

2-36

THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
FOURTH SECTION
COMMITTEE "H"
FORT BENNING, GEORGIA

ADVANCED COURSE ✓
1928-29

OPERATIONS OF COMPANY "C" ✓
3d MACHINE GUN BATTALION
AT
CANTIGNY
(Personal Experience)

CAPTAIN WELCOME P. WALTZ, INFANTRY. ✓

1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE	
Title page	(Unpaged)	✓
Table of contents	i	✓
Bibliography	ii	✓
Marginal abbreviations used	iv	
Introduction	1	
Location and terrain features	3	
Description of ground organization	4	
Enemy information and dispositions	4	
Plan of operation	5	
Preliminary preparation	6	
Operations		
Analysis and criticism	32	
Lessons	35	✓
Questions on Cantigny operations	37	

MAPS

Special Map No I	38
------------------------	----

BIBLIOGRAPHY

American Battle
Monument Commission ✓

A Guide to the American Battle-
fields in Europe; Washington,
Government Printing Office,
1927

A good reference. Short, but accurate.

Bullard, R.L. ✓

Personalities and Reminiscences
of the War; Garden City, N.Y.,
Doubleday, Page & Co., 1925.

A good story and accurate as to detail.
Not complete.

Ely, E. H.
Colonel, U.S.A. ✓

Cantigny Operations, May 28-30,
1918.

A very important reference. Complete and
accurate in every detail. This report was
written a few days after the action and
when all events were fresh in mind.

First Division
Historical Society ✓

Cantigny: Extracts from the
First Draught of the First
Division History.

A good reference. Accurate in facts and
complete in detail. Tendency to withhold
any unfavorable comments.

First Division
Historical Section ✓

World War Records: First Divi-
sion, A.E.F., Regular, 1918.

A good reference. Accurate in general
facts and complete in detail. Written by
veterans of the First Division shortly
after the action, and all facts were
checked by the participants themselves.
It has a tendency to overburden the
division with praise for the action.

Hanson, Joseph Mills ✓

Up the Lines from Cantigny;
The Independent, March 27, 1920.

A colorful story but inaccurate as to
facts. It is no good as a reference.

King, Campbell,
Brigadier-General, U.S.A. ✓

Cantigny Operations.

Very accurate as to the plan of operations.
General King was Chief of Staff, 1st Divi-
sion at the time of action and signed all
operation orders.

MARGINAL ABBREVIATIONS

First Division
Historical Section

History of First Division

McGlachline, E.F., Maj.
Gen., U.S.A.

Report of Capture of Cantigny

Report of G-1 and G-3,
First Division

Cantigny-Montdidier Sector--The
First American Attack.

Ely, Hansen E., Col, U.S.A.

Cantigny Operations, May 28-30,
1918.

Wise, J.C.

The Turn of the Tide

Ware, James V., Capt., Inf.,
U.S.A.

Verbal Statements, Company Commander,
Company "H", 2d Battalion, 28th Inf-
antry.

Johnston, Edward S.,
Captain Inf. U.S.A.

Verbal Statements, Company Commander
of Company "E", 2d Battalion, 28th
Infantry.

McGlachlin, E. F.,
Major General, U.S.A.

Report of Catigny.

A short and accurate account of the action, but written sometime after the action and with no personal knowledge of same but from gathered facts of others.

New York Times Co.,
New York

New York Times Current History:
The European War. 1914-1919,
Vol. 16.

Incomplete and inaccurate as to facts. Just a good story of the first day of action.

Reports from G-1, G-3
First Division

Cantigny--Montdidier Sector--
The First American Attack.

A very accurate and absolutely reliable report. It is a file containing all the official Field Orders, Memoranda, Instructions, etc., of G-1 and G-3 of the First Division, A.E.F.

Stars and Stripes

Official Newspaper of the
American Exp. Force. May 31,
1918, page 1. July 19, 1918,
page 5. Nov. 29, 1918, pages
1 and 7.

An interesting story with much enlargement of facts.

Wise, Jennings Cropper

The Turn of the Tide: American
Operations at Cantigny; New York,
Henry Holt and Co., 1920.

Most accurate in facts and impartial to either side. No undue credit is given the Americans. To my mind it is extremely accurate and very valuable as a reference.

The

INTRODUCTION

Cantigny operation was small of magnitude but of great importance, for it inspired the confidence of the Allies and correspondingly depressed the enemy. It was the first opportunity presented, for the Allies to determine the true fighting qualities of the American soldier and from then on the Allies knew the American soldier could be relied upon.

The Cantigny sector was very active during the American tour of duty and when the 1st Division, U. S. Army took over the sector from the 45th and 162d French Colonial divisions, just two days after the Germans had been stopped, nothing but fox-holes were in evidence and the exact location of the enemy's front lines was unknown. This relief was made on the night of April 24, 1918, at which time the 1st Brigade, 1st Division, consisting of the 16th and 18th Infantry, occupied the front lines with the 28th Infantry, 2d Brigade in a support position at Rocquencourt and

(1) History of
1st Div.,
p. 70,

Coullemelle. (1) At this time Company "C", 3d Machine Gun Battalion, attached to the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry, was located at Rocquencourt.

This machine gun company had formerly been Company "D", 26th Infantry, until it was pulled out from its rifle battalion on January 1, 1918 and assigned to 3d Machine Gun Battalion, as Company "C". It had occupied the lines in Sommerville and Anserville sectors on the Lorraine front, during October 1917 and January, February and March of 1918, but had never engaged in an operation and like all army units which have never

been in action, was anxious to get a taste of real fighting.

The company was not what one might call well trained, but was an average ^{wartime} company. It was equipped with the French air-cooled Hotchkiss machine-gun and received its preliminary machine-gun training from the 54th Alpine Battalion. (French).

(2) History of
1st Div.,
p. 76

On the night of 14th May, 1918, the 2d Brigade relieved the 1st Brigade and the 3d Machine Gun Battalion relieved the 2d Machine Gun Battalion. (2) At this relief, Company "C" took up a position near Villers-Tournelle, located just in rear of our main line of resistance, facing Cantigny.

The company, while located at Rocquencourt, two and a half kilometers west of Villers-Tournelle, experienced very little discomfort from enemy activity but in the Villers-Tournelle position, a very small amount of ^{open} activity during the day, would surely bring enemy fire. It was while the company was located here, that its activities in connection with Cantigny operation began.

The above history of Company "C", 3d Machine Gun Battalion, is set forth in order to permit the reader to properly visualize the company in respect to its organization connections and actual service activities, just prior to Cantigny action.

The writer was second in command of Company "C", 3d Machine Gun Battalion, during the Cantigny operation. It is my purpose to present the facts, as they relate to Company "C's" part in the operation, as

large cellars were still in good shape, and offered good dugouts for occupying troops. The general characteristics of all terrain in the vicinity was very rolling and wooded.

Villers-Tournelle, held by my division, was just two kilometers southwest of Cantigny. It was the scene of many American casualties by the enemy artillery.

DESCRIPTION OF GROUND ORGANIZATION

(Consult Special Map No. 1.)

the
The general trace of our main line of resistance, facing the Cantigny salient, was as follows: on the right, from east to west, along edge of Bois de Cantigny, thence north through Bois Carre, Bois Suisse, beyond Bois Suisse for five hundred yards, then northeast for three hundred yards and then north past Grivesnes. The German main line extended around the western edge of the town and the distance between the opposing lines varied from (fifty yards on the right) to two hundred yards on the left and four hundred yards in the center. (3)

dates shown!
(3) 1st Div.
Map, G-2

This country has white chalky soil which permitted deep and dry dugouts and if any sector needed deep dugouts, this one surely did.

ENEMY INFORMATION AND DISPOSITION

(Consult Special Map No. 1.)

The enemy front line was supported by numerous machine guns and a few large caliber trench mortars were located within the village. There were more than ninety German batteries firing on this sector with many secret

(4) History of batteries. (4) The 271st Regiment, 82d Reserve
1st Div.,
p. 72

accurately as my memory will permit and to place criticism and praise wherever due. The company was attached to the 2d Battalion 28th Infantry during the action and it will therefore be necessary to describe, to some degree, the battalion operation around which the battle activities of Company "C" are centered. It is my intention to describe here only what I saw and not a lot of incidents which were passed down ^{to me} through several individuals. ^{Nevertheless,} It will be necessary to state a few facts which were told me by the company commanders of the assault companies.

LOCATION AND TERRAIN FEATURES

(Consult Special Map

No. 1.)

The town of Cantigny, five kilometers ^{North} ~~west~~ by ^{West} ~~North~~ of Montdidier and held by the Germans, stood on the forward slope of a high plateau, in the center of a small salient. This high ground permitted the enemy to have excellent observation over most of the terrain held by the 1st Division, U.S. Army. The possession of this high ground was very important to either side desiring to make an offensive in this vicinity, for it not only afforded good observation but good cover for reserves. The Germans, quite aware of this advantage, made careful plans to hold it and the Americans made plans to capture it.

This village covered an area of about five hundred meters square, with a good supply of trees and hedges. Prior to our attack on the village, the buildings were quite badly shot up, but many of its

Division (German) held the town of Cantigny, with one battalion in the town, one battalion in support and one battalion twelve kilometers from the line, in reserve. The 272d Regiment of the same division held the northern edge of Cantigny and main line to the north with the

- (5) McGlachlin, same disposition as the 271st. (5)
Maj.Gen.
U.S.Army,
p. 7

PLAN OF OPERATION

(Consult Special Map No. 1.)

Since this account deals with a machine gun company, I shall go very briefly into the plan which concerns the regiments and go more into detail with the plan which concerns the 3d Battalion, 28th Infantry, to which my company was attached for the attack.

The 28th Infantry was to make the attack with three battalions abreast, on a front of 2200 yards. It was to capture Cantigny and the high plateau on which the town stood, thrust into the German line to a distance of about 600 yards to the east of the town and bending back to the northern edge of Bois de Cantigny on the right and to a point about 1000 yards northeast of Bois

- (6) McGlachlin, St.Eloi in the old front line trench on the left. (6)
Maj.Gen.
U.S.A.,p.
6

The 3d Battalion, 28th Infantry, was to take the center assault position and supported by one group of tanks was to attack Cantigny from the west and north, the right of the battalion advancing straight through the village, overcoming any resistance en route. The left of the battalion was to march direct to its final objective, without regard to any fluctuation of the fighting in Cantigny. The 3d Battalion was to be on the left and the 1st Battalion, moving forward on the

right, was to permit its left flank to pass through the southern edge of the village. Each battalion was to be accompanied by a machine gun company. The attack was to be launched early in the morning, (6:45 AM), after a short--one hour--but violent artillery preparation. (7)

(7) Report of G-1 and G-3 1st Div., p. 17

The artillery was to execute preliminary preparation by the long heavy artillery (220's and 280's) in the form of slow and methodical fire of destruction on Cantigny and on the day of attack, from H - 1 hour to H hour (6:45 AM), violent preparation fire of trench howitzer and light artillery was to be carried out on the zone of attack. During the attack, a rolling barrage was to precede the advance. Interdiction fire on probable routes for counterattack was to be placed on the western edge of Bois de Framicourt. (8)

*involved
the long
preparation*

(8) Report of G-1 and G-3 1st Div., p. 18

The corps artillery was to be charged with the neutralization of enemy batteries and was to open fire at H - 2 hours and was to continue its neutralization fire until the end of the operation. (9)

(9) Report of G-1 and G-3 1st Div., p. 18

One plane was to operate during the attack in order to follow the progress of the attack. (9)

*? PV
see Capt. W...*

One half section of Engineers was to accompany each rifle company charged with cleaning up Cantigny.

(10) Report of G-1 and G-3 1st Div., p. 20

PRELIMINARY PREPARATION

(Special Map No. 1.)

On the night of May 24-25, 1918, Company "O", 3d Machine Gun Battalion, then located at a support position around Villers Tournelle was relieved by a machine-gun company of the 18th Infantry and withdrawing to Rocquencourt, took truck for the special training

at Maisoncelle, where a portion of the 28th Infantry was assembled. The remainder of this regiment was at St. Eusoye just two kilometers ^{South} ~~west~~ of Maisoncelle.

In this vicinity, the terrain is very similar to that around Cantigny and it was here that the regiment was to rehearse the attack.

Our machine-gun carts and combat train had been sent overland to this area just prior to our being relieved.

Company "C" rehearsed the attack with the regiment on May 25 and 26, 1918, using the same formations as was to be used in the attack. The plan called for one section of guns ^{to be} attached to each of the three assault rifle companies and six machine guns in reserve to accompany the battalion reserve rifle company.

While at this village, we received our first demonstration of French flame throwers in operation. This section was to accompany the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry through the town and help mop it up. They demonstrated before the regiment the use and power of these weapons. This demonstration was quite impressive, as the red flame, with a great roar and accompanied with a big cloud of very black smoke, shot out of the high pressure tank, which was strapped on the back of the soldier. Turn this flame down the entrance of a dugout and if the enemy within are not killed by the flame, licking into every corner of the dugout, or tunnel, they surely would smother to death from the smoke. It seems to me that they are quite useful ^{weapons} ~~instruments~~ to have around in a defensive position.

During the two days that we were at Maisoncelle,

we checked our machine-gun equipment over very carefully and replaced parts that were missing. In addition to our regular equipment, each man was issued a large two-litre French canteen which hung from the shoulder. Each man was also issued either a large shovel or pick. Those who received the shovel cut the handle half in two so that the shovel, when hanging on the haversack, would not have its handle dragging on the ground. The heavy picks and shovels are the only tools for a short operation. We very quickly found, upon reaching our objective, that one can remove a lot of ground in a very short time with these tools, whereas with the infantry entrenching pick and shovel, the results are not so good when one has ~~temporarily~~ freedom of action.

On one of the two days, in the rear area, all officers of the regiment were assembled in a building at Maisoncelle where the plans of the operation were carefully discussed by the commander of the 28th Infantry, Colonel Hansen E. Ely. In his characteristic, *forceful* forcible way, he impressed upon us the necessity of driving hard ~~into them~~ and allowing no opposition to hinder us from reaching our objective.

On the evening of May 26-27, 1918, Company "C", 3d Machine Gun Battalion entrucked with the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry for the trench area, just due west of Cantigny. All the French peasants in the nearby villages, through which we passed, seemed to know of our attack and were lined up on the road as our trucks passed towards the front, to give us a farewell. It made one think twice.

~~Company "C" moved to the front with 3~~
officers, 96 enlisted men and 12 guns. Of course, the carts and wagons were left at Maisoncelle to await our return after the action, for we had no use for carts in that attack. We took just as much ammunition per gun as a squad could carry by hand and after the take off in the attack, it was never necessary to replenish this supply.

We detrucked about a half of a kilometer west of Rocquencourt and Company "C" ^(less 6 guns) marched independent of the 2d Battalion toward the front lines, ~~with~~ ^{while} the ~~exception of~~ three sections, one attached to each assault company, ~~and~~ accompanied their respective rifle companies ~~in going forward~~.

All nights ~~at~~ near the front lines ~~x~~ were very dark, and certainly this night was no exception. One just had to feel his way along. I have often wondered whether the nights ^{in France} ~~really~~ get ~~very~~ black ~~France~~ or whether they ~~seemed to us that way due to our~~ ~~condition~~ *Just appeared that way to us.*

Our assembly area was in the western edge of Bois Roberval, on the reverse slope of some high ground, which our forward trenches were on. To get there, we had to carry our guns and ammunition by hand, for a distance of about five kilometers. We marched through Rocquencourt, feeling our way through many of our battery positions and then down the road to Villers Tournelle, at which place we encircled its northern edge, after going through several wheat fields. We, now, had to go down a valley by the Bois Belgrand to Bois Roberval. This ravine was called Death Valley

due to the constant shelling of it by the enemy, and the knowledge that one would always run into shells upon entering this valley. Well past midnight, we arrived at our assembly area in Roberval Woods.

The trees at this point were not very thick but due to being located on a nice reverse slope, everybody, for the time being, felt secure and never gave the high angle fire of the enemy mortars a thought.

The men arrived at the assembly point quite fatigued, having carried their heavy machine-gun equipment for a considerable distance and over a much-shelled area, ^{and} on an unfavorable night. They placed their guns and equipment around the various bushes, making sure that they ~~would~~ ^{would} not give off any flashes to enemy planes during the fast approaching daylight. They, then, crawled into nearby fox-holes and went to sleep. It is admitted that no supervision was exercised in the placing on the ground of the machine-gun equipment prior to the men seeking the fox holes and if during the next twenty-four hours the situation called for a sudden use of the guns, no doubt, half the guns could not have been found in the excitement.

At 4:30 AM, May 27, 1918, the enemy put down a real drum fire barrage of 77-mm ~~shells~~ ^{shells} on the trenches just out ahead of our woods. Quite a number of large trench mortar bombs started to drop on our assembly point. We were surprised to find these heavy shells falling on our reverse slope, for we only thought of the 77's when we first took up our position. But they didn't put them on us, thick enough, to do any damage.

When their big barrage started, we thought little of it, just thinking it was some sort of retaliation fire, but as it kept dragging on, we began to wonder whether it didn't amount to more than just retaliation. Over an hour had gone by and still the 77's were pounding our lines just above us. It had now grown light and things didn't seem so bad, as ~~day came~~ ^{during darkness}. The mortar shells were still falling on us, but the men were comparatively safe in their fox holes. No effort as yet was made to gather together the pieces of machine-gun equipment.

Along the western edge of the Bois Roberval were several horizontal shaft dugouts, the command posts of the various companies in the nearby trenches. These were about fifty yards down the slope from the fox holes used by Company "C".

At 6:00 AM the barrage increased in its intensity and things really sounded serious. We hadn't made any reconnaissance and really didn't know where the front line was located. At this point my company commander suggested that we go to one of the dugouts at the base of the slope and try to get some information, at the same time make a map reconnaissance. Why we did not have the location of the trenches, lay of the ground and all things in this vicinity oriented, I am unable to say, except that, possibly, we, never having been there, and arriving at night and ^{being} placed under heavy enemy fire, were ~~completely unoriented~~ ^{slightly disorganized}. Strange and unexplainable things happened on the front.

him and should have shot him on the spot. No American would have yelled "retreat" but would have said something similar to "beat it" or just stated that the enemy had broken through without any mention of retiring.

It is true that the Germans did execute a raid on our subsectors, directly in front of us, at this time and no doubt with the idea of getting some prisoners. They came over at 6:00 AM the morning of May 27, 1918, right when their barrage increased in its intensity. This fire caused serious casualties to our troops in the trenches just ahead of us.

During the day of May 27, 1918, my company remained in their present position at Bois Roberval. Early on the morning of May 28, 1918, shortly after our preparation fire for adjustment with the artillery, started to roar in on Cantigny (4:45 AM), the six reserve guns under a lieutenant followed the captain and myself to a position with Company "G", 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry, which was battalion reserve. This place was in the eastern edge of Bois St. Eloi. At this time the neutralization barrage was thundering over our heads.

Well do I remember how we stood at the edge of those woods, everybody very quiet, long of face, thinking of what was to take place very shortly. It was no time for jokes. This was our first show and with all of this artillery roaring, well, we had seen better times.

Suddenly, just at 5:45 AM, a perfect hail of projectiles went screeching over our heads and dropped in and around Cantigny. The great artillery preparation for the attack had started. The air seemed to be clouded

of Bois de Grande de Villers. How it got through the barrage safely, I do not know. If it had been in battle position and could see ahead, somewhere, it would never have broken, but having arrived on the place at night in a tired condition and having this enemy artillery come down on them, with news that the enemy had broken through and not being able to see or know anything about the terrain was too much for them.

Sign

I took one look at those huge geysers of dirt going up all over the floor of that valley and just knew that I was ready for my last run. So I started out but got through safely and overhauling the squad, brought it back some distance and put it on the south side of the valley. ~~Soon~~ another gun was in position just opposite me.

Spell

Frenchmen began to retire up the valley towards our guns. These Frenchmen, no doubt, were members of the French tank crews, which were to assist us in our attack the next day and who were assembled in the woods just ahead of us. Evidently, they also had been informed of the German breakthrough and ~~got wild eyed~~ ^{were retiring}. About this time, one of our battalion ammunition dumps in Bois Roberval started to go up in smoke. It made quite a show as the smoke and flames shot skyward.

The enemy artillery began to lessen and things looked better. Then we realized for the first time that the soldier who had informed us about the enemy breakthrough was none other than a German agent in an American uniform and who had endeavored to cause a panic within our lines at this point. The captain and myself should have realized who he was at the time of our contact with

or a scared
American

We went to the dugouts, had a short talk with one of the officers found there and were in the act of studying the map, just at the entrance to the dugout, where the light was good when suddenly a young private came running along the base of the hill from the south, halted at our dugout and in a very excited way, waving his rifle and free arm, yelled to us, "Retreat, they have broken through," after which he quickly disappeared. The captain and myself drew our pistols and ran out of the dugout and up the slope to the place where we expected the enemy to appear, for we fully expected that the Germans were upon us and that it was now everybody for himself. We waited a ~~little~~ while but no enemy appeared, ~~the~~ The fire was still very great. We quickly went over to our six gun crews and found them in quite a little confusion. Evidently someone had got them wild-eyed and they were dashing around the bushes trying to find their machine-gun equipment but in their excitement they had forgotten under just the exact bush they left them and as a result they were quite confused. If the situation had not appeared so uncertain at this time, the wild confusion of the men would have certainly presented a laughable sight.

I was in the act of untangling them when my company commander, calling me over to him, showed me one of our squads running to the rear, up death valley and told me to overtake them and put the gun in position on the south side of the valley in order to cover the eastern entrance just opposite Bois Roberval. This squad had gone through a very thick barrage which was playing on this valley and were headed in the direction

with trench mortar shells tumbling through the air into Cantigny. Everyone of us came to life, so to speak, and things began to brighten up. The picture was certainly startling. All of us, at once, sensed the power of our own artillery and knew that with that kind of protection the enemy would be helpless. The weapons which really brought the awaiting troops to their feet were our large howitzers as their projectiles roared just over our heads onto the front line trenches of the enemy. It was the first time that we had seen such heavy shells fall onto trenches. The results were inspiring. As these great projectiles hit the ground, huge geysers of dirt shot up for what seemed to be a height of one to one hundred and fifty feet in the air. Nothing could withstand such a shock action. Words could not describe this magnificent picture. This show was made possible by using an enormous quantity of artillery in comparison to the frontage to be attacked. There was made available one hundred and thirty-two 75-mm guns; thirty-six 155-mm howitzers; sixteen 220-mm and 280-mm howitzers and twenty-four 58-mm, six 150-mm and four 240-mm trench

(11) The Turn of the Tide. (11)

Wise, J.C., In addition to this, the artillery from one French p. 18

division on our right and on our left stretched their

(12) History of the 1st Div., p. 79

ranges as much as possible into our sector. (12)
 Shortly before H hour (6:45 AM) Company "C" 3d Machine Gun Battalion, with Company "G", very quickly moved out of the woods into the open, in line of squad columns so that the enemy would not catch us with their shrapnel on the edge of the woods, and

dropped in a depression on the ground just in rear of our assault companies. We had been out there a very short while when two groups of enemy planes of about four each moved over us at rather low altitude. We all lay very still for fear of being detected, but they slid majestically by us without the slightest suspicion of our presence. Due to our extraordinary artillery activity they had gotten their wind up and were out to see what it was all about. Just one condition saved us from much suspicion: they, no doubt, thought that our own artillery fire was in retaliation for theirs of the previous day during their raid. (We later verified this from prisoners.)

Just three minutes before H hour (6:45 AM), our rolling barrage of 75-mms crashed down in front of us and right on the H hour we pulled ourselves up and moved forward.

The plan was to go forward in three waves but due to the desire of everybody to get past the enemy artillery danger zone, which was the first two hundred yards of our advance, the third wave leaned very hard against the second wave and almost assimilated it. Prior to the attack, we had been instructed that it was necessary to get past this danger zone in ten minutes from the ^{Line of departure,} ~~jump off~~, for it had taken the enemy artillery H plus 10 minutes to come down on their final protective line, during the French attack at Grivesnes, just to the north of Cantigny, a short time preceding this attack. Well, we in the third line kept well in mind these instructions and cleared the two hundred yards very quickly or as quickly as our rolling barrage would let us.

Just before H hour we could hear quite a bit of enemy machine-gun fire from their front line trenches but as one big howitzer shell after another roared into their positions, this fire grew less until all one could hear was a feeble burst now and then. When we started forward in the attack, a very feeble response came from the German trenches.

We had gone but a short distance when the lieutenant in command of our six guns received a bullet through his right hand, ~~as he held his arm aloft for some reason or other~~. He retired from the field and I took charge of his guns. I do not recall having any other member of the company hit while going over. We went across the enemy trenches, encircling the northern edge of the village and coming around to the northeastern side of the large hedge just to the south of the cemetery, ~~we~~ started to dig in, having consumed thirty-five minutes in going across.

When we crossed the enemy trenches, I noticed that very little of them were in evidence, due to the fact that our violent heavy artillery preparation had erased them from the terrain. I noticed an arm here and a leg there protruding from the churned up ground.

Tanks were laboring among our squads on the way over, with their dashing little tank commander, on foot, strutting among them and displaying a shining bamboo walking stick as his only weapon. There was nothing much for the tanks to do while going over but they surely were there looking for trouble. Upon arriving at the farthest point of the infantry advance these tanks got in some good work by firing on enemy

groups, mostly machine guns, which were maneuvering for position.

During our advance I saw one small American doughboy off to my right and out in the clear, close with a large German, in bayonet combat. They seemed to be off to themselves and it was almost funny to see that small doughboy jumping around the big, slow German, playing for an opening. But very shortly the smaller one saw his opening and I saw him give a quick lunge forward, dropping his opponent with a jab to the stomach. This was one of the very few times which I have seen a German use a rifle.

Sydney

A few engineers, who had accompanied us across, started to tape out some trench traces for our strong point, but we were all in a big hurry to get planted before the artillery dropped and could not be bothered with much manipulation of the white tape. We had been told that twenty minutes after gaining our objective the enemy artillery would come down on us. As we started to dig, a few shots came tumbling in, but we had plenty of opportunity to get in before it became bothersome.

A platoon of Company "G" dug in with us along ~~a~~ wavy trace, about one hundred yards out from and in front of the large hedge, along side of which we came to a halt.

We placed one gun to the right rear of this standing trench and near the hedge, one gun to the left rear and near the hedge, with four guns in the trench with the rifle platoon. There is no doubt but what this disposition was very poor, as I see it now. At this date, my disposition for those six guns would have been

to place them in echelon for the three hundred yards distance, between the line of resistance and the support line. This scheme is not advocated by The Infantry School, but I think it is the strongest way to use guns of the support line.

This position of ours was entirely out in the open with the scattered trees of an ill-kept orchard about one hundred yards to our front. We, very foolishly, selected the open ground in preference to the orchard and thereby subjected ourselves to aerial observation. To our left front, the terrain was open clear to Bois de Lalval, which woods were held by the enemy. From this direction enemy machine-gun fire began to swish over our position. The terrain to our right front was quite ~~open~~ ^{wooded}. To our left rear, about two hundred and fifty yards to the north, Company "D", 3d Machine Gun Battalion had established a strong point. To our right and south of us about three hundred yards, the machine-gun company of the 28th Infantry had established a strong point, right in the edge of the grove of trees at the eastern and southern quarter of the town. So here were three strong points, all of which had been established at beautiful registration points for the enemy artillery and the enemy did not wait long to take advantage of this set up. We, like dummies, stayed there and took it without the slightest effort in moving forward to a better and safer place.

The two guns which had accompanied Company "H" through the town never had an opportunity to go into action until they reached their final objective, at which place, they had ~~quite a bit of~~ ^{some} difficulty in keeping a

crew at the guns, due to heavy casualties from machine

- (13) Ware, Jas. guns and enemy artillery fire. (13)
Capt., Inf.
U.S.A.
Statement.
C.O. of
Co. H

The two guns which accompanied Company "E" were put into action at the bend in road (Cantigny-Bois de Lalyal) at the northeastern exit to town and fired down this road into enemy groups which were entrenched along the southern edge of the road. Their fire was very timely and did considerable execution. No further use of these guns existed until the final objective was reached. Here they were disposed, one on each flank of the company, similar to the disposition of the two guns with Company "H", and from this formation all four guns merely executed sector fire across the front of their respective rifle companies and into the adjacent sectors. Company "E" also experienced quite a bit of difficulty

- (14) Johnston, E., Capt.
U.S.A,
Statement

in keeping crews on the guns. (14) Curious enough, most of the enemy artillery would fall on the line of strong points and especially along the edge of the town. So most of the casualties along the line of resistance were due to machine gun fire.

As to the two guns which accompanied Company "F", I am unable to state how they were used. I do not recall which officer had the guns or what happened to them. I was told that all officers in this rifle company were killed very shortly after reaching the final objective and news from that part of the front is lacking.

The enemy had some inclined shaft dugouts along the hedge just in rear of our strongpoints. One of these was occupied by my company commander as his command post. I had just decided to remain with him

but the plan did not look right to me and so with my runner, we went out in the open field to a centrally located point, about twenty-five yards in rear of the standing trench constructed by the riflemen. We dug a rather large fox hole within a large and shallow shell hole and on the enemy side.

The day was very warm and under the heat, excitement and fatigue from digging, our thirst was almost unquenchable and our water soon gave out before the fox hole was completed. My runner suggested that he run back to the jump off line and replenish our four canteens. I gave him permission, but told him to make it snappy for all hell would break loose shortly. He made the round trip in nothing flat, for it didn't seem like anytime before he was back and while he was gone I was digging the fox hole in nothing flat.

Our fox holes and standing trenches were completed in about twenty-five minutes after our arrival at our objective. The shells were coming in on our position pretty good now but still were not what one would call particularly annoying. Numerous wounded were limping through our position by now and were going around the northern edge of the town to the rear.

It was quite noticeable that the heavies were dropping rapidly along the hedge just to our rear and I could see them getting dangerously near the shaft within which my company commander was located. Very shortly the captain came on the run and jumped in the hole along with me. He said things were getting too lively over there. He wasn't any too soon, for a few

seconds after that they dropped a big one right into the entrance to the shaft and dugout planks and dugout went skyward. At this point the two guns located in the hedge pulled out and came forward with the rest of the guns for it was altogether too hot in the hedge for them to remain any longer.

The lone plane of the 1st Division, now put in its appearance, and with red streamers flying on the end of each wing, it shot low over us and cut figure eights around us. The observer would lean out and wave his arms. It was a wonder that an enemy shell didn't get him as he swooped low, right into the path of their trajectories. I often wonder why we couldn't have gathered together more than one plane for the action. The enemy had about eight planes circling over our heads while our one lone plane would have to dart in among them now and then, when they would be over their own lines. I would like to state here that there is hardly anything so depressing to troops as to see the sky filled with enemy planes and none of yours in sight. That is almost as bad as to be in a support position and see your own artillery hitting your forward positions in the back, or worse still to be in the forward positions and be hit in the back.

The enemy air groups kept together and travelled in a large circle, first swinging over our position, then back over their own lines. As they would go back, our lone plane would come forward and swoop down over us. It cheered us up considerably.

The enemy planes kept rather high all morning and refrained from bothering us, being content with observing and spotting for their artillery. In the afternoon of our first day business began to pick up. The planes came lower and out of one group swooped a fast plane onto our strongpoint. His forward guns were pouring it into us from the second he tilted for our position. He kept on coming and it looked as though he was going to bury himself in the first fox hole on our left flank. He seemed to enjoy this and rehearsed his act again. The riflemen were shooting at him and couldn't help hitting him, he was so low. But our first hits on him showed us that his vital parts were metal-covered for we could see sparks fly as our bullets glanced off of his metal sides. So that made him immune from our stings. I could see that he never bothered himself with our line of resistance nor did he bother with the strongpoints on our right and left. Evidently our position, alone, stood out like a lighthouse in a storm. But never once did we have sense enough to move forward to cover, within the widely spaced trees just ahead. Men's minds seem to become paralyzed at times, during action, and after which, they can offer no explanation for their senseless conduct.

The fox hole is certainly the doughboy's friend. I feel more secure in a fox hole, under fire, than in a dugout, but one becomes a real gambler in his fox hole, when his position is subjected to high angle fire from mortars and enemy airplanes. These streams of bullets from the airplanes suggested to my

mind a little overhead protection and so I grabbed the ~~old~~ shovel and widened out the bottom of my hole in only one direction. By doing this an overhanging ledge was created and hugging the side of this ledge close, I could at least protect my vitals from the enemy airplane bullets.

It will be remembered that the plan of operation was for the left battalion (3d Battalion) to advance slightly on its left with its right to connect up with the left flank of the center battalion. In my conversation with various officers who took part in the action, and who were able to see things, at least in their immediate vicinity, I am informed that the left company of the 3d battalion never got started and that the center and right companies of this battalion arrived at their objective. As to the stationary condition of the left company, I am unable to state but I do know that the right flank of this battalion did go forward but at some forgotten time during the afternoon of the first day, ^{groups from} the right flank of the 3d battalion, ^{these groups, constituting} was seen by myself to give way under a withering artillery fire, hitting them in the back. This fire was from heavy guns and seemed to come from our batteries, for the shells could be heard very distinctly going over our heads onto our line beyond. At that time we were positive that these shells were from our own batteries but in plotting out the enemy lines from Montdidier to Cantigny, I can see where it was possible for the German heavy howitzers to fire from the vicinity of Montdidier onto the left flank of our position and at

the same time permit their shells to go over our heads, ~~in the strong point on their way~~. At least I will give our heavy guns the benefit of the doubt. But not so with some of our light artillery. I am quite certain, that at times, some of our light ~~shells~~ ^{shells} ~~were~~ ^{could see them} hitting short, for I ~~saw it~~ ^{could see them} hit in between us and the forward position and could hear ~~it~~ ^{them} come directly from our rear. We shot up every flare we had, for the artillery to lengthen and sent back numerous runners but it wasn't until the second ~~day~~ that these shorts ceased to fall. If they had been shells from the enemy batteries, they would have continued to fall throughout the action.

I could see the heavy shells plow into our line of resistance just to my left front and it wasn't long before a long wave of men started back in groups, and as they fell back these shells fell back with them, which fact suggests enemy shells. These men moved back quickly and finally disappeared to my left rear out of side. I do not remember their returning. I had a very fine observation of this withdrawal and was standing up in the shell hole within which my fox hole was dug, ~~at this time~~, observing ~~their~~ ^{this} movement. I remarked to my company commander that if the right pulled out like the left, we would have to withdraw from our strongpoint. I did not know just what units were withdrawing other than they had pulled out from that part of the line where the 3d battalion was supposed to be. The right flank of the retiring groups came back, close on to the hedge of trees running east

of the cemetery and if one extends this boundary up to the line of resistance it would include the right flank of the 3d battalion and part of the left flank of the 2d battalion. As to whether any of the 2d battalion gave way at this time I do not know and no one else knows. All officers of Company "F" on the left of the 2d battalion were reported to have been killed, shortly after arriving at their objective, and the company commander of Company "E", center company of the 2d battalion could not see what was taking place on his left. I know that the battalion commander could not have seen what was taking place for he was in a dugout ^{at Battalion C.P.} in the center of the town and units on our right could not have seen the movement. Officers of the strongpoint, located in the cemetery, on my left, could see it but they are all out of the service and their names and whereabouts are forgotten. The only officers who saw the movement, no doubt were the four at my strongpoint. Of these, one was killed, the other is out of the service and lost, while my company commander and myself are remaining.

The enemy artillery was very bad from noon of the first day to noon of the third day. Of course it was rather quiet during darkness.

All afternoon of the first day the enemy ~~lepped~~ ^{dropped} over on our strongpoint, large 10 inch ashcans or mortar shells. We would look up out of our holes and see them flopping lazily in the air, from the direction of Bois de Lalval and whistling a very unwelcome tune. This was the high angle stuff that

that the fox hole could not protect one from, if they got on the edge of the hole. They were filled with a powerful charge and with their surface explosion the concussion was terrific. They came over so slowly that one, in looking up at them in an endeavor to gauge their line of drift, had too much time for reflection and this condition made their presence very undesirable. One of these bombs dropped exceedingly close to my hole and the concussion seemed to create a vacuum within the hole. It also pulled all the air out of my lungs and I had to stand up, lean over and gasp for my breath. My heart ached for sometime after that. The terrific concussion had almost finished me.

All through the second day, the enemy artillery was very active and in the afternoon I fully decided that our position was going to be pulverized and all of us churned up with it. I am talking of my strong point and not the line of resistance. The line of resistance escaped the larger part of this tremendous artillery fire. Such a deluge of shells, I never thought would be placed on ^{such} a small position. Getting through a barrage like that certainly instills one with confidence in their fox holes. It is truly a wonderful protection. The dust created by the bursting shells around our position was so great that it looked like the heaviest London fog. French artillery observers, afterwards, stated that it was the heaviest artillery fire they had seen delivered on a small sector in four years of war. My company commander, who had been evacuated during the second day, due to shell shock, said that it looked like the whole hill was being blown to pieces.

All during the second day of the fight two great, long-range, German guns pounded away on our strongpoint and along the hedge just to our rear. These guns were so far back that we never could hear the report of the gun but our first warning of the approaching shells was a great roar in the air as the giants would twist over and then a succession of roars and when it ~~sounded~~ ^{sounded} like a mountain was on the point of smashing us, we could look up and see two huge logs bearing down on us, both together. The concussion and shock was terrific. The earth seemed to buckle and shimmy around in a crazy manner. This type of stuff is what makes men go insane or shell shock. I noticed the regularity of their arrival and taking my Ingersol out, clocked them in every four minutes. All of them were hitting within a radius of zero to one hundred and fifty yards of our strong point. At one time, they registered so accurately on the center of our position that we at last got enough sense to split our men to the right and left, thereby leaving the center vacant. 2d Lieutenant Thomas H. Watson, in command of the rifle platoon at our strong point, was killed a few seconds before we split the strongpoint. He was a brave and courageous officer. His fox hole was just next to mine. He was at all times very active and in his hopped up battle condition, thought it was his duty to be running constantly over to his men. The enemy no doubt observed his movements and I am certain that this was the cause of bringing a large amount of additional fire on us. I tried to keep him down but it was no use.

Gram

He was even taking his pistol and shooting at our runners, from the front line, that were coming back near the strongpoint. When those big shells started to hold fast on the center of our position, he ran forward to see something or somebody and one of the big fellows ranged along side of him and that was the end of a very brave officer. I don't mention his activities as a personal criticism but as an illustration of what to avoid. Officers circulating, when there is positively no need of it, commit a grave mistake and are the cause of much additional losses to the personnel.

I believe that hot food was brought up to our position by carrying parties on the evening of the second day. But it has been my experience that soldiers in a heavy action over a period of two or three days require very little food and their reserve rations are sufficient. Hot drinks are always welcome.

It was on the second day, if I remember correctly, that up from the rear, and through heavy fire, a reserve platoon came on the run, up to our position. The officer was wild-eyed and all out of breath, as also were his men. He had his pistol in his hand and it looked like an infantry charge to me. He halted long enough at our place to yell, "Where are they?" We pointed up ahead and he with his followers disappeared in the trees beyond. We never saw him or his platoon again. It was murder to send more men up to our positions. We had too many men up there already. We should have been thinned out right after the positions

were consolidated. A little later on, some more reserves struck our strong point right when the enemy artillery was hitting us full in the face and these new arrivals dove into the numerous, close-by shell holes and no doubt many of them got badly burnt from mustard gas, for the nearby holes were yellow from this gas and these men arriving there all heated up, certainly were fortunate if they escaped being burned.

The nights seemed to be extremely cold, while up in front of that town and it seemed as though one was frozen stiff, when the streak of dawn would hit us. You see we only had a shelter half and anybody knows there is not much warmth in that article of equipment.

Things were rather active on the morning of the third day, but *Spell* ~~by~~ noon everything was comparatively quiet. The enemy had expended himself in six counter-attacks on our position, all of which were broken up by our artillery fire. At last he decided that enough was enough and since we were intent upon retaining our newly acquired terrain, he was willing to let us have it, all of which we were very thankful for.

Wild rumors were being constantly brought to us from battalion headquarters runners and main line all during the action that the enemy was attacking us in force with plenty of tanks. Wild eyed men can imagine all kinds of things that are going to happen to them. The front is a regular mecca for wild rumors of enemy activity and withdrawal of one's own troops. One usually hears dark rumors instead of enlightening ones.

On the night of May 30-31, well past 12:00, midnight word was given me from battalion headquarters to pull out at once for the rear, that the 16th Infantry would relieve me and that we did not have to await their arrival. Those orders were for my strong point. I do not know what orders the other units received. I, very quickly, ran from one gun position to another in order to acquaint the men of this information. I had some difficulty in awakening them, for everybody was down and out, having been without sleep for three days. I doubt whether an enemy break-through at this time would have been seriously combated, for I don't think the men would have awakened.

After some time, I got them on the surface with their guns and equipment, and formed them up along side of the hedge, to our rear. We were just ready to start out when I heard a parachute flare burst just over our heads. I yelled "down" and just in time, for everything was as bright as day a second after my men had dropped. They surely dropped beautifully though, for they were all ready to drop before I yelled, due to their weakened condition. After that scare, we pulled ourselves up and moving around the northern end of the town, retracing our steps of the attack, three days ago.

Syn. { We had no carts to meet us on the way out and so had to carry, by hand, our heavy guns for five kilometers back around Villers Tournelle and to Rocquencourt. How we ever got our equipment back, I know not, but we did. At Rocquencourt, we halted and fell out. Dawn had broken just before we reached this

village. The appearance of things had changed. We felt like having awakened from a twenty-year sleep. The intense artillery action had changed the appearance of the towns that we had known. Our other squads from the rifle companies rejoined us here and that day we entrucked for our base at Maisoncelle, ~~when~~^{where} we picked up our rear echelon.

During the three-day action my company had received about sixty casualties out of ninety-six men taken over, and of this number from six to ten were killed. I can not state definitely how many were killed or wounded.

The hostile position was penetrated to a depth of about sixteen hundred meters on a front of two and one-half kilometers. The entire German garrison was either killed or captured, two hundred and seventy-five dead being counted. Prisoners to the number of two hundred and twenty-five, including five lieutenants, were taken. (15)

(15) Turn of
the Tide,
Wise, J.C.,
p. 25

The division losses for the three days were as follows: officers, killed 13; wounded 31; missing 1; men killed 186, wounded 621, gassed 200, missing 15. (15)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

My company was brought up to the assault position twenty hours before the attack. This was wrong because it is the same as bringing a football team out on the field twenty-four hours before the game. Assault troops are dead on their feet, if they are required to wait this long. Sometimes it is necessary

to place assault troops in position, as we were placed, ^{to my knowledge} but conditions didn't warrant our being placed ^{on assault positions} twenty-four hours before the attack. The 2nd battalion was placed there with us, while the 1st and 3d battalions were put in position about three hours before the attack, which is about the proper time.

Although the Infantry School does not teach attaching machine guns to assault rifle companies, I think every assault rifle company should have at least two machine guns attached to it, as was done in this case. The fire power must be at the finish, ^{when going forward with artillery, and} a very few minutes after the objective is reached. ~~and~~ They will never be there in time for a quick, determined enemy counterattack if the machinegun companies trail along far to the rear near the normal reserve positions of the battalion. And guns coming up late are quite likely to have to come up under very stiff enemy fire which eliminates the chance for proper selection of machinegun positions and proper sectors of fire. If the enemy hasn't been too badly disorganized, they will pull off their first counterattack in fifteen to twenty minutes after we have hit them. This doesn't allow sufficient time for guns trailing along behind to come up and get properly located. Let the attached guns run chances of getting knocked out in order to gamble for the necessary fire power at the proper time. The big fault with attached guns following close is that they go too close to the assault platoons and not sufficiently near the support platoons of the assault companies.

The three strong points on the support line were located badly. By pushing all of them one

hundred and fifty yards forward, they would have been clear of well known landmarks and reasonably safe and at the same time could have afforded the front line better support. I think most of the guns which are not placed on the line of resistance should be echeloned from the main line to the rear instead of placing them on well-defined lines. I like a hidden thorn every step the enemy takes, after his initial penetration. If the enemy breaks through, the machine-guns on a defensive position become sacrifice guns, any way, and put them in a position to chew the enemy up all the way back. This can be done by echeloning them back over the entire distance, rather than echeloned in groups on well defined lines.

We should never have constructed standing trenches at our strong point, on the first day, but should have allowed only fox holes for the first two days and as soon as things got a little quiet then we could have ~~can~~ connected up the fox holes. If we had used nothing but fox holes during the first two days, our casualties would have been very small.

Additional troops should not have been sent forward at any time in the fight. In fact there should have been a thinning out of the assault troops after the positions were consolidated rather than allowing the enemy artillery to thin them out.

I think the assault troops should be relieved on the first night, if they have suffered heavy while going over and if not, then by the second night, at least, if the enemy artillery and machine-gun fire is at all heavy during their occupation. Troops of course

must be available before this can be done. During any night after the attack the relief could have been made with very few casualties.

Some sort of transportation should have been arranged for the carting of machine guns as far forward as Villers Tournelle and return. The distance was to for by hand.

LESSONS

Discussing the company situation only, the lessons are as follows:

1. The machine guns moved quickly to their objective, meeting enemy resistance with prompt and successful measures and assisted in holding on to the captured position. In this way they carried out the Principle of the Objective.

2. The Principle of the Offensive was shown when the machine-gun company quit a defensive line, and in conjunction with other troops, moved forward in the attack.

3. When the two guns, with the center company, went into action at the bend in the road to the north-east of town, and caught the enemy with sudden and surprise fire, its action embodied the Principle of Surprise.

4. I think the Principle of Security was violated by placing the three strong points at important landmarks on edge of town. By moving all three strong points a short distance forward, they would have been clear of the landmarks and the second strongpoint would have been free from direct and aerial observation.

5. All plans pertaining to the use of the twelve guns of this company were extremely simple and were free from contingencies. In this the Principle of Simplicity was applied.

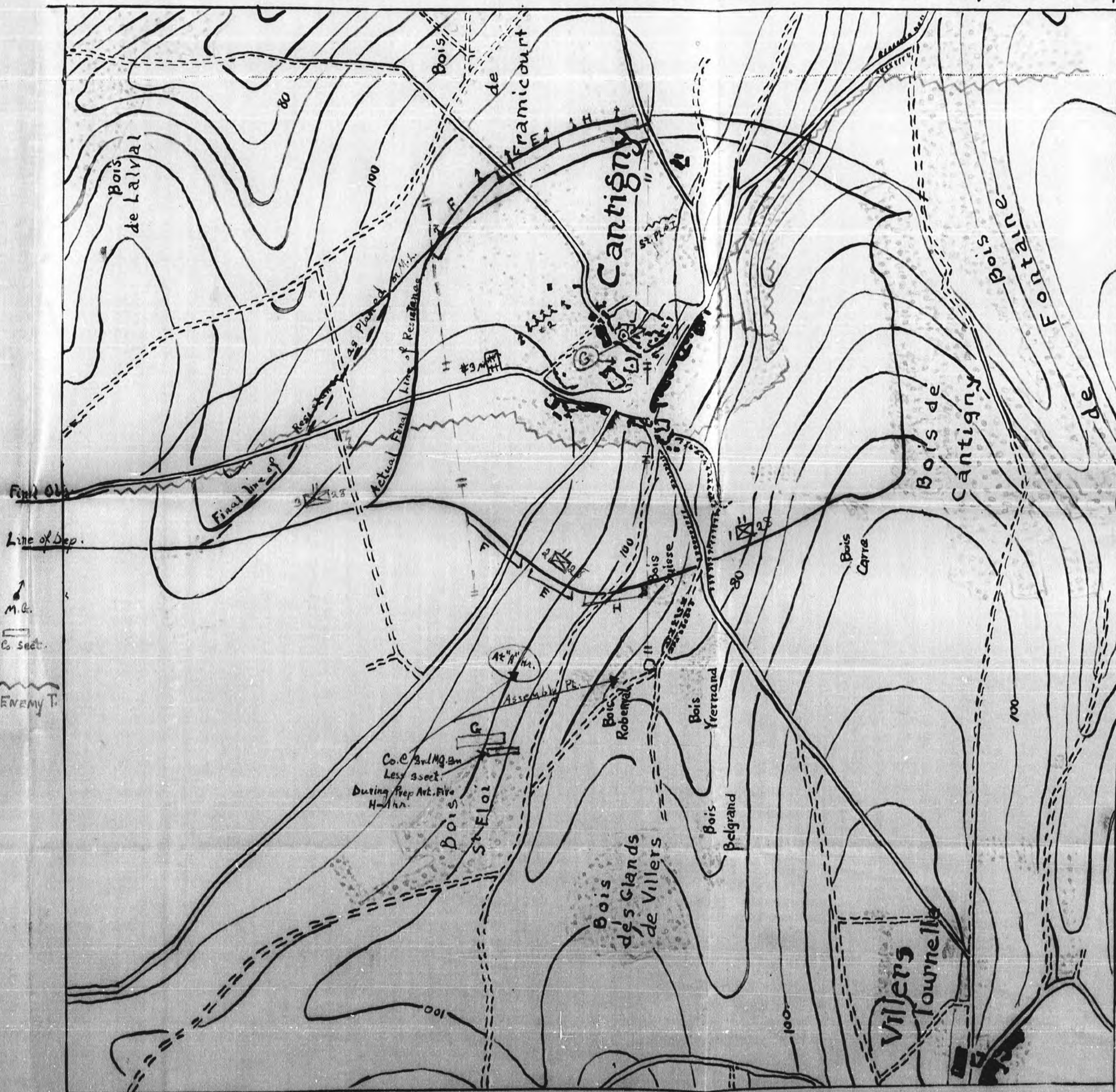
6. Close cooperation of the machine guns with the assaulting rifle companies of the 2d battalion, both, while attacking and holding the captured ground, was applying the Principle of Cooperation.

QUESTIONS ON THE CANTIGNY OPERATIONS

1. Did the machine guns properly cooperate with the assault rifle companies to which they were attached?
2. In what way could the operation plan be changed in order that Company "C" might be in better condition to jump off at H hour?
3. In what way was provision made to get the machine guns up to the assault position from point of detrucking and was this sufficient?
4. While in an assembly position just in rear of your assault position is it necessary to be prepared for an attack, providing friendly troops are between you and the enemy?
5. What should you try to avoid in selecting machine gun positions?
6. Was the strong point of Company "C" properly located? State your reasons.
7. Did machine guns go forward as a company or were some guns attached to assault rifle companies?
8. Why were the machine-gun carts left out of the action?
9. What formation did the company use in jumping off?
10. What was the mission of Co "C"; 3rd M.G. Bn.

No answers to questions.

CANTIGNY OPERATION. MAY 28-30, 1918.



T.D.G-2 1st Div A.E.F. No 39

1:10,000 Scale
Meters

W.P. WALZ,
CAPT. INF. U.S.A.

Copy #1

Contour Interval - 20 meters

