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THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
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ADVANCED COURSE
1928-29

(11 Rev)

OPERATIONS OF COMPANY F 34TH INFANTRY IN THE PUVENELLE SECTOR

OCTOBER 1 -- NOVEMBER 11, 1918

(Personal Experience)

CAPTAIN BENJAMIN H. HENSLEY, INFANTRY ³⁷

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fell, Edgar T.

"History of the Seventh Division, United States Army, 1917-1919", Philadelphia, Printed by H. Moore, 1927.

✓ Accurate as to dates and general facts, but being, as it is, a division history, compiled, it is believed, from data submitted by individuals and subordinate units with possibly embellishment in some places and omissions in others, one should try to verify statements contained therein before accepting them as final. It is believed, however, that its worst sin is that of omission, for which the author is not perhaps responsible.

O'Neil, Raymond E.

"The History of the 20th Machine Gun Battalion", written at Camp Funston, Kansas, June, 1920. Kansas City Mo., Franklin Hudson Publishing Company, 1920.

✓ Accurate and in detail as it pertains to the 20th Machine Gun Battalion; units or individuals associated with that organization; not used by me as a reference.

Thomas, Shipley

"The History of the A.E.F." New York, George H. Doran Company, 1920.

✓ An excellent reference work; covers the larger organizations and commands. Would be of value to the student of general military history but is of little value to one working on such an assignment as a company, except, as to dates of important historical events.

American Battle
Movements
Commission

"A Guide to the American Battle Fields in Europe", Washington, Government Printing Office, 1927.

✓ Accurate. An excellent reference work and of value to students of military history, with special reference to the operations and locations of American units in the European conflict.

Bullard, R.L.

"Personalities and Reminiscences of the War", Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, Page and Company, 1925.

✓ A very interesting book apparently quite accurate. as to larger commands or units and matters as they pertain to the larger units but of little assistance to one delving into the ramifications of such small units as a company.

Moss, J.A. and
Howland, H.S.

✓ "America in Battle with Guide to the American Battlefields in France and Belgium", Menasha, Wis., George Banta Publishing Company, 1920.

A handy little history; sketchy, rather brief, but containing considerable data in accessible form.

The Stars and Stripes

✓ "The Official Newspaper of the American Expeditionary Forces", printed in France from February 8, 1918 to June 13, 1919.

A newspaper, a little more accurate perhaps than most newspapers, but a newspaper still. A source of data if there is none other available.

Chambrun, J.A. de p.
and
Marenches, Charles Comte de

✓ "The American Army in the European Conflict", New York, The Macmillan Company, 1919

A very interesting and apparently excellent reference work with particular reference to staffs, commanders, divisional and larger units, including also the special services and welfare organizations. This is, I believe, one of the very best works that I have seen covering not only the military but also general historical facts connected with the A.E.F.

MARGINAL ABBREVIATIONS USED

Fell, Edgar T.

"History of the Seventh Division"

P. E.

Personal Experience of B. H. Hensley, Captain,
34th Infantry

Thomas, Shipley

"The History of the A.E.F."

INTRODUCTION

- Company F 34th Infantry was a part of the 14th Infantry Brigade commanded by Brigadier General Wahl. (1) The 14th Infantry Brigade was a part of the 7th Division commanded by Major General Wittenmyer (after October 26, 1918). (2) The 7th Division was a part of the IV Corps commanded by Major General Muir. (2) The IV Corps was a part of the Second Army (after October 12, 1918) commanded by Lieutenant General Bullard. (3)
- (1) P.E.
- (2) Thomas, Shipley p. 364
- (3) Thomas, Shipley p. 362

FIRST PHASE

THE PUVENELLE SECTOR

General Map needed

The boundaries of this sector were; on the east, the Moselle River, south to the bend one kilometer east of Dieulouard, thence southwest along the Dieulouard-Franchville road to Auberge Quatre-Vents, one kilometer east of Rosieres-en-Haye. The western boundary ran along the west edge of Bois de Riche-en-Cote and one and one-half kilometers southeast of ~~St. Julian~~, then to hill 321.4

- (one kilometer east of Rembercourt), and along the western edge of Bois de Bonvaux and Bois de Heiche and the eastern edge of the Bois de Euvezin, and then to the east of Limey and passing east of Noviant. (4) This was supposed to be a quiet sector.
- (4) Fell, Edgar T. p. 55

The 7th Division, which was in name a regular army division, had a cadre of regular officers and men, but was, in fact, composed mostly of national army officers and drafted men. When the division took over the Puvénelle Sector it did not have, among other things, its artillery. The division was supported by the 5th Field Artillery

- (5) Fell, Edgar T. p. 176
- (5) The 7th Division relieved the 90th Division.

Upon taking over this sector the division put all four
(6) Fell, Edgar T. infantry regiments in line (abreast). (6)
p. 56

THE 34TH INFANTRY SECTOR

This regiment held the extreme left of the division sector. The 34th Infantry relieved the 358th Infantry. The 2d Battalion of the 34th Infantry took over the regimental front line from the 3d Battalion of the 358th Infantry. This line ran through the north part of the Bois de Bonvaux and the southern edge of the Bois de Grand Fontaine. (7)
(7) Fell, Edgar T. p. 59

PRELIMINARY MOVEMENTS AND ORDERS

From October 1-7, 1918, Company F 34th Infantry was in training at Franchville, France. On the evening of 7 October 1918 the company was issued sixteen new Browning Automatic rifles and orders to proceed to the front. None of the officers or men in the company knew anything about ~~the new automatic rifles, or where to go to go into the~~ front line, or, for that matter, where the front line was, except that generally it was "north of us". Orders were issued and every officer and man was warned not to tell anyone that he might meet or pass what organization he belonged to, where he came from, or the names of any officers that he knew.

The night of October 7/8 the company marched from Franchville to Minonville, where it went into billets. The day of October 8 was spent by the company in learning something about the new automatic rifles.

About 5:00 PM on the 8th the company was served a good hot meal from the rolling kitchen and each man was supplied with three good sandwiches and all the water he

wanted, with instructions to fill canteens with water (not coffee) and to conserve both food and water, as we would resume our march to the front that night. We marched at about 6:00 PM via Noviant, Limey to Fond des 4 Vaux where we were met and informed that we would remain there as division reserve. Time of arrival about 10:00 PM; distance marched, approximately twelve kilometers; roads muddy; men tired. As our rolling kitchens and water carts were following us, men were authorized to eat their sandwiches, and of course the consumption of the water was implied. Billets were found for officers and men in abandoned French dugouts. The men being tired lost little time in turning in for the night. It was now 11:00 PM.

About 11:30 PM we were awakened and given orders to form up at once and resume our march to the front. This was done. It was dark, rainy, and the road full of mud, shell holes, and debris. To-night, as last night, the order was, no lights, not even a cigarette or luminous watch dial, and no noise. We marched approximately eleven kilometers (seven miles), reaching the Thiaucourt-Regnieville, Euvezin-Vieville cross roads about 3:15 AM (365.6-238.4) on the morning of October 9, 1918. Here we were pulled off the road, (it was dark as the ace of spades and now getting foggy, the rain having stopped) and put in the south edge of Bois d Heiche under cover. Here we were to wait for guides who would conduct us to our places in the line. By this time all sandwiches and water had been consumed by both officers and men. Here the company came under shell fire for the first time.

We waited at this point for our guides until about 9:00 AM, by which time the fog had cleared away and the sun was shining bright. It was one of the prettiest days we

had seen in France. From this point we were conducted six kilometers, five of which were across the open fields and along the road over the Vieville-en-Haye ridge and the Tautecourt ~~the~~ ridges in plain view of a German observation balloon, to our place in the front line. There were ~~some~~ thoughts in the minds of some of the officers and ~~some~~ expressions on the part of ^{a few} ~~some~~ of the men concerning the secrecy with which we were getting into the line. However, the morale of the men was high. It will be remembered that along this general line is where the St. Mihiel drive was stopped and, it is assumed, where the hardest fighting of that drive took place. Here the men were seeing unmistakable signs that there was a war on. Along this route there was much debris, such as German planes that had been brought down, personal equipment, rifles, etc., etc., that had been left by men who would no longer need ^{them} ~~it~~, and some dead soldiers, both Germans and Americans. We arrived at about 12:00 noon October 9, 1918, on the front line. (8)

(8) P.E.

~~Contrary to expectations the front line here was not~~
line at all, not even a trench, but merely a series of fox holes and other ineffective places of concealment and shelter. Our battalion command ~~post~~ was located in a German dugout in the Bois de Bonvaux. (9) It was a modern home under ground. The dugout was not only nice ^{and} well equipped, ~~the, etc.~~, but was large enough to accommodate the entire battalion staff, runners, and most all of the enlisted as well as commissioned personnel of the battalion headquarters. (10)

(9) Fell, Edgar T.
p. 59

(10) P.E.

TERRAIN, DESCRIPTION OF WORKS, AND ARMAMENT

The company was now face to face with the Hindenburg
(11) Fell, Edgar T. line. (11) The German lines on this front were one to three
p. 62
hundred yards distant and the terrain was covered with a

(12) Fell, Edgar T.
p. 59

dense undergrowth of brush and trees. An extremely steep banked ravine ran approximately through No Man's Land between the two lines. (12)

The enemy's line of resistance was part of the Hindenburg system. The Hindenburg position included among its elements two lines of trenches, each line having the protection of a double and in some cases a triple band of wire entanglements.

The position was characterized by its large number of concrete shelters. These were found along the trenches at intervals of from eighty to one hundred meters. They also appeared checkerwise between and behind the lines of trenches. There is little question ~~but~~ that the heavy concrete type scattered through this position was intended for use as shelters and "pill boxes". Those of this type were constructed of reinforced concrete--four meters long by five meters wide and three to four meters deep. When finished this projected only slightly above the ground. ~~They were covered by a~~ concrete roof one meter thick. Two doors gave access to shelter. The shelters had three windows opening from the level and the one in the center was larger than the two on the side. All of the windows were constructed as loopholes.

In front of the Hindenburg position was the outpost zone. The foremost outposts were constantly changing their positions, with the exception of a few fixed posts sited at points where penetration on our part might jeopardize the outpost zone and the main line of resistance.

The whole of our front was heavily wooded, which afforded very poor opportunities for direct observation of the enemy lines. All of his paths and trails were either permanently closed or chevaux de frise were so placed that they could be closed in case of necessity. These paths and trails were

almost invariably covered by machine gun fire from guns echeloned in depth along or near their course. It could be expected that at the first moment of warning of any raid on our part he would place "annihilating" fire on what he considered our assembling areas and along the front of the line of his foremost outposts at points where he considered it necessary for us to penetrate. The latter fire would either automatically, after a certain length of time, or by signals be withdrawn until it fell in front of his main line of resistance.

Direct and indirect machine gun fire was often used

- (13) Fell, Edgar T. from the German emplacements in the main line of resistance. (13)
pp. 62-63
(14) Fell, Edgar T. The enemy's aerial and artillery supremacy was pronounced. (14)
p. 65
Rain and mud and more mud ^{was} ~~were~~ the rule. (14)

DISPOSITIONS AND PLANS

Company F 34th Infantry, six officers and two hundred and fifty men, relieved Company L 358th Infantry on the front line in the Bois Grand Fontaine at 3:00 PM October 9, 1918, taking over a more or less irregular line of fox holes extending ~~from a point at (E57.80-243.10) to a point at (E57.00-~~
243.35) with two platoons in line (abreast) and two platoons in support. The company sector was about eight hundred meters wide, each platoon covering about four hundred meters with Company E 34th Infantry on the right and Company H 34th Infantry on the left. The support platoons were each placed about one hundred and fifty meters in rear of the corresponding front line platoon so that it could fire through intervals to the front if necessary. The support platoons occupied a front of about one hundred and twenty-five meters.

Our position, see overlay No 1, which followed generally the two hundred and ninety meter contour, was under constant observation from a hill extending from five hundred

to one thousand meters to our left front (northwest) known as hill 323, from which the Germans did considerable sniping, and which was later to be a factor in our operations.

Routes of approach to the front line were reconnoitered and understood by all officers and noncommissioned officers. There were a few strands of wire about fifty yards in front of our front line and running parallel thereto. Our company plan of defense was simple. In case of attack the 3d platoon was to immediately fill the gaps in our front line, the 4th platoon would not move until ordered to do so by the company commander and we would fight it out on that line. We would not retire and no routes to the rear were reconnoitered. The company command post was located at (367.25-243.00). The company observation post was in a tree at (367.5-243.25). This was occupied at irregular intervals when the company commander felt lucky, until one day about the 18 of October 1918 the battalion commander found the company commander occupying the observation post with his mountain Winchester; the battalion commander made some "verbal observations" about teamwork, individual wars, etc., etc. After that that observation post was not used. (15)

(15) P.E.

We had expected to find trench equipment, grenades, tools and ammunition in the trenches. We found no trenches, and we found none of the other things, including ammunition. We had only ten rounds of ammunition per man and a sector to defend. The company commander lost no time in sending a runner to the battalion commander with a statement of the facts in the case and an earnest request for ammunition, also a request for water. The runner came back with a message that ammunition and water would be sent up. We had passed dead soldiers on our way in, so details were sent out to take ammunition off the dead and to look for any possible

dumps. By dark we had found a fair amount of rifle ammunition and some grenades, both American and German. But no ammunition and no water had been sent up, so the company commander sent another message to battalion commander explaining the situation ^{in regard to} the ammunition and that the men had had no food and no water that day. A message came back that these supplies would be sent up in a short time. The men were informed of the contents of the message, and the night wore on. The morning of the 10th arrived but no supplies ^{and} the men began begging for water. Another message was sent to the battalion commander; a message came back to the effect that the other units were working under the same conditions as Company F and that the supplies would be sent up as soon as available. Some of the men were seen trying to drink from little puddles on the ground.

OPERATIONS

During the day of the 10th we searched our area. Plenty of grenades and ammunition and several French automatic rifles were found, also several Springfield rifles which we were glad to get, as we did not like the so called Eddystone rifles. By night we were well equipped, had made some small readjustments in our front line and were ready for business.

The 9th and 10th of October had been quiet until about 5:00 PM on the 10th when the carrying party arrived with our first food on the front line. The position being heavily wooded, we thought we were under cover, so a platoon was ordered to pass by the containers and be served. Apparently the enemy had observed the carrying party coming in and waited a few minutes until the men

should be gathered around the containers, when they would give us a lesson concerning cover, concealment, and noise. As the men gathered, some of them allowed their mess kits to rattle and down came a salvo of shrapnel and high explosive. As we heard the shells coming we scattered and hit the ground, and while a couple of cans of food were turned over and destroyed, fortunately no one was seriously hurt, though a few men, including the company commander, were hit by spent fragments. We took warning and thereafter did not assemble for chow or any other purpose. The night of the 10th there was some shelling but it did us no damage.

(16) Fell, Edgar T.
p. 65

The 11 October was a beautiful day. Enemy air planes were active and an aerial battle took place over our position. One allied plane was shot down in flames just back of our company sector. (16) About 9:00 PM the enemy shelled our positions and the battalion P.C. There was a maelstrom of bursting shells and falling trees. The battalion P.C. was filled with wounded some of whom belonged to Company F (these being our first casualties). Means of carrying them to the battalion aid station were lacking. Had there been enough stretchers, it would have been fatal to venture out on account of the heavy bombardment then going on. A large number of gas shells were mixed in with the high explosive and this necessitated the wearing of masks all night. The battalion commander and his staff, together with the entire 2d Battalion headquarters, were gassed and evacuated. (17) This resulted, in addition to the men lost, in the loss of an officer from Company F to take over the duties of battalion adjutant.

(17) Fell, Edgar T.
p. 66

From October 12 to 19, weather rainy, foggy, cold, and very dark at night, ^{and} we received daily a few shells from

the enemy, (and we thought some five or six from our own artillery, one night). During this period, enemy air planes were active over our front, there was some sniping and we kept up patrolling of our front and No Man's Land at night.

LOSSES

We lost a few men sick and wounded; one officer sick; one officer sent back to some school as an instructor; and two noncommissioned officers to training school for officers. These had been selected apparently at random from the company roster, not upon the company commander's recommendation.

On the night of October 19 the company was relieved on the front line and went back to Fond de 4 Vaux (368.00-233.80) as a part of division reserve. Here from October 20 to 26 we lost one officer and about four men, sick. Very active training was kept up under cover of the woods, especially in ^{the} subjects of grenades, automatic rifles, scouting and patrolling and marching at night by compass. For this purpose night patrols were sent to the towns of Remenauville, Regnieville.

SECOND PHASE

PRELIMINARY MOVEMENTS AND ORDERS

On the night of October 26 we were relieved as division reserve and moved up to Sector H, (Regimental reserve sector) (366.70-240.80) (see overlay No 2) as regimental reserve. The 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, and 31st the company furnished patrols and working parties. On October 30 the company commander was called to battalion headquarters and told that he had been selected to take his company and capture and hold hill 323. This operation was to have taken place on November 1. So the company

commander issued necessary warning order to the company and proceeded to make a thorough personal reconnaissance of the ground over which Company F was to advance. Among other things he discovered that he had been given a man-size job, one that offered little, if any, chance of success by a company which later developments proved to have been a correct estimate of the situation. Upon returning to the company later in the afternoon of the 31st the company commander was called to battalion headquarters and informed that the plan for the capture of hill 323 had been changed. That the 64th Infantry was going to take hill 323 (which incidently they failed to do) and that Company F would participate in an attack to be launched against hills 287.1 (367.50-243.70) 310.2 (366.30-243.60), and 311 (369.25-243.70). In accordance with "Operations Instructions No 1":

"HEADQUARTERS, SECOND BATTALION,
THIRTY-FOURTH INFANTRY,
AMERICAN E.F., France, October 31, 1918.

OPERATIONS INSTRUCTIONS;
NO. 1

clude a general line through 287.1-310.2-311.0.

2. Company "E" under Lieut. Porter will leave our lines at point 243.3-367.2 and will proceed in a general north direction, until the junction of the roads due west of 287.1 is reached when he will turn due east and proceed along the ridge 287.1 to 311.0. "E" Company will advance in four waves each in line of combat group. Upon passing 287.1 the rear platoon will remain there and establish a strong point. Similarly on the ridge road at 300 (enemy position at 243.5-367.9). The third platoon will remain and take position. The remaining platoons will assault 310.2 and after its reduction will establish strong points at 310.2 and 311.0.

Two squads of "F" Company under Lieut. Rice will leave our lines at point 242.9-368.4 and will establish an outpost on the valley road at point 243.1-368.5. Two squads of "F" Company under a sergeant will leave our lines in rear of "E" Co. and will proceed to the valley where they will cover the flank of "E" Company in its advance. The remainder of "E" Company under Captain Hensley will report to Bn. Commander at point 243.1-367.6 at 6 h. and will be held in readiness for counterattack.

Company "C" 21st Machine Gun Battalion will take position so as to sweep hill 310.2. They will commence firing at 7:15 and will continue until green star signal from assaulting party.

The One-pounder platoon under Lieut. Black will take position at point 287.7 and will fire on hill 310.2. They will commence firing at 7:15 and will until green star signal from the assaulting party. Six men from Company "G" will report to Lieut. Black as carrying detail.

3. Immediately upon reaching objective patrols will be advanced and the work of digging and wiring commenced. Working parties from Company "A" and the Engineers will be sent forward immediately.

4. First Aid men will accompany each company. Dressing stations will be established at 243.0-368.2 and 243.1-367.6.

5. Dumps for ammunition and supplies will be established at 243.0-368.2 and 243.1-367.6.

6. Each rifleman will carry two bandeliers of ammunition, and each grenadier a bandelier of grenades.

7. The combat pack will be carried.

8. Liaison will be established promptly with bodies on flanks and in rear. The following signals will be used: Three stars (repeated), normal barrage; Caterpillar rocket, objective reached; Green star, going to advance.

9. The Battalion P.C. will be at point 243.1-367.6 and will move forward to valley road. The zero hour will be 7 h.

NOTE: Platoon Commanders will be held responsible for the safety of their men, and while consolidating objectives will hold a reserve in readiness for counter attack.

A.M. WEYAND,
Captain, 34th Infantry, A.E.F.,
Comndg. 2nd Battalion. "

Full

We left our dugouts at 4:00 AM and reached the jump-off point at 6:00 AM as ordered and then stood there an hour. The attack was launched as planned, at 7:00 AM, November 1, 1918, and in accordance with the above order. Weather: rainy, foggy, and during the early morning, very dark. The fog, however, lifted about 7:30 AM after which observation was fair to good, when one could see through the trees.

TERRAIN

The woods were very dense and the terrain was a series of steep ridges and ravines; hence we could see little. But our position was subject to observation from hill 323.

DISPOSITIONS

At 7:00 AM the battalion commander at 367.60-243.10 directed the Captain Company F to leave a platoon at that

point as a battalion reserve and with the remainder of the company which consisted of the company commander ^{and} two platoons plus two squads to proceed to the junction of

(18) Fell, Edgar T. trails in the ravine at 367.80-243.40, as a battalion. (18)
p. 91 reserve closer to the probable scene of action. This order

(19) Fell, Edgar T. was carried out under heavy artillery fire. (19)
p. 91

That our attack was a complete surprise to the enemy there can be little doubt, as we had gone only about fifty yards beyond the jump-off line when we ran into a German patrol of about a squad in front of our wire. They were in a close group and being completely surprised and greatly outnumbered they surrendered without a fight. They were put under guard and started to the rear. As the detachment reached the vicinity of our aid station they were caught in the apex of a German box barrage and about five of them were killed.

ACTIONS AND ORDERS

~~When we arrived at the junction the~~
box barrage mentioned above was discovered to be closing in on us, so we moved about one hundred and fifty to two hundred yards up the face of the very steep south side of hill 310.2, to a point where we were defiladed from artillery fire from the front. Shells were hitting in front and behind us. The barrage was very intense but it looked for a time as though we were safe in this position. However, after about one hour we received a few very large caliber high explosive shells, estimated as eight or ten inches, which probably came from the defenses around Metz. These caused us some casualties and was doing our morale no good. The intensity of the shelling now (about 9:00 AM) decreased ~~some~~ so we sent patrols out to gain contact with the platoons of company E ~~that was~~ ^{which were} supposed

to be on hill 310.2, and to call on us for help if they needed it. We found instead of friendly troops, Germans on the hill in our front, with machine guns behind bands of wire entanglements fifty feet wide, in emplacements and behind obstacles, and they exhibited no special hurry to leave the hill. Upon receipt of this information the company commander felt that if the battalion commander ^{were} ~~was~~ present or in possession of that information that he would order an attack by Company F at once. The company commander believing that no time should be lost decided to attack at once in one wave straight to the front. Interval between skirmishers 3 paces, guide center on the company commander who was the only officer left with the company. The order was passed to the right and left and repeated back in undertones. While this was being done the company commander sent a message to the battalion commander informing him of the situation and contemplated action.

THE ATTACK

The attack was on. It was now about 9:45 AM. We reached the wire ^{without material loss} ~~and~~ where we were met by machine gun fire, however, we kept on, getting through, over or under the wire as best we could. When across the wire we gave our attention to the machine guns which were soon put out of action. It was now about 11:00 AM. We had reached our objective.

At this time the 4th platoon which had been left at 367.6-243.1 as a battalion reserve rejoined the company.

ORGANIZATION OF POSITION

We immediately set about to organize the position against any possible counterattack. The company was re-organized simultaneously with the organization of the ground.

With four squads sent out on flank missions and with the casualties that we had had it was deemed best to organize the company into only three platoons, which was done, each platoon under a sergeant. There were no officers available as platoon commanders.

DISPOSITIONS

Two platoons were put on the forward slope (below the military crest) as a front line, in fox holes, and behind a few strands of wire hastily strung about 100 yards beyond. Just behind the wire was put a line of cossack posts of three rifles and one automatic rifle each. Three of these posts were put out in front of each front line platoon. One platoon was placed in support on the reverse slope and slightly to the right center as it was felt that our right flank was the one most likely to be attacked as it had the best approaches. This proved to be ~~known~~ the correct estimate.

COUNTERATTACK BY GERMANS

At about 4:30 PM we received a counterattack by about two hundred men on the right center of the company sector; Our outposts falling back fighting, as ordered, to our front line or main line of resistance.

This attack which lasted for about an hour and a half, was preceded and supported by machine gun and small caliber artillery fire, practically all of which hit on or just in front of the geographical crest and did us very little damage. This attack was repulsed without serious loss to us, but it is believed that it was costly to the attackers.

DECISION AND ACTIONS OF COMPANY COMMANDER

We did not ask for artillery support on this counter-attack as we did not believe that it was needed. For a short time we were worried about ammunition. However, ammunition soon arrived and was distributed and again we were ready for Fritz.

It was now about 6:00 PM, a telephone line had been brought forward to us, but was of little use as it was cut every few minutes by shell fire. We now learned that our two squads that had been sent to the left flank of the battalion as a combat patrol had been caught in an artillery concentration about the middle of the afternoon and wiped out. We also learned that the combat patrol consisting of an officer (Lt. Rice) and two squads that had been sent to our right flank had been caught in an artillery concentration and wiped out, suffering about eighty per cent casualties, including Lieutenant Rice.

About 7:00 PM the 34th Infantry machine gun officer arrived at our position on the hill, looked around, and decided that we should have machine gun assistance. A position was selected for the machine guns. They were sent up, arriving about 6:30 PM, I think, took a position on the right of Company F with an excellent field of fire.

Night of November 1-2, 1918, weather: ~~the same as~~ rainy, foggy, ~~the same~~ cold and very dark.

The machine guns stayed until about 12:30 AM November 2, 1918, then pulled up and left the line without notifying us that they were going. Whether they had orders to leave or not we never found out. The machine gun company referred to was not the 34th Infantry machine gun company but was a company from a machine gun battalion supporting us. Our own

machine gun company was away, attached to some other regiment or machine battalion.

John Siga

We felt quite keenly the need for machine guns only a very short time later. We also felt that had we had our own machine gun company ~~they~~ ^{it} would have stayed with us, or if ordered away, would have notified us that they were going. It is easy to imagine the chagrin and ^{other} sensations of the company commander of Company F when his contact patrol reported that the machine guns had gone and that that (most vulnerable) part of the line was not occupied, and that the Germans in large numbers could be heard approaching our position. It is needless to say that the support platoon was promptly put into the gap where about thirty minutes later they received the main effort and inflicted heavy loss upon a rather determined raid by the enemy.

At about 1:30 AM on the morning of November 2 the Germans attempted a raid on our front. This was not preceded by preparatory fire. Our only warning was the volume of talk that could be heard in the woods in front of our outposts. Probably as many as two hundred men participated in the raid. This was repulsed without serious loss to us. It was believed that the raid was for the purpose of taking prisoners, for information, or to find a weak place in our line. This raid was followed by a very determined attack about 3:30 AM which was preceded by an artillery and machine gun preparation. This fire fell, as did that of the previous afternoon, on and just in front of the geographical crest of the hill.

At this time small cannon and machine gun fire from hill 323 on our left flank caused us some losses. At 4:00 AM the company commander decided to call, by rocket, for artillery support. This was done but we received no "presto" artillery support due, it was thought, to the fog and poor

visibility. At 4:15 the call was repeated and a runner sent to P.C. 1st Battalion 34th Infantry (phone available there which was two kilometers away) with a message to be sent to the regimental P.C. requesting artillery support "now". Also, a message to the battalion commander 2d Battalion apprising him of our situation.

Things were not now looking so good, it was getting warmer, though there had been no change in the weather. It was now 4:30 AM; a third rocket, and the last one we had, was sent up. This apparently was seen and we received some help from the artillery. We learned later that the runner that had been sent back with the message never reached the telephone.

By 5:30 AM the attack had been definitely stopped and the attackers driven off with heavy losses. The artillery fire had ceased and things quieted down a bit.

REORGANIZATION OF COMPANY

~~A partial reorganization was effected and a~~
of four squads under a sergeant was re-established on the reverse slope of hill 310.2.

COOPERATION WITH ADJACENT UNITS

At about 6:30 AM a runner arrived at our command post with a message from the company commander on our right, saying that he was being attacked by a force superior to his and asking for support of a platoon. This request was immediately complied with; our own (all and only) support being sent under the sergeant to reinforce the unit on our right. (20)

(20) Fell, Edgar T.
p. 91

The advance made was about a kilometer in depth and a

(21) Fell, Edgar T. like distance in width. (21) (See overlay No 2.) Our front
p. 91 line now extended from about 368.0-243.7 to about 368.9-243.6.

(Anomally inserted words)

The enemy apparently convinced that we meant to stay on that hill now consoled himself by shelling us for about two hours, from 6:45 AM to 8:45 AM, with considerable vigor and with shells about fifty fifty high explosive and gas.

RELIEF FROM CAPTURED POSITION

(22) Fell, Edgar T. At 9:00 AM two platoons of Company G 34th Infantry
p. 91 arrived to relieve us. (22) We were not sorry to see them. Upon being relieved we returned to our dugouts in Sector H. We were tired, hungry, thirsty, and sleepy.

November 3, 4, and 5 the company furnished working parties, litter carriers, and burying details.

RELIEF FROM SECTOR H

On the night of the 5th we were relieved in Sector H (regimental reserve sector).

We had lost about fifty men killed and wounded, and several reported as sick who were, it was believed, really gas casualties.

THIRD PHASE

PRELIMINARY MOVEMENTS AND ORDERS

Upon being relieved in Sector H we marched out under shell fire about 7:00 PM, going to the Bois du Beau Vallon, seven kilometers, where we spent the night of the 5th and the day of the 6th in old abandoned trenches. Marching at 7:00 PM on the evening of the 6th via Euvezin to Bouillonville,

seven kilometers, where we stayed until the evening of the 9th.

During this period we kept up drill and instruction, mostly close order drill, under cover of adjacent woods. While here we were subject to aerial observation during daylight hours and some shelling, most of which was at night, high explosive and gas shells being put down on us in about equal numbers. The weather continued rainy and cold. Here we lost a few men wounded and several sick. On the 8th we received one new 2d lieutenant and also two of our original officers returned to us; one ~~from~~^{from} a school, one from duty as acting battalion adjutant.

On the 9th at 3:00 PM we received the following order:

(Secret) "HEADQUARTERS FOURTEENTH INFANTRY BRIGADE,
A.E.F. FRANCE, NOVEMBER 8, 1918.

FIELD ORDER
No. 6.

1. The 13th Brigade is to advance our outpost line to the approximate line - BOIS du TROU de La HALE - FME de la GRANGE en HALE - MIN. J. FERMOULIN - ST. JULIEN - ~~SAINT JULIEN~~

2. Two battalions of the 14th Brigade will occupy the present flanks of the outpost line to support the operation, night of 9/10 November.

3. (a) The second battalion 34th Infantry will relieve units of the 13th Brigade on the line; RUPT de MAD to the western boundary of the Divisional sector.

(b) The third battalion 64th Infantry will relieve units of the 13th Brigade on the line; from point 358.6 to the eastern boundary of the Divisional sector, viz., PRENY inclusive - VILLERS SOUS PRENY exclusive.

(c) The second battalion 64th Infantry will occupy the position vacated by the third battalion 64th Infantry in the sector H.

(x) 1. Battalions 3 (a) and 3 (b) will send reconnaissance parties at 7:00 A.M. 9 November 1918 to arrange details of the relief under directions of battalion commanders who will report for instructions in person to Commanding General 13th Infantry Brigade.

2. Movement of battalion 3 (c) may be by daylight.

3. Upon completion of operation by 13th Brigade the

28th Division is to take over the left of the sector 7th Division to the RUPT de MAD when battalion 3 (a) will be withdrawn to its present position. Battalion 3 (b) will also be withdrawn to main line of resistance by orders to be issued later. On this account both battalions will place guards over property and billets to be later occupied.

4. Machine Gun Companies 37 m/m guns and stokes mortars will be assigned to these battalions in accordance with existing orders.

4. Field Trains will accompany their units. Supply will be arranged by Regimental Supply Officers from forward Division Dumps. Request for assistance will be made direct to the Division Quartermaster.

5. P.C.'s no change - for Brigade and Regiments. Battalion Commanders involved will notify Regimental and Brigade Headquarters immediately upon location of their new P.C.'s.

LUTZ WAHL,
Brigadier General,
Commanding."

OPERATIONS

In compliance with the provisions of the above order Company F moved from its area near Bouillionville at 5:00 PM on November 9 for the front, marching via Thiaucourt. In the latter place the road and streets were congested and there was quite a delay and some confusion.

While waiting just outside the town we were fired on by a low flying lone enemy plane, which did us no harm. Had we been authorized to fire at ~~the~~ low flying plane it is believed that we could have brought ^{this one} ~~him~~ down. The town of Thiaucourt was being shelled by the enemy as we marched through. Just outside the north side of the town we received a few gas shells which caused us a few casualties.

We arrived at our new position about 11:00 PM (see Overlay No 3) (363.7-243.3). Distance covered about five kilometers. Here we were in battalion reserve. Our operations in this sector consisted of furnishing reconnaissance, contact

and combat patrols.

Reconnaissance and combat patrols ^{were} ~~being~~ sent through the Bois du Rupt and Bois de la Montane, where they captured a few Germans and a machine gun which had been passed by and was ready to fire on our advancing troops from the rear.

The contact patrols were sent to our left to maintain contact with the 28th Division whose right boundary ran generally along the Xannes-Charey road.

We received a phone message at 10:30 November 11, 1918, telling us that an armistice had been signed, effective at 11:00 AM, and that all hostilities and advance would cease at that time.

The order was obeyed.

GAINS AND LOSSES

We had at this time gained three officers and had an effective combat strength of four officers and sixty-four men.

We had lost in thirty-two days approximately fifty per cent of our officers and eighty per cent of our men.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

Requiring a double night march of troops, sending troops, especially green ones, into action, even in a defensive sector, without water and with only ten rounds of ammunition per man and failing to see that these supplies were promptly sent forward is, it is believed, subject to criticism.

There was lack of confidence in, or a dislike for the so called Eddystone rifles with which the men were armed when we went into the front line. There was a preference on the part of the men for the so called Springfield, U.S. Magazine rifle, Model 1903, as against the Eddystone rifle, as was clearly demonstrated by the individual soldier, for wherever

he found a Springfield in workable condition he traded rifles. In a very few days the company was equipped with Springfields, a fact in which they took pride.

The value of the increased fire power of automatic rifles was appreciated by all men of the company which was evidenced by the desire of all the men to take instruction on how to fire the automatic rifles. Also, by the fact that during the first few days on the front line the men were constantly searching the woods in our immediate rear for automatic rifles. A number (16 - 18) of French automatic rifles were found, conditioned, and placed in combat posts on our front line.

It was felt by the company that we were able to hold hill 310.2 against counterattacks, due, in a very large measure, to our automatic rifles.

Only our best men were assigned as automatic riflemen. It was an assignment much sought after in the company, regardless of the burden of the extra weight on the march.

The Principle of the Objective, Offensive, and Mass was

~~carried out by the company when it took and held Hill 310.2.~~

The Principle of Economy of Force was violated by the captain of Company F when he did not ask for artillery fire during the first two counterattacks.

The Principle of Movement was carried out by the company in its operations of November 1-2, 1918.

That the Principle of Surprise was carried out is shown by the capture, in toto, of the enemy outpost patrol without a fight.

The Principle of Security was carried out in putting out the cossack posts in front of our position and contact patrols to the right and left.

The Principle of Simplicity is shown in the company commander's order for the attack.

The Principle of Cooperation was demonstrated in the immediate dispatch of all that remained of the company support to the assistance of the unit on the right on the morning of November 2, 1918.

LESSONS LEARNED

Plans should be so drawn that double night marches are not necessary. If the distance must be covered, all well and good, do it in one march. But troops should not be stopped, told they are to remain there, put into billets, and then gotten up half hour later and told to march on.

Marches should be consistent, i.e., not at night in areas miles behind the line and then finish the march over hills in plain view of the enemy in broad daylight, as this tends to destroy confidence in the command and staff.

Plans for essential supplies should be so made that these are reasonably available to troops, especially is this true of water. Men and animals must have water.

~~Ammunition must either be in the possession of the~~
troops or be issued to them before they are committed to action.

Spull On separate missions or a more or less isolated operation auxiliary weapons should be attached (under the orders of) to the unit needing their help.

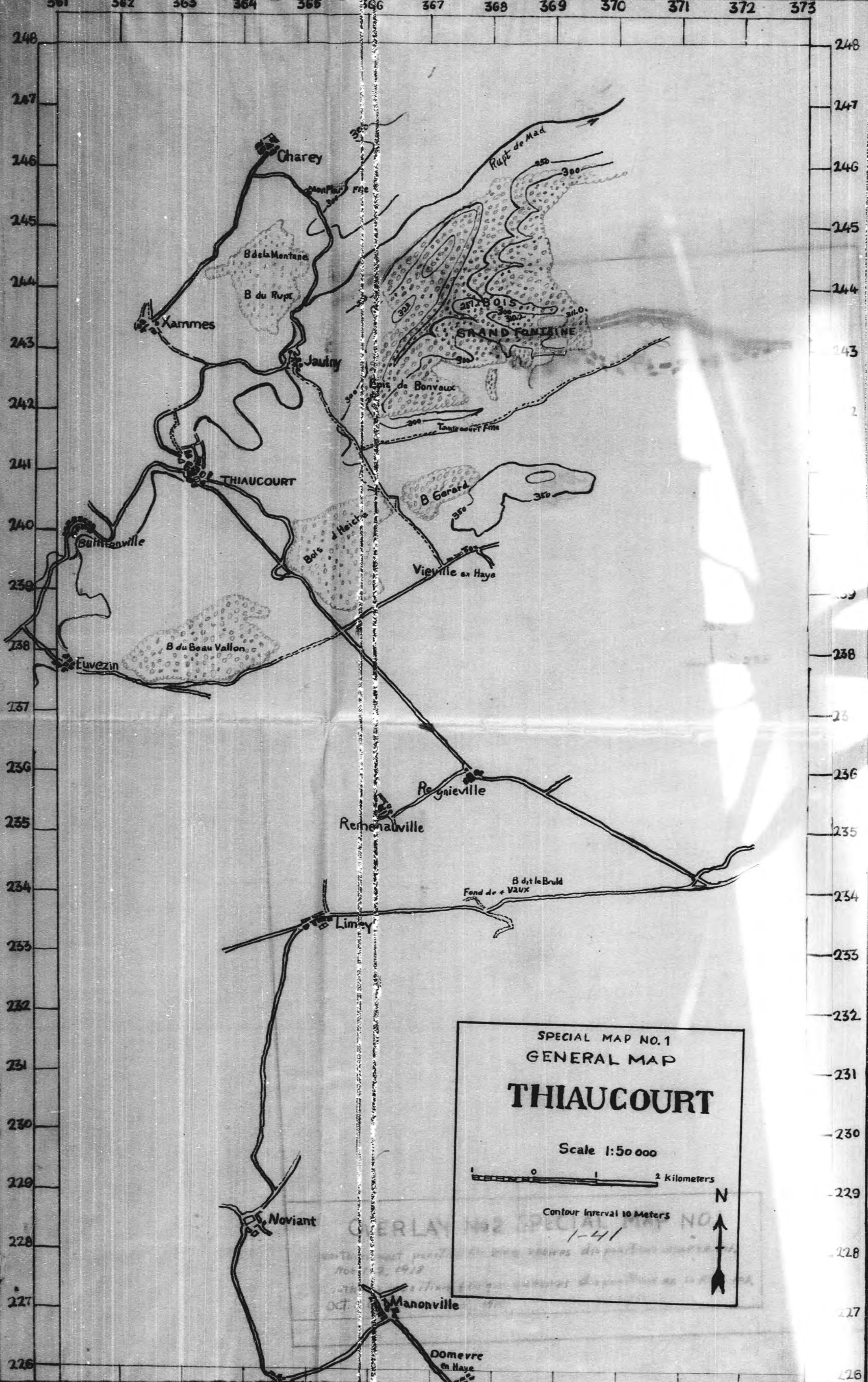
Unity of command should be observed and the tactical chain of command followed in issuing orders effecting any tactical operation.

Troops can be depended upon when armed with weapons in which they have confidence.

There should be at least two automatic or preferably, semiautomatic rifles to each infantry squad.

QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO THE ORGANIZATION AND OPERATIONS OF
COMPANY F 34TH INFANTRY

1. Q. What brigade and division was Company F 34th Infantry a part of?
A. 14th Brigade, 7th Division.
2. Q. What corps and army was it a part of?
A. IV Corps, Second Army.
3. Q. Was this a regular army organization?
A. Yes.
4. Q. Was it composed entirely of trained regular army officers and men?
A. No, it had a cadre of regular officers and men, but was composed mostly of emergency officers and drafted men.
5. Q. In what sector did this unit operate?
A. The Puvenelle Sector.
6. Q. Where was the Puvenelle Sector?
A. East of Thiaucourt, France, bounded generally, on the east by the Moselle River, south by a general line Dieulouard-Noviant, on the west by the general line Noviant-Flirey-Euvezin-Bouillionville-Charey-St.Julian.
7. Q. What was the period of this operation?
A. October 8 to November 11, 1918.
8. Q. What was the most important operation of the company?
A. Taking and holding hill 310.2.
9. Q. What was the reaction in this unit to the automatic rifle?
A. Confidence and a desire for more of them.
10. Q. What was the spirit of Company F 34th Infantry?
A. Cooperation, aggressiveness, and determination.



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F34

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OVERLAY NO 8 SPECIAL MAP NO 1
Position of Co F34 1st Nov 9-11, 1918.
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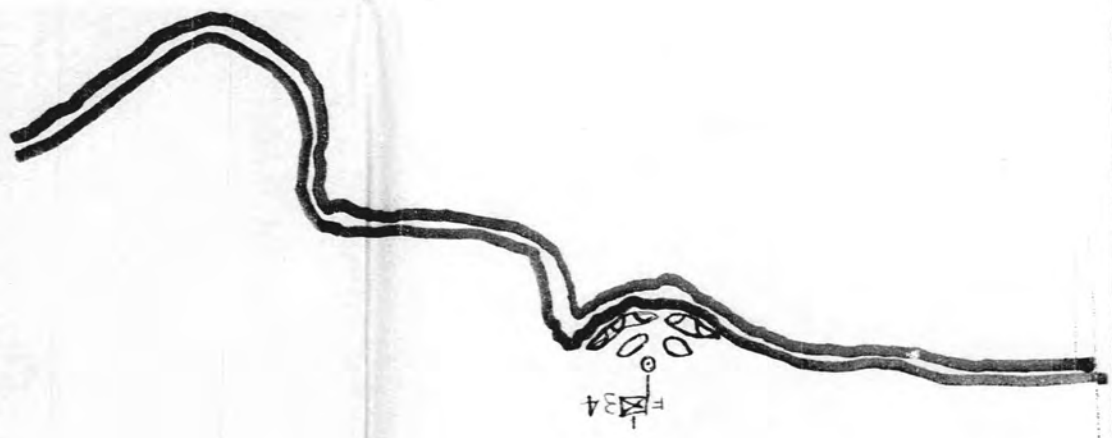
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Hemlock

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OVERLAY NO 1
positions of Co F34th in
Oct 9 - 19, 1918
Special Map No 1



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