left.

In the 1st Battalion all company officers were killed, except Captain Sullivan, who was wounded.

In the 2d Battalion every company officer was killed or wounded.

In the 3d Battalion every company officer but one was either killed or wounded.

In the 105th Infantry Battalion both officers of Company M were killed.

After the battle the men were unanimous in their commendation of the gallantry and determination of the officers who led them, but they all referred to the embarrassment to their coordinated efforts, at the most critical time of the battle, resulting from these losses. It is true that in most companies non-commissioned officers, with great initiative and determination, took over the command of platoons and even companies, and maintained the fight, but from no source will the testimony be stronger than from the enlisted men themselves, of the vital importance in combat

of the commissioned officer in whose experience and judgment the men have confidence.

The division sustained 1,540 casualties in this battle. Detailed statement of these casualties will be found among the statistics in the Appendix.

Some remarkable accomplishments by individual officers and men marked the conduct of the troops engaged, and at the same time throw light upon the fierce character of the fighting.

Sergeant Frank J. Farrelly with a detachment of men of Company D, 106th Infantry, having seized part of an enemy trench and being fiercely opposed, sprang from the trench and advanced rapidly over the open for a short distance to a Lewis gun lying beside a wounded soldier. He seized the gun and promptly attacked the enemy group with its fire, successfully driving them out. For this he received the Distinguished Conduct Medal of the British Army.

Corporal Harry M. Close of Company D, as the smoke screen began to lift, found himself alone in close proximity to a group of thirteen enemy soldiers. Single handed and alone he promptly attacked them, killing three and taking the remainder prisoners. For this he received the Distinguished Service Cross.

Lieutenant Horace B. Scanlon of Company M, 106th Infantry, finding his detachment about to sustain an enemy counter-attack, without awaiting its delivery organized about forty men who were in the vicinity and counter-attacked the enemy force. While conducting this attack he was mortally wounded, calling out to his men as he fell, "Go on fighting, don't mind me." For this he was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

First Lieutenant William B. Turner of Company M, 105th Infantry, led a small group of men forward after they had become separated from the rest of the company in the darkness. He put one enemy machine-gun nest out of action single handed and killed one of the crew of another nest. He continued to lead his detachment over three lines of enemy trenches although wounded three times, and killed several of the enemy in hand-to-hand encounters. Upon reaching the fourth line of enemy trenches, which was his objective, he captured it with the nine survivors of his group and resisted counter-attack until finally surrounded by the enemy and killed.

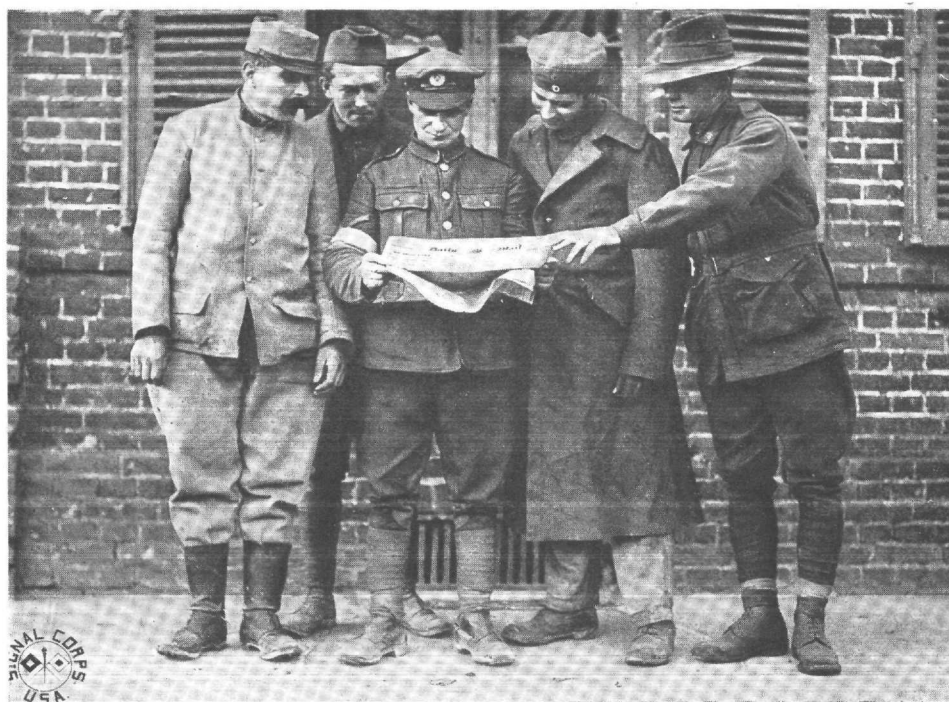
Sergeant Leon R. Matson of Company M, 105th Infantry, was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross for effectively taking over the command of his company after all the officers became casualties.

Sergeant George Schuessler and Corporal Alonzo Holdon, both of Company M, 105th Infantry, at one critical time placed in action a captured enemy machine gun and materially assisted in breaking up an enemy counter attack.

It was in this battle that Sergeant Reider Waaler of the 105th Machine Gun Battalion won the Congressional Medal of Honor for crawling forward under heavy artillery and machine-gun fire and successfully rescuing two men from a burning British tank. He was also awarded the Croix de



Types of German prisoners captured by the 27th Division during the Battle of the Hindenburg Line



The Poilu, the Yank, the Tommy, the Fritz and the Ausie discuss the news

Guerre with palm, the British Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Montenegren Military Medal for his extraordinary valor on this occasion.

An indication of how the leading elements felt throughout this battle may be gathered from the experience of Sergeant Joseph A. Cook, of Company F, 106th Infantry. His platoon was part of the leading wave. They followed the barrage to its conclusion and at the termination he found himself with twenty-five or thirty survivors of the platoon about 150 to 200 yards south and east of Guillemont Farm on the objective line. Looking his men over he found that among them were men from succeeding waves. As the smoke began to lift, he found his platoon out of touch with elements on the right and left and that parties of German troops were in the trenches about him. With these his party was soon engaged in a fierce struggle. An organized counter-attack was broken up and repulsed by the excellence of the rifle fire of his little command. Later, however, the attacks were renewed in the form of bombing attacks down the trenches which the sergeant held. Nevertheless they maintained their position until darkness. They could see and hear the firing in their rear and their experience told them that they were cut off. The sergeant from his position could see German troops filtering their way down the trenches to reinforce the German detachment at the front. Others continued their attempts to surround and close in upon his party. Finally giving up hope of reinforcement and relief by other detachments of the 106th Infantry or by troops of the 54th Brigade, and knowing that destruction or capture was inevitable if he remained, he fell back until he met a patrol of the 107th Infantry which passed the survivors of his party on to the rear.

Privates John H. Rawlinson and Eugene Reynolds of Company K, 106th Infantry, were awarded Distinguished Service Crosses for their extraordinary accomplishment during this battle. They became tangled in a mass of wire and separated from their command in the heavy smoke on the morning of September 27th. Upon disengaging themselves from the wire they came upon an unknown corporal of the 105th Infantry and all three advanced into one of the trenches of the outworks system which they followed cautiously, Private Rawlinson preceding the others, as an advance guard. Coming to a communicating trench, Private Rawlinson looked around and discovered about a dozen enemy soldiers sitting on a fire step. Heavy machine guns were in the parapet. The three soldiers then conferred, with the result that the Corporal and Rawlinson crossed diagonally over the top of the communicating trench, throwing in hand grenades, while Private Reynolds advanced through the trenches and opened fire with his rifle. The surprise was most effective. Several of the enemy were killed or wounded, the survivors crying for quarter. At that moment one or more German officers and a considerable number of men came out of a dugout calling out that they surrendered. They all apparently believed that larger forces of American troops accompanied the soldiers. Private Rawlinson directed the senior German officer to assume command of the detachment and march them to the American lines. The

German officer, unaware that his captors were lost and did not know where the American lines were, marched the prisoners to the rear.

About the time the three soldiers were getting the prisoners out of the trench and to the top, one or more German machine gunners some hundreds of yards distant discerned the men through the lifting smoke and opened fire. A moment later, however, evidently seeing the German soldiers emerging from the trench and not wishing to hit them, fire was suspended. It was necessary for the three soldiers to keep intimidating their prisoners, who, upon gaining the top, were surprised to see no supporting American troops about. The Germans as they emerged from the trench were required to leave their arms behind them. Much to the amazement of Reynolds, Rawlinson and the Corporal the dugouts continued to disgorge men until they had secured somewhere between 80 and 100 prisoners. No attempt was made to count them at that time. They quickly moved off with one of the guards near the head of the column, one near the center and the other bringing up the rear, all with their rifles in readiness. After moving to the rear for several hundred yards they came to an aid station about which were lying a large number of wounded American soldiers. The officer in charge, Captain Walter C. Tilden of the Medical Corps attached to the 106th Infantry, hailed the appearance of the prisoners with satisfaction, for to him they meant litter bearers. Accordingly, he demanded of the captors a sufficient number of prisoners for the purpose indicated. It is not known the exact number of the prisoners used for this purpose, but what is known is that the remainder that were not so employed, numbering 52, were taken further to the rear, where the party met Captain Lewis H. Gibbes, Adjutant of the 105th Infantry, from whom Private Rawlinson asked for a receipt for the prisoners, in order that he might have evidence justifying the absence of himself and his comrades from their commands. This receipt was given on a scrap of paper and read as follows:

“Private Rawlinson, J. H., was detailed by me to guard 52 prisoners to P. O. W. cage. He was at all times on duty.”

Whereupon the 105th Infantry corporal started forward to find his command. In this effort he was evidently killed, for a later attempt to identify him, in order that he might be rewarded for his part in the affair, failed to locate him among the living. Private Reynolds and Rawlinson reached their company and were honored as indicated after the return of the division to the United States.

It has been stated that through the day of September 27th, the fields covered by the attack were the continued scene of hard fighting. With the approach of darkness, the work of evacuating the wounded began. These were scattered all over the battle-field, both Americans and Germans. Many of them were brought in by litter bearers of the 105th and 106th Infantry Regiments, and later during the night by parties from the 54th Infantry Brigade, which took over the line on the night of September 27th. Similar work was being carried out by the Germans, but neither side let up their sanguinary efforts for control of the field. Numerous mêlées continued throughout the night between isolated opposing parties, with the

result that many of the wounded were again hit, while relief parties, which could not be distinguished by either side from combat patrols, were fired upon with machine-gun and rifle fire, when they were observed in the darkness.

It will be remembered that the 54th Brigade were not to be committed to this battle and were not to take over from the 106th Infantry and the supporting battalion of the 105th Infantry until the night of September 27th-28th. Promptly as directed by orders, the 54th Brigade moved forward for the purpose of effecting the relief. The approach to the front when relief is to be made must take place under cover of darkness, and often a relief is not completed until shortly before dawn, particularly when the territory to be taken over is strange to the relieving troops and as well to the troops to be relieved. Accordingly when troops of the 54th Brigade reached the front line from which the 53d Brigade had launched its attack on the morning of the 27th, they found themselves under machine-gun and rifle fire from enemy posts on their immediate front, which prevented further advance without committing the brigade, in violation of orders, to a night attack. The events as they affected the 54th Brigade, properly belong to the story of the attack of September 29th on the main defenses of the Hindenburg Line. Suffice it to say here that patrols of the 54th Brigade spent the night in reconnoitering their front, locating enemy points of resistance which still existed on the battle-field, evacuating wounded of the 53d Brigade and picking up and relieving detachments of the latter brigade still in their front.

Under these circumstances, a night attack delivered by the 54th Brigade as early as possible during the night of September 27th-28th would probably have cleared the field of the remaining points of resistance and would have established and resulted in the consolidation of the objective line for the main attack of September 29th. Such an attack by fresh troops following closely upon the heavy fighting of September 27th would have overcome the fatigued German survivors of the day's battle and would have secured all points of resistance before they could have been secured by fresh German troops.

The plan for September 29th, however, was not to be a divisional or even a corps battle. The entire 4th Army was to make an attack, and the attack itself was but part of a great offensive directed by Marshal Foch. Hence the dominating importance of preserving with unimpaired strength the 54th Brigade, which was scheduled to play so important a rôle in this great coming battle. During the night of September 27th and 28th the German defensive system already described in detail, proved the efficiency of its layout. Under cover of darkness, the German relief troops were pushed out from the main system through the various approach trenches to reinforce the German points of resistance still existing at The Knoll, Guillemont Farm and the Quennemont Farm and as well at other places in the forward positions. In similar manner groups of the 106th Infantry still held on to isolated points in the outworks system where the close of the day's fighting had found them.



Temporary graves of two soldiers of the 27th Division who were buried where they fell, near Le Cateau, France



American plot in British Cemetery at St. Emilie, France, where a number of the 27th Division soldiers killed in the Hindenburg Line Battle were buried. In the foreground Second Lieutenant Summerfield S. Curtiss, Division Burial Officer, checking up graves. To the left may be seen a burial party at work.

The 106th Infantry and the support battalion of the 105th Infantry made a record in this battle for gallantry and determination of which they may well be proud. It is a record which reflects honor upon the manhood of the state of New York, for it is to be remembered that until the active operations were concluded, the personnel of the entire division were almost wholly from the state of New York. These men had gone into battle against the strongest position ever constructed in the field by any army. They had undertaken their mission with a knowledge of the previous failures and losses which had fallen to the lot of the British divisions of the III Corps to bear. They did so with confidence in their ability to win and with keenness for the test of their worth, although they must have believed that their numbers were hardly equal to the demand. The survivors came out of the battle but a remnant of the fine regiment that had so gallantly entered it a short time before. They came out grieved by their losses, fatigued almost beyond description by lack of sleep and nervous strain, many of them suffering slight wounds which they had not thought of sufficient consequence to call for medical attention.

The attack on the outworks of the Hindenburg Line, while not a clean-cut and decisive success for the reasons that have been mentioned, nevertheless constituted a most effective contribution to the great task of breaking through the Hindenburg Line. The enemy's defensive organization of the outworks system was badly shattered. Their communications were largely destroyed. Heavy losses had been inflicted upon them, particularly in and about The Knoll. On the right half of the regimental sector, the ground was quite generally cleared of enemy troops, except for the isolated machine-gun posts in the ruins of Guillemont and Quennemont Farms and at odd places between these two strong points.

The brigade had given a magnificent demonstration of valor and determination on a field which will become memorable in history as the place where one of the fiercest and most important battles of all times was fought.

In the next chapter will be described the battle for the cleaning up of the outworks and for the possession of the main defenses of the Hindenburg Line. But as a part of the story of the effort of the 53d Brigade, it may be mentioned that on September 28th the survivors of the 106th Infantry were informed that they were to be given no opportunity for rest and recuperation, but were to be organized as a provisional battalion to aid in mopping up for the 107th Infantry on the occasion of the attack of September 29th. The details of this will be explained in the next chapter.