

## CHAPTER XX

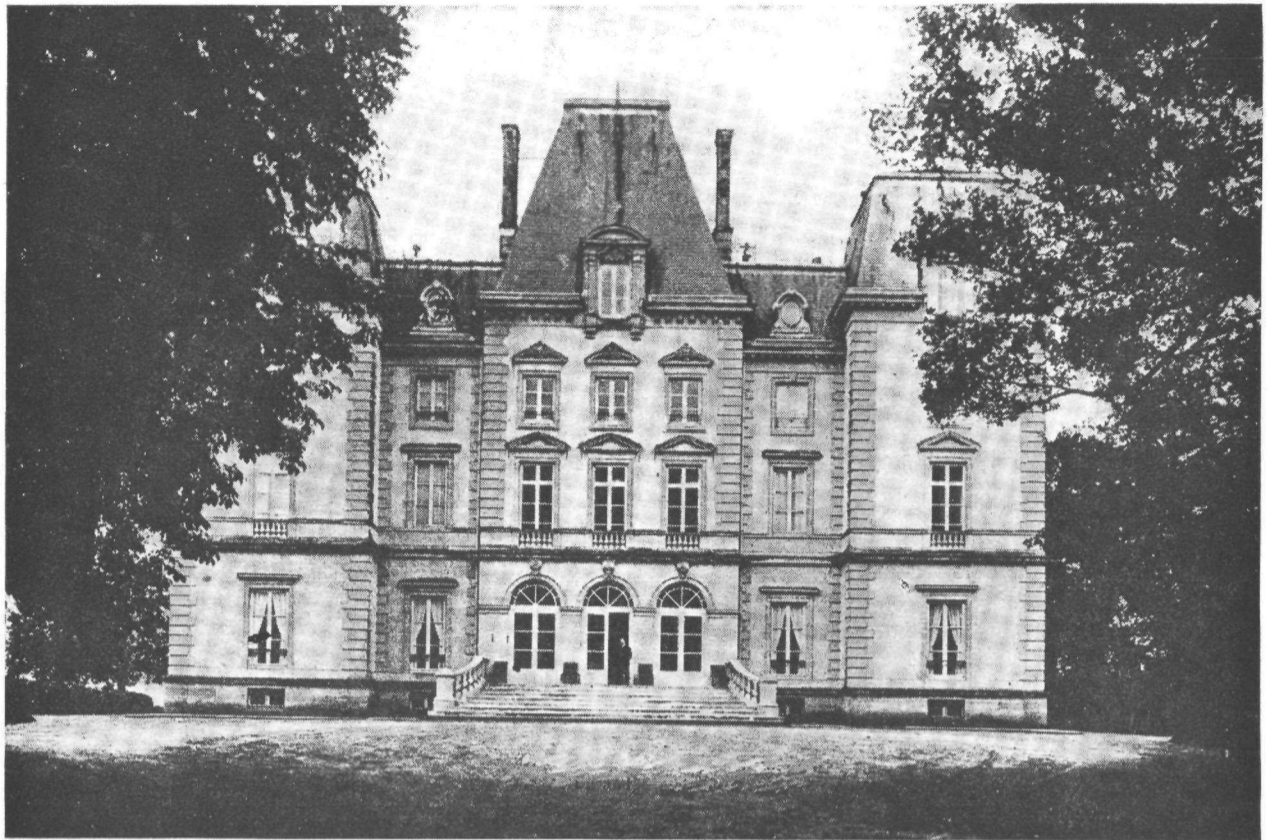
### LE MANS AREA



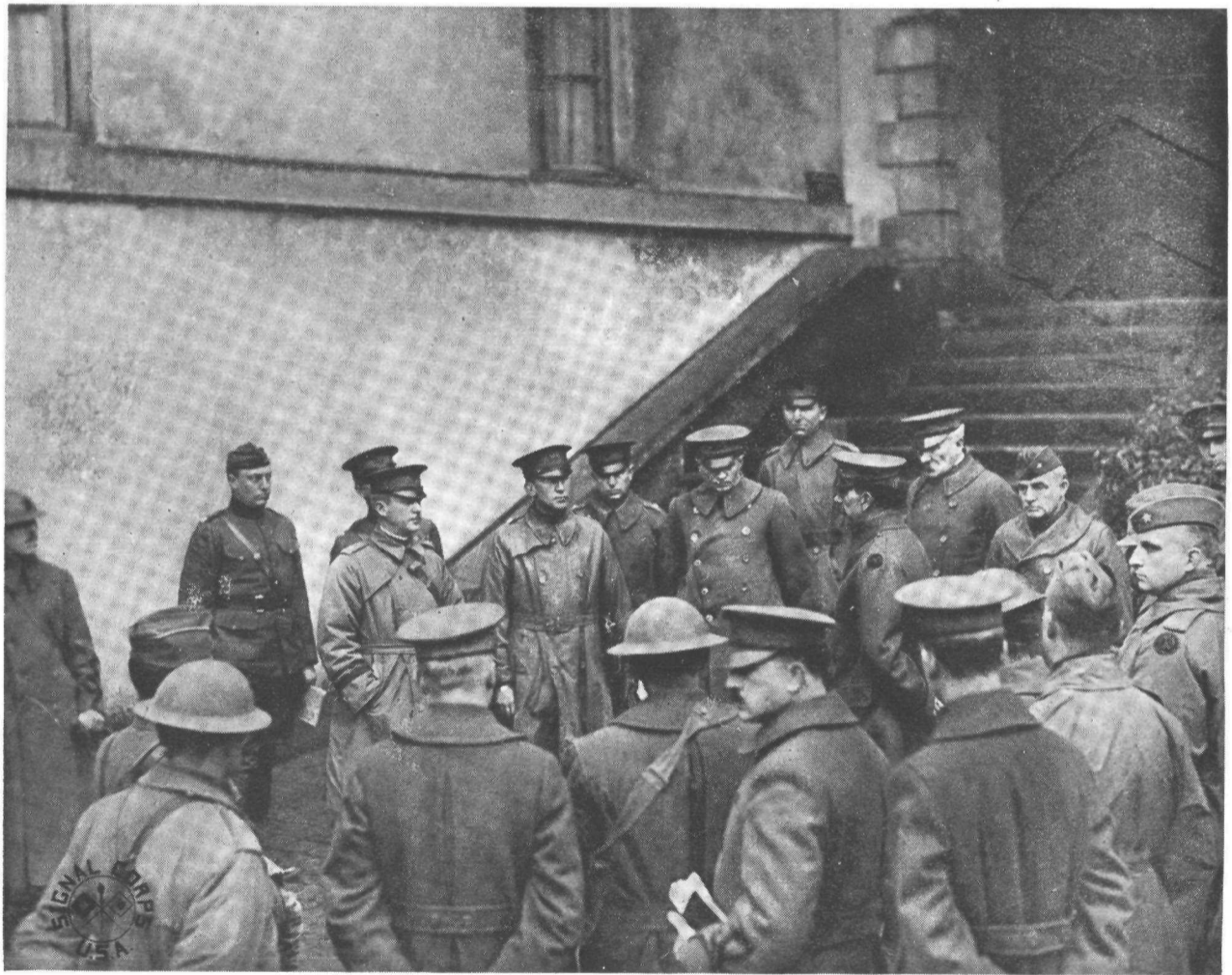
TUESDAY, November 26th, found the major portion of the division entraining or en route for the Le Mans area. Le Mans is a large and interesting city, southwest of Paris. The city is rather noted for the manufacture of high-grade motors. It was to this city that the Wright Brothers went when they sought a light motor to furnish power for the airplane developed by them, when the results of their first attempts to fly in America demonstrated the possibilities of aviation. The country about Le Mans had of course experienced none of the immediate suffering incident to military operations in the war. The terrain was rolling, healthy and attractive.

The task of returning to America an army as large as that of the American Expeditionary Forces required that the troops, before their arrival at the ports of embarkation, should be concentrated in some convenient area where they might be prepared for the homeward voyage. This preparation consisted of accounting for and turning in property not desirable to take back to America, the delousing of the men, where that process was necessary, and furnishing them with new clothing where needed. The Le Mans area was peculiarly well adapted for the purposes indicated. It was sufficiently distant from Paris to remove that attractive city from the immediate environment of the troops. Its location in a general way was on the line between the area of the American army and the ports of Brest and St. Nazaire, and it afforded adequate billeting facilities in the numerous towns and villages that made up the district.

Shortly before the division began its movement from the Corbie area, the Division Commander received a telegram from United States Senator James W. Wadsworth, Jr., who at one time had been an officer in the New York Division, that he had arrived in Paris and desired to visit the division. Senator Wadsworth at the time of the call for the Mexican border service was a first lieutenant in the 1st New York Cavalry, as well as United States Senator from the state of New York. When the call for the border service was made, Senator Wadsworth planned to resign from the Senate and resume his military duties as a subaltern officer. This attitude of loyalty to the military service and to the division was greatly appreciated at the time by the officers and men who knew of it, but when it was found that the Senator, contrary to the advice of his immediate military associates, proposed literally to carry out his purpose, the appreciation of the officers turned into concern, for all knew the importance to the army of the continued service in the Senate of Lieutenant Wadsworth. Accordingly the Division Commander and other officers made known their views to Senator Wadsworth and he was dis-



*Division Headquarters at Montfort*



*Critique in the courtyard of the chateau of Count de Nicolay at Montfort following divisional exercises*

MAP SHOWING  
DISPOSITION OF UNITS  
**27<sup>th</sup> DIVISION**  
IN THE  
**LE MANS AREA**



LEGEND

- |                  |       |           |       |
|------------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| FIRST CLASS ROAD | ===== | RAILROADS | ----- |
| SECOND " "       | ===== | RIVERS    | ~~~~~ |
| THIRD " "        | ----- | WOODS     | ⊘⊘⊘   |

2 1/2 Kilo. VOLNAY  
Co. D. 105<sup>th</sup> INF. SCALE



suated from permitting his military ardor to interfere with his paramount duty to the people. The division went to the border, and while there had the pleasure of a visit from Senator Wadsworth on Thanksgiving Day at McAllen, Texas. The following Thanksgiving Day, when the division was at Camp Wadsworth, Senator Wadsworth again spent the holiday with his old comrades of the division, and then said that no matter where the division might be in 1918, he would, if it were at all possible, spend Thanksgiving Day with the officers and men. True to his promise, he had arrived in France for the purpose mentioned. At least he had so arranged his official business in France as to be able to spend Thanksgiving Day with the 27th Division.

The Division Commander met Senator Wadsworth in Paris on Wednesday, November 27th, and with him continued on to the Le Mans area the following day. Senator Wadsworth spent several days with the division, visiting most of the units before leaving the area for home.

Midway between Paris and Le Mans lies the ancient city of Chartres, with its interesting cathedral and numerous points of interest. Many of the officers and soldiers of the division whose duties occasionally took them to Paris after the division arrived in the Le Mans area will remember Chartres.

The Division Headquarters was established in the village of Montfort. A number of the officers of Division Headquarters were billeted and provided with every convenience and facility at the chateau of the Count de Nicolay, who left nothing undone to make the stay of the officers agreeable.

The new area is shown on the accompanying map.

With the arrival of troops in the Le Mans area, it was natural for the mass of the men to believe that this was but a short and intervening step preliminary to boarding the transports. About this time the American troops began impatiently to look forward to the commencement of the homeward voyage. The war was over. As a result of the participation of American troops, victory to the Allied cause had resulted. The mission had been accomplished. Why, therefore, remain in France? This impatience of the soldiers promised to result in a serious problem for the Division Commanders of the army. In the case of the 27th Division, however, the feeling of impatience was not marked. The division in a sense constituted a homeland. These remarks have no application to the replacements that had been received during the period of the division's service in the Corbie area. The replacements were new men. However, public opinion, if it may be termed such, was dominated by the veterans, most of whom had been in the division for several years. Most of them remembered the impatience of the troops to return from the Mexican border after it became clear that there was to be no fighting, and they, more than the others, realized that it was a physical impossibility to transport the entire A. E. F. back to America in a short period of time. It was inevitable that even if the troops were sent back in an uninterrupted stream and at the rate of 200,000 men per month, it would take ten months

before the last detachment could embark. A more pertinent question among the men of our division was, "What will be the order of the departure of divisions?" Would the division embark within a month or would their turn not come before ten or more months had elapsed?

It is common knowledge that a large body of men are peculiarly susceptible to unhappiness if they are kept in comparative idleness, and that, on the other hand, active work and physical effort make for the maintenance of interest and happiness. Division Commanders were reminded of this principle by General Pershing. The division had hardly completed its movement to the Le Mans area when plans were developed for interregimental competitions in all fields of activity. These included not only athletic events, but tests in marching, precision at ceremonies, combat exercises, condition of transport and animals, etc.

For a time the newer men seemed mystified concerning the great industry displayed on all sides in relation to development of company, battalion and regimental efficiency. Some of them believed that this activity foreshadowed a movement to the Rhine. After a time, however, they understood the importance of keeping hard at work during the waiting period. As a result of the previous hard field service, when men were required to sleep in dugouts, shelters and cellars infested with vermin, they had become infested with lice and other parasites. These pests were evicted with the greatest difficulty. This sanitary work required constant supervision and inspection. It was essential also that the billets of the new area should be kept in proper sanitary condition to prevent reinfection. Portable delousing machines were obtained and moved about as required. Other machines were improvised. Everywhere in the billeting areas men were to be seen at improvised baths, engaged in washing their bodies and underclothes. The washing of the latter garments was usually ineffective unless the washing process was followed by pressing with a hot iron. Simultaneously with this work a great effort was made to increase the smart appearance of orderly rooms, billets, stables, corrals, picket lines, motor transports, shops, storehouses and vehicles. The rivalry among companies, battalions and regiments was keen. Great attention was given by the best drillmasters to the instruction and training of the replacements.

More replacements arrived. The division began once again to resemble in numbers a war strength division. Toward the end of December great progress had been made in the training of replacements. This progress was augmented by the fact that the mass of the replacements were exceptionally fine material from the military point of view. Before coming to the division their experience had in most cases been unhappy. Some of them belonged to divisions that had been broken up. Their pride and morale had been badly damaged in consequence. They still talked to their new comrades of the injustice done them. None of them viewed with anything but apprehension the prospect of being assigned to a division that had seen a great deal of hard service and whose men would be able to tell of battle participation which had been denied them. This



*Officers of the 27th Division. Picture taken at the chateau of Count de Nicolay at Montfort on New Year's Day, 1919*

situation, however, had been anticipated, and the veteran officers and men of the division had been advised of the importance of welcoming the new men with enthusiasm and good will. With their usual loyalty they followed this advice. In the infantry regiments the band was paraded to greet incoming detachments of replacements. Without delay the replacements were assigned by detachments to the various company units, where they were received in appropriate and hospitable fashion and made to feel that their arrival was an event. A substantial percentage of the replacements had been moved from pillar to post from the time of their arrival in France until their assignment to the 27th Division, and in the case of such men the new life was, comparatively at least, most enjoyable.

Months before this period the division had adopted a divisional emblem, but no authority had existed to permit the officers and men to wear it. Later, however, the American General Headquarters had authorized the adoption of divisional insignia, subject to the approval of the Commander in Chief. The insignia selected by the 27th Division was approved shortly after the arrival in the Le Mans area, and a telegram had been sent to a firm in America to ship to the division in France some

thousands of these insignia. These arrived after a large number of replacements had joined the division and the question immediately arose among the men as to whether the new men who had not taken part in battle should be permitted to wear this proud emblem of their accomplishment. It is a commentary upon the generosity and good will of the veterans that they acclaimed the divisional order which made no distinction between veterans and replacements in relation to the wearing of the divisional insignia. The only distinction made was that no soldier was permitted to wear the insignia unless he had passed an examination by a commissioned officer of his company certifying to his character as a soldier and his reasonable efficiency in the performance of the duties of his grade. Names so certified were published on company orders. It was a military offense for a soldier to wear the insignia unless authorized by official order of his command. The psychology of this was so profoundly correct that hundreds of the newer men worked overtime under drill sergeants to qualify themselves to pass the prescribed examination.

It may be stated here that the military courtesy of the division during the period of the stay in the Le Mans area reached a state of precision and smartness that left nothing to be desired.

After the division had been in the Le Mans area for some time, the Division Commander began to receive a large number of cablegrams, messages and official communications commending the valor and battle accomplishment of the officers and men of the division. The official commendations were published in bulletins for the information of the personnel of the division.

One of the first letters received by the Division Commander was one written by Major General Gellibrand, commanding the 3d Australian Division, which command, it will be remembered, was in support of the 27th Division during the Hindenburg Line attack. The letter follows:

FRANCE, October 14, 1918.

GENERAL:

On behalf of all ranks of the 3d Australian Division, I desire to express our sincere appreciation of the fighting qualities displayed by the 27th Division U. S. on the 27th and 29th September last. The gallant manner in which your troops faced an extremely difficult task, the determination of their attacks on a strongly entrenched position, and the undaunted spirit with which they met their losses make us hope that we shall again have the honor of fighting alongside the division under your command. The confidence of the men in their officers appealed to us as a particularly happy omen for the future successes of the 27th.

Very respectfully,

(Signed) I. GELLIBRAND,  
Major General,  
Commanding 3d Australian Division.

On October 19th the following message received by General Read, commanding the II American Corps, was repeated by him to the 27th Division.

COMMANDING GENERAL, 27TH DIVISION :

The following repeated for your information: The Commander in Chief desires you to convey to the officers and soldiers of your corps his appreciation of the magnificent qualities which have enabled them, against powerful resistance, to advance more than ten miles and to take more than six thousand prisoners since September 27th.—McANDREW.

On November 22d the Division Commander received the following letter from Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, Commander in Chief of the British Expeditionary Forces, transmitted through Major General Read, commanding the II American Corps:

Now that the American II Corps is leaving the British zone, I wish once more to thank you and all officers, non-commissioned officers and men under your command, on behalf both of myself and all ranks of the British armies in France and Flanders, for the very gallant and efficient service you have rendered during the period of your operations with the 4th British Army.

On the 29th of September you took part with distinction in the great and critical attack which shattered the enemy's resistance in the Hindenburg Line and opened the road to final victory. The deeds of the 27th and 30th American Divisions, who on that day took Bellicourt and Nauroy and so gallantly sustained the desperate struggle for Bony, will rank with the highest achievements of this war. They will always be remembered by the British regiments that fought beside you.

Since that date, through three weeks of almost continuous fighting, you advanced from one success to another, overcoming all resistance, beating off numerous counter-attacks, and capturing several thousand prisoners and many guns. The names of Brancourt, Premont, Busigny, Vaux-Andigny, St. Souplet and Mazinghien testify to the dash and energy of your attacks.

I rejoice at the success which has attended your efforts and I am proud to have had you under my command.

(Signed) D. HAIG,  
Field Marshal.

A day or two later Major General Read sent the following communication to the Division Commander:

Referring to the telegram from the Commander in Chief, of appreciation of the sacrifice and service of the troops of the American Expeditionary Forces, I feel that it should be impressed upon the men of our command that they, and the organizations to which they belong, have played an exceptional part in bringing about the magnificent results which the Commander in Chief has so warmly eulogized, and that every advantage should be taken of this expression of what has been done in the past and confidence as to the future by those in command to inspire their men with pride in the service they have had as soldiers in the army of the United States, and to keep alive this "proud consciousness of a new Americanism born of sacrifice."

I would request that you convey to your command my appreciation of the part they have taken in our great victory, and my thanks for their heroic devotion to duty; and that I share with them their sorrow for fallen comrades, and their pride in the high achievements of the men of this corps.

(Signed) G. W. READ,  
Major General, Commanding.

Another commendation received on December 6th was from Sir Henry Rawlinson, commanding the 4th British Army, commending the work of the 102d and 105th Regiments of Engineers. The letter follows:



1. I wish to express to you my thanks for and my appreciation of the excellent work done by the 102d and 105th Regiments of Engineers, whose services you were good enough to place at my disposal.

2. The work done by these two regiments on the light railways was of the greatest value in getting through the system of light railway communication which, owing to the continuous destruction of the broad gauge lines by delay action mines, was the means by which it was possible to maintain the troops and continue the fighting which led to such great results.

3. I will be glad if you will be so good as to convey to Colonel A. H. Acker and Colonel J. H. Pratte, commanding respectively the 102d and 105th Regiments of Engineers, and to the officers, non-commissioned officers and men of these regiments this expression of the keen appreciation with which their valuable and cordial cooperation has been regarded by all ranks of the 4th Army.

H. R. RAWLINSON,  
Commanding 4th Army.

The following cablegram was received during the first week in January from Honorable Charles S. Whitman, Governor of the State of New York:

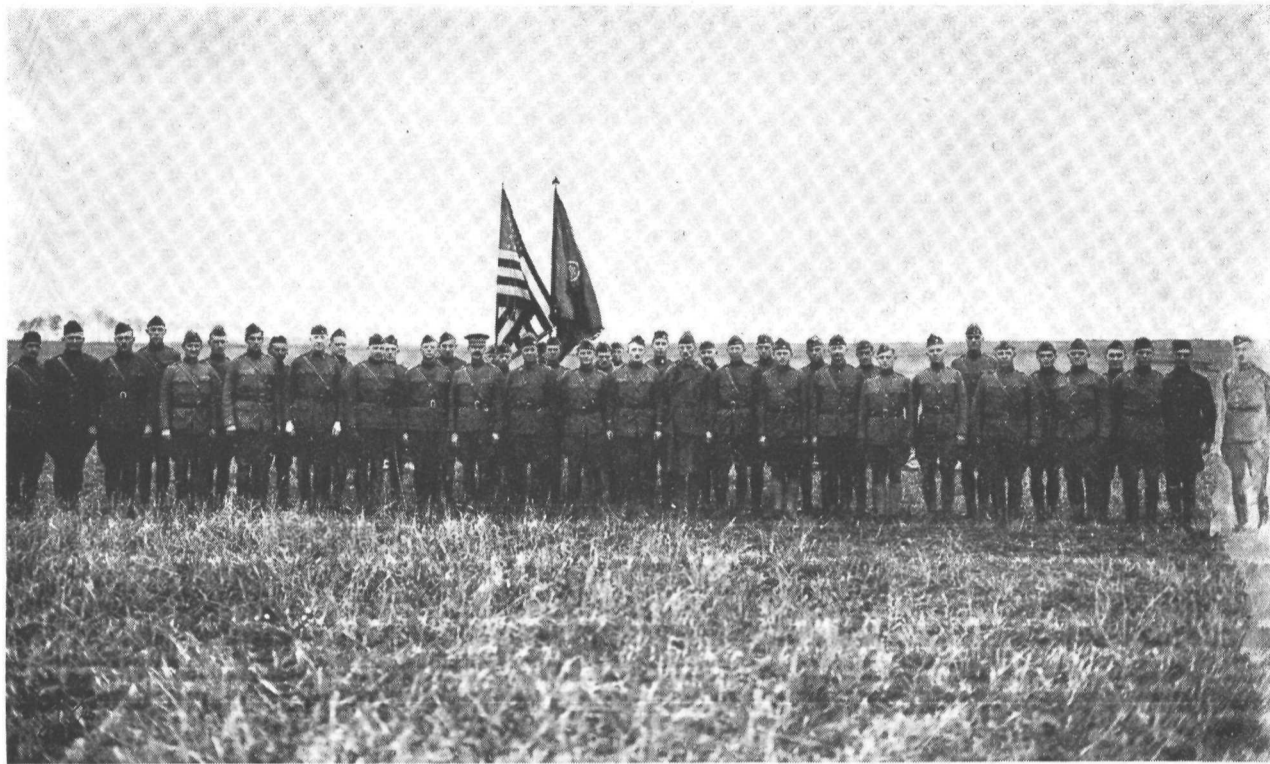
MAJOR GENERAL JOHN F. O'RYAN,  
27TH DIVISION,  
AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES:

New York State extends to the gallant officers and enlisted men of the 27th Division heartfelt greetings for the new year, with grateful and loving pride in their glorious achievements on the historic battle-fields of France in the cause of liberty and humanity. A year of accomplishment and heroic sacrifice has passed with victory won. A new year is breaking upon us. May it give to the civilized world the joys of peace and good will.

CHARLES S. WHITMAN,  
Governor of New York.

On December 3d a new leave area was established for the 27th Division. This was at St. Malo on the northern coast of Brittany, an old and most interesting seaside resort. Orders provided that leaves of absence for seven days' duration, exclusive of time necessary for travel to and from destination, were authorized for officers and enlisted men in accordance with the provisions of General Orders No. 6, of General Headquarters, 1918. The leaves were so arranged that men were daily departing and daily returning after the first leave period had expired. This plan was carried out on the basis of two per day from Division Headquarters, three from the Trains and Military Police, two from the Sanitary Train, four from the Engineers, one from the Engineer Train, two from the Signal Battalion, one from each Brigade Headquarters, two from each machine gun battalion, eight from each infantry regiment and one every two days from smaller units. It was later noted that the men profited greatly as a result of the rest and change of environment resulting from these leaves.

During December and January there were periodical field exercises employing the entire forces of the division. These were usually supervised by the II American Corps. The critiques following these exercises were most instructive, particularly to the officers of field grade. Always, however, the newer men seemed puzzled concerning these military activities.



*Officers of the 107th Infantry. Left to right: Lieutenant J. S. Snyder, Company M; Lieutenant W. R. Smith, Supply Company; Lieutenant Harry F. Allen, Headquarters Company; Lieutenant O. A. Albright, Company H; Lieutenant Charles P. Gray, Sanitary Detachment; Lieutenant A. L. Bibbins, Company G; Lieutenant Hiram W. Taylor, Supply Company; Lieutenant Jesse M. Hughes, Company D; Captain Henry B. Heylman, Personnel Adjutant; Lieutenant Luther M. McBee, Jr., Company B; Captain Douglas C. Despard, 53d Brigade Adjutant; Lieutenant Joseph P. Murphy, Company I; Captain Edward H. Kent; Lieutenant Edwin L. Holloway, Company H; Brigadier General Charles I. De Bevoise, commanding 53d Brigade; Lieutenant Alexander E. Ostrander, Company K; Lieutenant Colonel Mortimer D. Bryant, commanding the regiment; Lieutenant William G. LeCompte, Company F; Major Thomas J. Brady; Lieutenant Eugene L. Mullaney, Headquarters Company; Major Raymond A. Turnbull, Sanitary Detachment; Chaplain Peter E. Hoey; Captain Rowland Tompkins, Company H; Lieutenant William J. Coogan, Sanitary Detachment; Captain K. C. Wilson, Headquarters Company; Lieutenant Albert N. Benedict, Sanitary Detachment; Captain F. P. Riggs, Sanitary Detachment; Lieutenant R. C. Johnson, Company G; Lieutenant Edwin S. Munson, Company C; Captain Henry A. Bancel, Sanitary Detachment; Lieutenant G. B. Daniell, Company K; Lieutenant Claude G. Leland, Company I; Lieutenant Georges D. Bragdon, Company E; Lieutenant Herbert F. Shaver, Company A; Captain David C. Bull, Sanitary Detachment; Captain John A. Korschen, Company F; Chaplain H. M. Stewart; Lieutenant F. D. Conklin, Company A; Lieutenant Arthur Talbot, Headquarters Company; and Lieutenant John A. Nelson, Headquarters Company. Taken in Corbie, France, on November 10, 1918.*

They seemed to suspect that the intense activity indicated preparation for other military operations.

About December 15th the 52d Field Artillery Brigade rejoined the division, General Wingate establishing Brigade Headquarters at Laval near Le Mans.

On Friday, December 18th, the entire day was utilized in the conduct of a terrain exercise. This and other similar exercises were carried out as actual operations, a large staff of officers from the corps and from the 30th Division acting as umpires. On occasions when the 30th Division was occupied in similar exercises the 27th Division was called upon to

furnish umpires. Friday, December 20th, was devoted to a divisional exercise in liaison.

During this period and until after the Christmas holidays many visits were made by the officers and men to their comrades of other units of the division stationed near by. On particular occasions these visits were for the purpose of attending company, battalion or regimental dinners. In some units where the billet afforded the requisite facilities, the dinner was held at the station of the unit, while in other cases hospitality was provided for at a hotel or restaurant. For units stationed near Le Mans the hotels and restaurants of that city provided excellent and attractive facilities. The Division Commander entertained the Brigade Commanders and the general officers of the II American Corps and 30th Division, and in turn visited these officers on occasions of formal and informal dinners.

On Saturday, December 21st, Major General Read entertained the senior officers of the 27th and 30th Divisions at dinner at the magnificent chateau at Bonnetable, where he was billeted. The 27th Division theatrical troupe provided the entertainment for the evening.

Great preparations were made in all commands for the Christmas holidays. Christmas is not celebrated in France as it is in America and



*Lieutenant Colonel William L. Hallahan, Division Signal Officer, and officers of the 102d Field Signal Battalion*

it was with much wonderment that the children in all the villages watched the preparations for the celebration. Wherever possible, a large Christmas tree was secured and erected in the "Grande Place" of the village or town. On Christmas Eve these trees were decorated and fitted with candles. Officers and men had contributed generously to the Christmas funds and this made it possible for the various committees to purchase at Le Mans large quantities of inexpensive toys to be given the children. During the entertainments soldiers wonderfully camouflaged as Santa Claus appeared and distributed the gifts to the enthusiastic and grateful children. Undoubtedly every American soldier thought of some American youngster near and dear to him as he handed out or witnessed the presentation of these presents to the youngsters of France.

At the Division Headquarters Christmas Eve celebration, Colonel Montgomery, the Division Surgeon, appropriately dressed as Santa Claus, distributed presents to the officers. These presents were of such a character as to indicate some foible of the donee. The ceremony was carried out with the mirth usually attending such occasions.

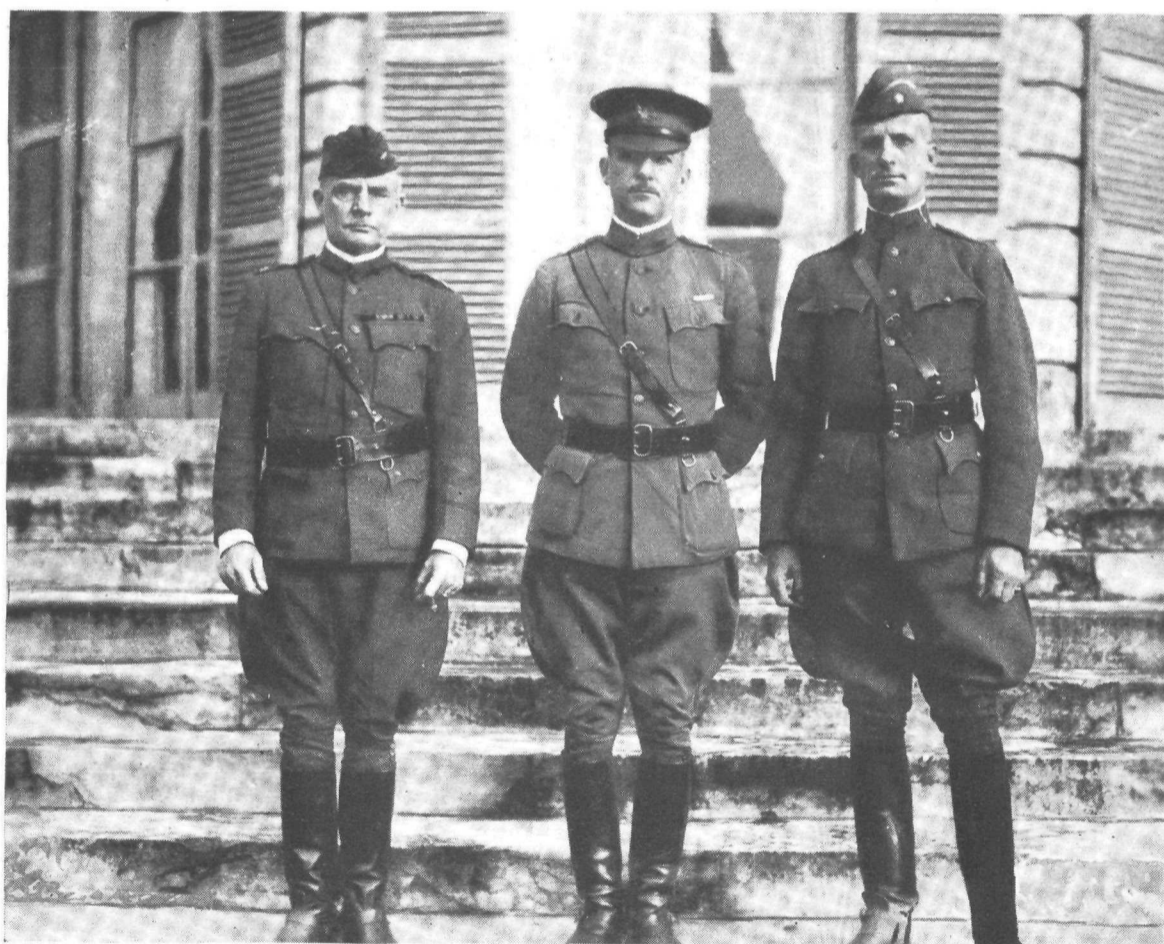
During the month of December, and in anticipation more particularly of the Christmas holidays, a large soldier choir was organized. In this choir was gathered the best singing talent of the division. After several weeks of training they were qualified to play their rôle in any form of religious service. They could sing one or two of the masses of the Catholic church; they knew the best Methodist hymns, and they could sing appropriately at a Jewish service. Chaplain Kelley, then assigned to Division Headquarters, arranged for a midnight mass at the Catholic church adjoining the chateau of the Count de Nicolay at Montfort and invited the choir to sing the service. The invitation was accepted and the people of the village were invited to attend. The church is large and normally swallows up the congregation of the village. On the occasion of Christmas Eve, however, all the soldiers that could be accommodated apparently attended and left little room for the native population. The latter must have believed the Americans to be very devout. Although there were undoubtedly a great number of Catholic soldiers present, their numbers were heavily reinforced by their comrades of other denominations. The choir sang most impressively. Privates Judson House, of Division Headquarters, and M. White, of the 102d Engineers, were the soloists.

Christmas day, of course, was marked by a Christmas dinner in every company unit of the division. There were no turkeys, but there were excellent substitutes, and what the soldiers most appreciated were the "seconds," and in many cases "thirds" and "fourths," that were allowed. To the uninitiated it is necessary to explain that the soldier is always hungry, and that "seconds" signifies a second helping.

It was expected that the week intervening between Christmas and New Year's would be a week of jollification. However, very much of the time was occupied in strenuous field exercises.

Prior to the Christmas holidays it had been announced by the Corps Commander that shortly after January 1st an inspection would be made

by a board of officers from the corps for the purpose of determining the best infantry regiment and best machine gun battalion in the corps, merit to be determined by precision of drill, soldierly bearing and smartness, condition of equipment and of the animals, harness and vehicles of the transport. In preparation for this test divisional inspections were held during the Christmas holidays for the purpose of determining the best infantry regiment and machine gun battalion within the division. When such units were selected, they were to represent the division in the corps tests. Great interest was manifested in these competitions. All canvas equipment was thoroughly scrubbed and refitted. Packs were made up with most meticulous care, steel helmets were repainted and varnished and all animals groomed to a standard approaching perfection. Particularly did the men of the machine gun battalions and the infantry transport lavish attention upon the animals, harness and vehicles. A great amount of time was expended in the preparation of the animals to meet the test. The chains of the harness were polished with sand until they glistened. All harness was placed in excellent condition, while the vehicles were scrubbed and repainted and the brass hub caps highly polished. As a result of the zeal shown in preparation for the competition, it was most difficult to determine what organization should be selected to represent the division. A board of divisional officers rated all units in accordance with a formula laid down for the purpose. The result of



*Left to right: Brigadier General L. L. Durfee, commanding 54th Infantry Brigade; Major General John F. O'Ryan, commanding 27th Division; Brigadier General George Albert Wingate, commanding 52d Field Artillery Brigade*



*Brigadier General Charles I. De Bevoise, commanding 53d Infantry Brigade, formerly commanding 107th Infantry, conversing with Captain Thomas J. Brady, Operations Officer of the 107th Infantry*

the competition was that the 107th Infantry was selected as the infantry unit and the 105th Machine Gun Battalion as the machine gun unit to represent the division. The 106th Infantry was a very close second to the 107th in this competition. During the time these competitions were under way it would be difficult for the most exacting officer to imagine troops presenting a more soldierly appearance than those composing the competing organizations. The two units selected were prepared to meet the corps test and looked forward to the competition with the greatest confidence. However, a few days before the corps competition was to take place, orders were received from the Corps Commander that the competition would not be held.

Christmas holidays were marked by the publication of a new number of *The Gas Attack*, the division's magazine. This number was published by a printing firm in France. It was produced with much difficulty and the exercise of considerable initiative on the part of the soldiers responsible for its production. The foreword, written by the Division Commander, gives the atmosphere of the time, and for that reason it is reprinted here. The illustrations contained in the number, as well as the reading matter, are most interesting, but space does not permit their republication in the history. The foreword follows:

We are all glad to have a Christmas number of *The Gas Attack*. With the enterprise and thoroughness so characteristic of our men, those charged with the

work of producing this number accomplished their mission in the manner shown by its pages. They are indeed to be congratulated.

Our last Christmas number was published in Spartanburg, S. C. Very much has transpired since then. We have come overseas. We have served and fought in Belgium and in France. It fell to our lot to take part in what doubtless will be regarded as one of the greatest battles of this greatest of all wars. The valor of our officers and men, their determined skill in action and their tremendous pride in their organizations, have been the subject of such continued praise, and from such eminent sources, that no further reference to them need be made here.

I have said that much has transpired since the appearance of our last Christmas number. Much indeed, for the soldiers of the division today are not the same men who came with the division to France. They may answer to the same names and there may be a resemblance so far as outward appearances are concerned. In those mental qualities, however, which individualize men and distinguish them from others—in those qualities our men are new men. They are not the men we brought to France. They are not the men we brought to France because they are products of a new and extraordinary life, an existence that may be likened to the process employed for the production of steel. For our men have been through the crucible. They are the survivors of every character and intensity of fire. They have seen and faced death in all its violent forms. In physical effort and in mental strain they have endured what none but the hardiest could endure and survive.

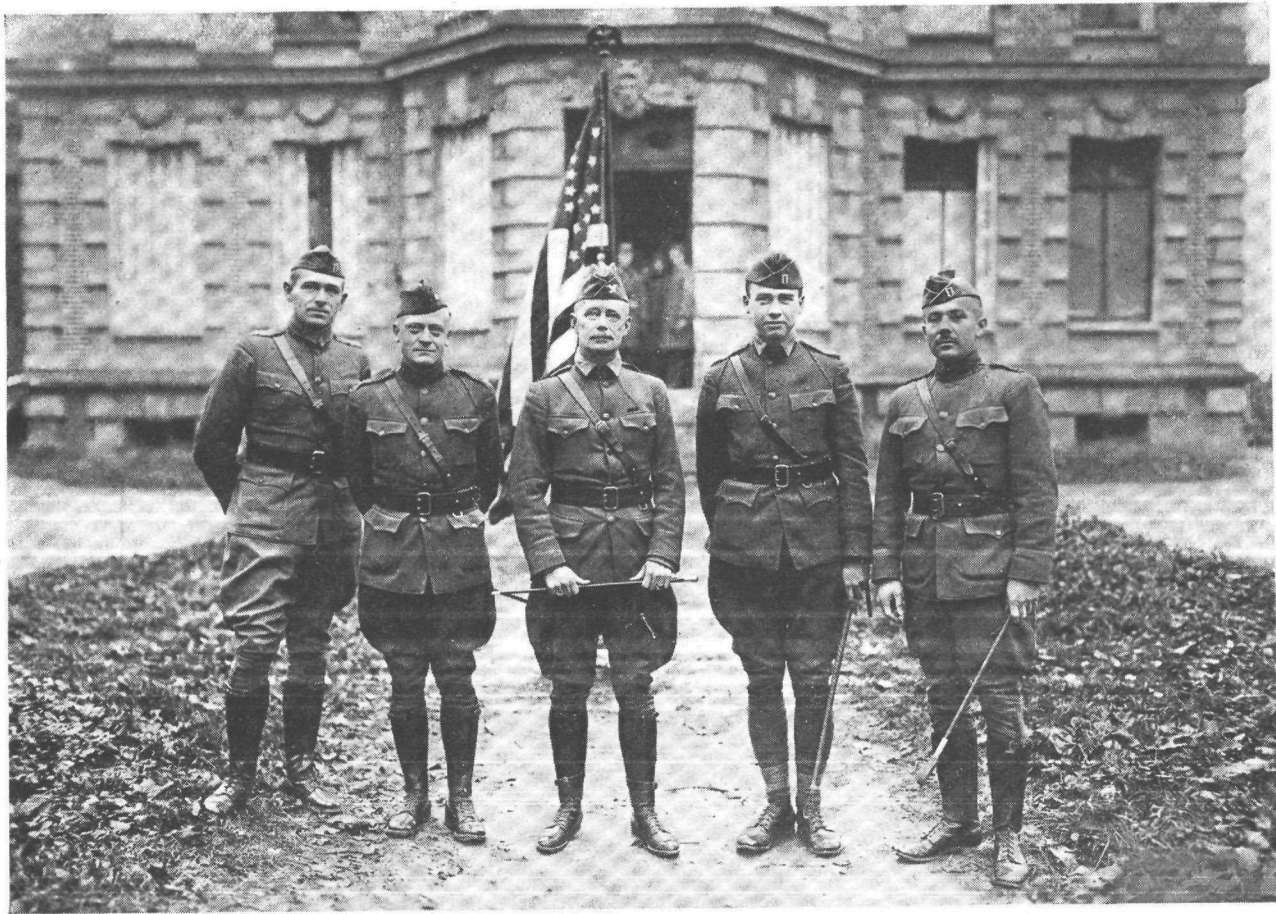
When our men return to their homes they will look on the world through eyes that will depict the sheltered life, its joys, its problems, and its sadness, in forms and in hues very different from the pictures seen by the ordinary man. Home and happiness, friends and pleasures, will no longer be accepted as matters of course, but by contrast with other days and this other life will be appraised and truly valued. How contemptibly trivial to men who have lived and half died in shell holes at night, in mud and water to their waists and with machine gun bullets skimming the tops of their tin hats, seem those circumstances of the sheltered life which constitute for some such apparently vexatious and depressing problems.

Merry Christmas and many Happy New Years to our soldiers who will constitute with their discriminating minds the America of tomorrow.

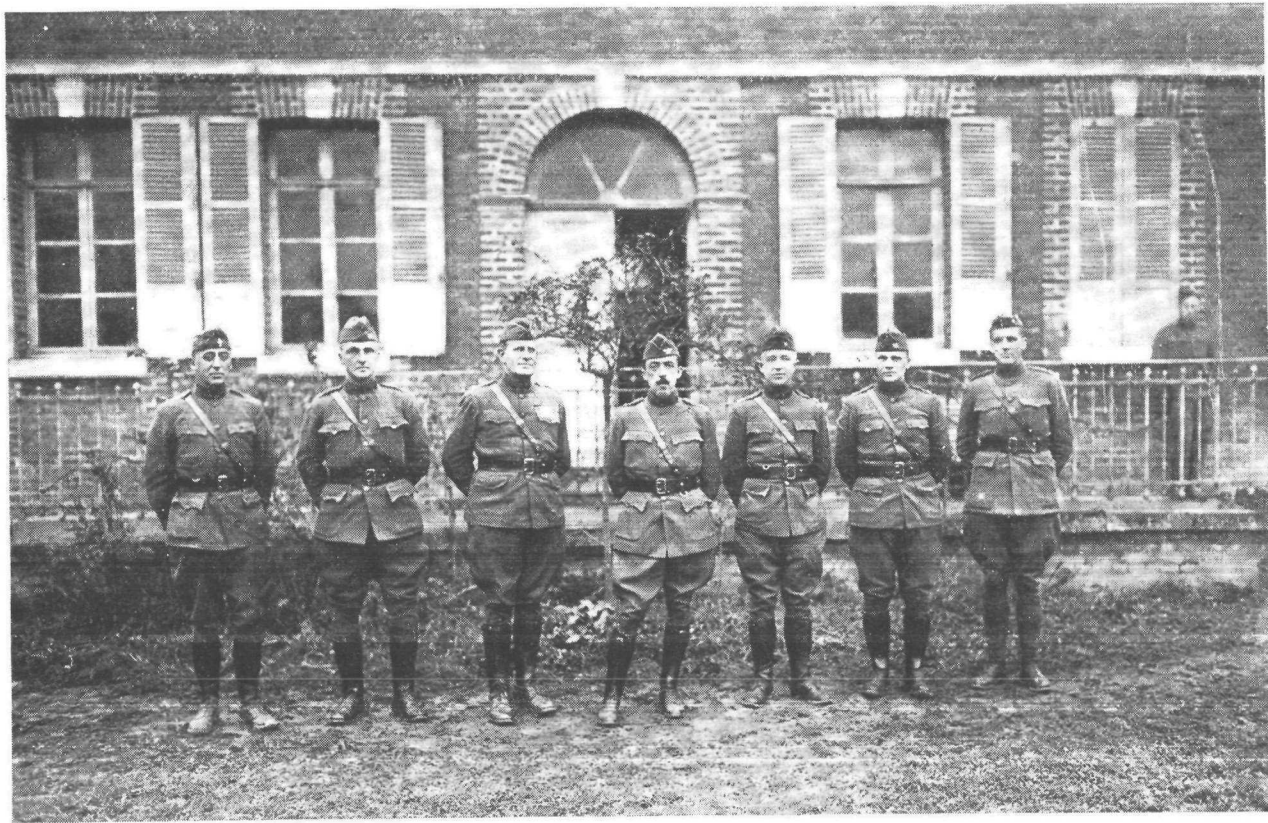
JOHN F. O'RYAN,  
Major General.

On January 16th word was received that General Pershing would arrive in the Le Mans area the following day and would make a personal inspection of all the divisions in the area. General Pershing and the members of his staff arrived at Connerre in a special train. The 27th Division was directed to furnish one battalion as an escort of honor when the General left the train on the morning of the 17th. Connerre was in the area of the 107th Infantry and that regiment was directed to furnish the necessary escort. This regiment, having won the divisional competition shortly before this date, was well prepared to turn out a battalion worthy of the division. The men were for the most part very tall, and in their immaculate clothing and equipment, topped by the polished steel helmets, they presented a really remarkable appearance. When General Pershing left the train, he was immediately impressed by the appearance of this escort and then and there made a personal inspection of the officers and men, at the conclusion of which he commended the battalion commander.

The same day it was arranged that a few days later the Commander in Chief would inspect the entire division, including the transport, at



*Regimental Staff of the 105th Infantry. Left to right: Captain Stephan H. Fifield, Personnel Adjutant; Captain George W. Papen, Regimental Surgeon; Colonel James M. Andrews, commanding; Captain Lewis H. Gibbes, Regimental Adjutant; Captain John W. Frost, Operations Officer, Daours, Somme, France, November, 21, 1918*



*Regimental Staff, 106th Infantry. Left to right: Chaplain Frank I. Hanscom; Captain Murray Taylor, Operations Officer; Lieutenant Colonel John M. True; Colonel Franklin W. Ward, commanding; Captain James P. Cook, Adjutant; Major Nils P. Larsen, Surgeon; Chaplain Warren T. Powell*



Belgian Camp. Orders were accordingly issued for the movement of all units to that place, the marches being so timed that all commands would arrive at the camp not later than 11 o'clock on the morning of the review. The review was scheduled to be held in the afternoon. These arrangements were made for the purpose of enabling the commands to make a final clean-up of clothing, arms and equipment before the afternoon ceremony.

In the interim, General Pershing was entertained at dinner at the 27th Division Headquarters in the chateau at Montfort. The dinner was followed by an entertainment given by the division theatrical troupe. So well made up and so "girlish" were the soubrettes that for a time General Pershing seemed suspicious that the cast actually included some girls. After the entertainment was over, he asked opportunity to say a word to the actors and "actresses," and then saw the soubrettes with their wigs removed. Much to their satisfaction, he told them that they were the best entertainers he had seen in France. On another evening during his stay, the Corps Commander and the Division Commanders in the area were entertained by General Pershing aboard his special train.

On the day of the review, which became known throughout the division as the "Pershing Review," all the organizations reported at Belgian Camp on time and up to their best standards of preparation for participation in such a ceremony. Numerous questions arose in the minds of the staff as to whether the division should follow what the regulations prescribed in relation to reviews, or whether such requirements should be ignored and the customs established within the division followed. For example, as has been stated in the account of the memorial review held on November 10th, it has been the practice in the New York Division since the Mexican border days to give the infantry the right of line, as the infantry is the arm which fights the battles. Regulations, on the other hand, give the right of line to the engineers. Regulations furthermore provide that at such ceremonies troops shall be marched in review in column of companies or in column of platoons. It was the practice in the division to march the troops on such occasions in battalions closed in mass. Regulations provided that the rifles be carried without the bayonets fixed. The custom in the division was to carry the rifles with bayonets fixed. There were many other similar details in vogue in the division, which were the result of experience in military ceremonies involving the employment of considerable numbers of troops, and which differed from what was prescribed by regulations. The Division Commander determined to follow customs of the division, subject to the approval of General Pershing. When General Pershing arrived at Belgian Camp, the two best horses in the division were in readiness so that he might make a choice. Having selected one of the animals, the situation in relation to the proposed departure from regulations was explained to him, and he was asked whether he had objections to what was proposed. He replied that he would have to see the ceremony before he could judge it, remarking that officers who assumed to depart from regulations did so at their peril. Such confidence,

however, was felt in the superiority of the customs in vogue in the division over those prescribed by regulations that the risk of official displeasure was assumed, and the inspection thereupon commenced. So thorough was the preparation for this event and so careful had been the attention to details in relation to uniformity that not only were all the packs of the infantry uniform in size and appearance, but the wrap leggings were all rolled the same way. Even the shoe laces were laced in uniform manner. Although the roads approaching the camp were somewhat muddy, there had been time for mud spots to be removed from the shoes and leggings of the men and from the hoofs and legs of the animals and the wheels of the wagons. All units had come provided with the necessary oil, brushes and rags for the purpose. About the time the inspection commenced, the sun appeared. The division was in line of masses. All companies had been equalized so that the left guides as well as the right guides were covered in file. The alignment had been made upon a line "snapped" on the grass for the purpose. The observing eye of the Commander in Chief immediately noted the effects of the picture thus presented, and more and more, as he proceeded in the progress of his very thorough inspection, did he become enthusiastic over the men and their organizations. He inspected every individual soldier in the division and every animal as well. He questioned many men concerning their wounds and their decorations. He commented upon the great number of wound chevrons. In several squads seven out of the eight men wore wound chevrons. Frequently he met men who wore two wound chevrons. Several were encountered who had been wounded three times. It must be said that his greatest satisfaction was expressed when he saw the transport. Having looked over a portion of it, he stopped in the presence of the transport men and said that he had never seen anything like it and made numerous inquiries concerning the methods employed to attain such standards. Many methods had been employed, but the determining factor was the high standard of intelligence, zeal and efficiency of the transport personnel. That was the real secret. It had been almost a custom in the army to throw into the transport, to be there employed as "mule skimmers," all the "roughnecks" and trouble-makers of the line companies. As far back as the Mexican border service this custom had been discontinued in the division, and from that period men had been selected for service in the transport with increasing care. The results which followed justified the practice. Although General Pershing gave no assurances to the officers and men, they nevertheless sensed, with that extraordinary accuracy which is a faculty of soldiers, that the division had made a "hit" with the Commander in Chief. Accordingly it was with the greatest pride and confidence that they prepared for the passage in review. When General Pershing again mounted his horse and took his reviewing post, the division, headed by the massed band, marched by in column of battalions closed in mass with bayonets fixed. The machine gun battalions marched as a machine gun corps. All the transport and trains of the division marched as a divisional unit. It would be hard

to imagine a more martial picture than that presented by the 27th Division on this occasion. Officers and men felt that they had left a lasting impression of their precision and efficiency upon the great crowd that had gathered to witness this final divisional ceremony in France.

The day following the review General Pershing left the division area in order to inspect other divisions in the vicinity. Before leaving, he remarked his preference for the customs which he had seen exemplified on the occasion of the 27th Division review. He approved the marching with bayonets fixed, the close formations and the massed bands. Later he directed these customs to be employed in other divisions.

Shortly after the departure of General Pershing, rumors again became abundant that the division would shortly move to the ports of embarkation. These rumors were quickly followed by others that the division would not leave the Le Mans area for five or six months' time. It was most desirable for the contentment of the men and for the efficient conduct of training that no mystery should be made of the approximate time of departure. If the men were not to leave France for another five or six months, there would appear to be no reason why such information should not be given them. On the contrary, with that knowledge they would then devote themselves with greater contentment to the training schedules prescribed for the intervening period. The matter, however, seemed to be steeped in mystery. The Division Commander certainly did not know when the division was scheduled to leave, nor did the Corps Commander. Inquiry at the headquarters of the American Embarkation Center developed the fact that the Commanding General there did not know. It was explained that orders for departure would come from Tours, but that the officers there did not know because their orders were dependent upon information received from Commanding Generals at the ports of embarkation, and in turn their calls for troops were dependent upon the amount of shipping available. It seemed clear that the entire matter could be determined, at least approximately, but that those in immediate authority believed it to be unimportant for the men to know whether they were to leave in a month or six months. That point of view, if it existed, answers itself so far as its merits are concerned. The Division Commander determined to learn, if possible, the approximate time when the division would leave France, and with this object in view took the necessary leave and motored to Brest. There it was learned that in all probability the 27th and 30th Divisions would move to that port within thirty days' time. Shortly after the return to the divisional area this prophecy was expressed in warning orders from the Commanding General of the American Embarkation Center.

A very elaborate system had been planned by officers in charge of the American Embarkation Center which required that a division, before leaving the area for Brest, should go through a delousing plant, which had been established at Belgian Camp. As has already been stated, the matter of delousing the personnel of the 27th Division had been taken up promptly after arrival in the Le Mans area, so that before the time for de-



*Colonel Mortimer D. Bryant, commanding 107th Infantry, formerly commanding Officer 106th Machine Gun Battalion*



*Regimental Staff, 108th Infantry. Left to right: Captain Damase J. Cadotte, Personnel Adjutant; Major Charles W. Lynn, Surgeon; Captain H. S. Robertson; Colonel Edgar S. Jennings, commanding; First Lieutenant R. W. Robertson; Captain George D. Elliot, Adjutant; Captain Henry D. Bagnol; Captain Clarence S. Martin; Captain Edwin G. Ziegler, Operations Officer*

parture of the division had arrived, they were entirely free from vermin. When, however, it was proposed to the Commanding General of the Embarkation Center that the 27th Division should move directly from its billets to the port of Brest without first moving to Belgian Camp and putting the men through the delousing plant, the officers who had planned and constructed the delousing plant protested. They seemed to feel that the system that had been provided should be tested by the first divisional unit directed to move to Brest. On behalf of the division it was urged that experience showed that with every movement of a large body of troops from one area to another, involving changes in billeting conditions, a percentage of the men take cold, and that of these a percentage become infected with the particular variety of bugs which are in the ascendancy in the new billets. It was known, furthermore, that of the men who became infected and who contracted colds and sore throats a percentage would develop pneumonia, particularly during the winter season which then prevailed, and of this percentage some would die. The whole proceeding seemed so obviously unnecessary and so short-sighted when the health of 25,000 men was concerned that the Division Commander made very strong representations to the Corps Commander and to the Commanding General of the American Embarkation Center concerning the matter. The officers who had built up the scheme to pass divisions through their plant were given a hearing. They protested that they could not be responsible for the sanitary condition of troops arriving in America unless they passed through their delousing plant. Finally it was agreed that a most rigid inspection would be made by medical officers from the American Embarkation Center for the purpose of determining whether or not the troops of the 27th Division were free from vermin as claimed. Such inspections were immediately commenced. They were most exhaustive and of a most minute personal nature, both in relation to the bodies of the men and their clothing. The efforts of the doctors to find grounds for criticism were in vain. Soon their doubts changed to enthusiasm concerning the personal hygiene of the personnel, and the division was given a clean bill of health without assuming the unnecessary risks involved in passage through the Belgian Camp.

Before the division left the Le Mans area word was received that the British Government would present medals to officers and men of the division who had been awarded them for gallantry in action. This presentation was made at the Belgian Camp on February 18, 1919, by Major General Read. The troops ordered out for the ceremony were constituted of the 3d Battalion of the 108th Infantry. The officers and soldiers decorated are listed in General Orders No. 9 of February 16, 1919, copy of which appears in the Appendix as Exhibit 47.

During the last week of February units of the division began to en-train for Brest. Arriving at Brest, some units went immediately aboard transports, while others stopped overnight or for several days at Pontanezon Barracks.

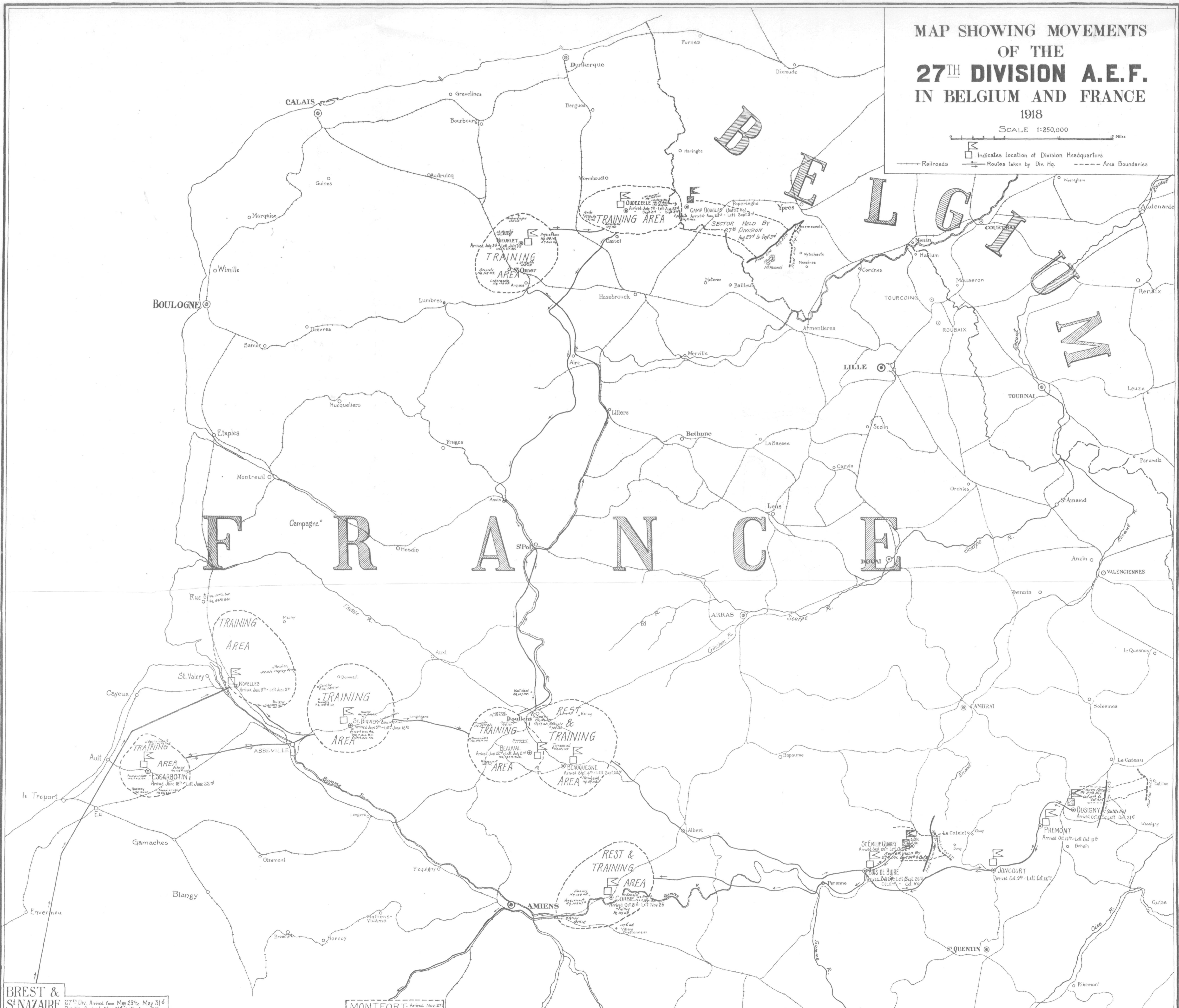
Word had been received from General Headquarters that the people

MAP SHOWING MOVEMENTS  
OF THE  
**27<sup>TH</sup> DIVISION A.E.F.**  
IN BELGIUM AND FRANCE

1918

SCALE 1:250,000

— Railroads    □ Indicates location of Division Headquarters  
 — Routes taken by Div. Hq.    - - - Area Boundaries



**BREST & ST NAZAIRE** 27<sup>th</sup> Div. Arrived from May 23<sup>rd</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup>  
Div. Hq. Arrived May 31<sup>st</sup> Left June 5<sup>th</sup>

**MONTFORT** Arrived Nov 27<sup>th</sup>  
Left -

of New York City desired an opportunity to see the 27th Division after its arrival in New York. The matter had evidently been taken up with the Secretary of War, for a cablegram had been received from the War Department directing that, so far as practicable, the units of the 27th Division should leave the port of embarkation so as to arrive in New York as close together, in point of time, as possible. Among the ships in the harbor of Brest when the 27th Division began to detrain at that port was the great *Leviathan*, which immediately took aboard about 13,000 troops, or practically one-half of the division. These included Division Headquarters Troop and Detachment, the 105th and 106th Infantry Regiments and the 105th Machine Gun Battalion. The *Leviathan*, with several other ships, sailed February 26th. These ships weighed anchor as soon as the troops were aboard, and without delay left the harbor of Brest and set out on the homeward voyage.

As the homeward voyage was without particular incident, no detailed account will be given of it. The next chapter will relate the story of the arrival of the troops in New York, the reception given the division, and the final parade and muster.

