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2-

ADVANCED COURSE

1926-27

OPERATIONS OF COMPANY "B", 11TH INFANTRY, 5TH DIVISION, AT ST. MIHIEL

September 12--14, 1918

Captain Philip S. Wood, Infantry

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MAPS

2 maps.

Carswell, Stuart R., Captain
St. Mihiel

Detailed study of the battle as a whole, showing considerable effort and study on the part of the writer. Valuable as it has been compiled from a wide variety of sources gotten together in one document.

Cotton, Robert
A Study of the St. Mihiel Offensive. (in The Infantry Journal, 1920, Vol. 17, pp 43-59)

Very good brief account of the battle as a whole. Lacking detail.

Shaw, Oliver
The Battle of St. Mihiel.
(in the Field Artillery Journal, Sept-Oct. 1925. Vol. 15, pp 448-456)

A short monograph on St. Mihiel done by a Harvard Student.

Peek, E.D.
Army Engineer Operations in the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne Offensives. (in the Military Engineer, 1922, vol. 14)

Engineer information.

A Brief History of Seventh Engineers, 5th Division.

Very brief account of engineer accomplishments.

Society of the Fifth Division
The Official History of the Fifth Division, U.S.A. during the Period of Its Organization, and of Its Operations in the European World War, 1917-1919. Washington, D.C., The Society of the Fifth Division, 1919.

A fairly accurate account, but like all division histories it is written to make good reading for members of the division. Naturally more space is given to achievements than to errors. The detailed data is in many places inaccurate but this is to be expected as only the eye-witness knows definitely of certain things. It served as a check on memory.

Wythe, George
A History of the 90th Division New York, The Ninetieth Division Association, 1920.

Written so as to make good reading for the folks in Texas and Oklahoma, rather than as an accurate source book.

Corey, Milo, Colonel
Operations Attacks and Offensives. Photographs and Plates Loaned.

Mostly photographs.

Heraty, F. J., Captain
Example of Machine Guns repelling Counter Attack, St. Mihiel Offensive.

Account by an eyewitness, covering the essential facts, but a little "pro machine gun".

Field Orders 1st Army
Field Orders and Reports
St. Mihiel

Will leave them to Leavenworth to remark on.

Der Kampfe um den Bogen von St. Mihiel, by Oberstleutnant Hermann von Giehrl

A good account of the battle from German viewpoint. This document is in German and is believed to be well worth translating. Fair and unbiased on the whole. No page references are given as data obtained from this were obtained from extracts obtained thru an interpreter.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Reference

Evaluation of Sources

Thomas, Shipley
The History of the A.E.F.
New York, George H. Doran Co.

Too general to be of any value in dealing with the specific subject as assigned.

Page, A.W.
Our 110 Days' Fighting.
Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday,
Page, and Company, 1920.

Same as above; good general description of the battle as a whole, but lacking in detail.

Pershing, John J. and Liggett, Hunter
Report of the First Army, AEF
Organization and Operations.
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, The
General Service School Press.

Reliable source and accurate as far as the higher units are concerned but naturally includes nothing definite as to individual company actions.

Palmer, Frederick
American in France
New York, Dodd, Mead and
Company, 1919.

Entirely too general for the purpose at hand giving a readable account of the battle as a whole but no detail from a military standpoint involving smaller units.

Michelin et Cie
The Americans in the Great War
Vol.2: The Battle of Saint Mihiel
Clermont-Ferrand, Michelin et Cie,
1920

Tourist information; mostly pictures.

Michelin et Cie
Le Saillant de St. Mihiel, 1914-
1918. Clermont-Ferrand, Michelin
et Cie, 1919.

Tourist information; mostly pictures.

U.S. War Department
Battle Participation of Organiza-
tions of the American Expeditionary
Forces in France, Belgium and Italy,
1917-1918. Washington, Government
Printing Office, 1920.

Shows in detail organizations participating. Good to check up who won battle clasps!

Liggett, Hunter
Commanding an American Army; Recol-
lections of the World War. Boston,
Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925.

Personal account touching the high spots. Not in accord with other writers on some points.

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.

Too brief for purpose at hand.

Hindenburg, Paul von
Out of My Life, New York and London,
Harper and Brothers, 1921. 2 volumes

Barely mentions the battle, apparently desiring to pass over it very casually. Aside from this, appears unbiased.

Message 1st Battalion
11th Infantry

Copy bound herewith. Example of brief
hastily written order.

NOTE.- Naturally none of these documents with exception of 5th Division History give much detail down to and including a company; consequently, the 5th Division History is consulted most frequently.

MEMORY.- From this source quite naturally in a personal experience comes much of the recorded data. Every attempt has been made to record this information exactly and wherever possible it has been cross-checked, and compared with other sources. However, eight years have elapsed since the action took place and some of the facts that seemingly should be recalled with ease have been forgotten, while on the other hand many minor points stand out with surprising distinctness. There seems to be little rhyme or reason in the manner in which time deals with that intangible thing--memory.

MARGINAL ABBREVIATIONS USED

Page	"Our 110 Days' Fighting"
Palmer	"America in France"
Liggett	"Commanding an American Army; Recollections of the World War"
Von Hindenburg	"Out of My Life"
Carswell	"St. Mihiel"
Cotton	"A Study of the St. Mihiel Offensive"
Shaw	"The Battle of St. Mihiel"
5th Div.	"Society of the Fifth Division"
90th Div.	"A History of the 90th Division"-- Wythe
Heraty	"Example of Machine Guns Repelling Counter Attack, St. Mihiel Of- fensive"
Von Giehl	"Der Kampfe um den Bogen von St. Mihiel"

PREFACE

In the fall of 1926, the officers attending the advanced course of The Infantry School were given a choice as to whether their monograph should cover one of a number of subjects ranging from Alexander the Great down to and including phases of the World War. In additon to these there was the alternative of offering as a subject a "personal experience". At his own request the writer was assigned one of the latter but not ~~UNTIL~~ after considerable thought, inquiry and many misgivings was it finally submitted as the first choice.

The two main reasons for hesitancy in making this selection were as follows: On every hand one was dissuaded by the remarks to ~~this~~^{the} effect that it is best not to stir up anything, let the sleeping dogs lie, and the other being that one quite naturally does feel some delicacy in talking and writing on a subject that might savor of "how I won the war".

The selection, however, was made with the thought that I might teach best by pointing out the errors of omission and commission in a company action in order that others might profit from these mistakes, rather than attempt a discourse on one of the Great Captains upon whom volum~~s~~^{es} have been written ~~and~~ which are available for the asking.

Being now committed to a personal experience be it remembered above all else that it is not recorded as a feat of arms but rather as an account of an average company trying to do its bit in that interesting position of a flank company of a division in a big attack.

BRIEF HISTORY OF COMPANY "B", 11TH INFANTRY

The writer first took command of Company "B", 11th Infantry in the fall of 1917, and for the purposes of this article its history need go no farther back than that time. Stationed at Camp Forrest, Georgia, more often spoken of as Fort Oglethorpe, it completed its intensive training during the winter of 1917-18. A winter memorable even in the South for its severity. (1) December 1917 saw us assigned to the 5th Division. Like the division as a whole the company may be considered as regular army in name only. The length of service for the sergeants averaged from six to nine years but through the grade of corporal and private first class it dwindled rapidly, the privates composed for the most part of elements of the draft or the echelon immediately preceding it. (2)

(1) 5th Div.
p 53 ✓

(2) 5th Div.
p 53 ✓

Early in 1918 business started picking up in those mysterious channels of Army communication controlled by the Great God Rumor. Confirmation of these rumors presently indicated that we might expect to sail at a not too distant date, and April found the 11th Infantry at Camp Merritt, New Jersey, fairly well grounded in its basic training and ready for the Great Adventure.

On the last of April when the Leviathan, former pride of the German Merchant Marine, slipped out of New York Harbor, the 11th Infantry was a small part of its huge cargo. The voyage, enlivened by submarine thrills which never materialized, was terminated on May 5th in the Harbor of Brest. (3)

(3) 5th Div.
p 55 ✓

After a day or two of rest the company had its initial introduction to the French boxcar. Our destination was the vicinity of Bar-sur-Aube, designated as the 5th Division training area. (4) Here for approximately one month our interrupted training program was continued.

(4) 5th Div.
p 57

Toward the middle of June the very welcome movement to

(5)5th Div.
p 347

the front took place. Following the custom of most divisions we were sent to quiet trench sectors and spent the period from June 15th to July 15th in the Arnould Sector, in the Vosges Mountains well over toward the Swiss border. (5) Here the company and regiment went through the initiation period for a while being attached to the 77th Division (French) and later serving in various capacities in the different subsectors. From here we moved on westward into the St. Die sector remaining until the 23 of August. (6)

(6)5th Div.
p 348

In retrospect, the occupation of these sectors, of purely stabilized trench warfare, cannot be viewed other than with pleasure. Comfortable for the most part, even for the enlisted man in the front line, well organized after some three and one-half years of stabilization, the enlivening which American occupation brought gave just enough thrill and danger to make them interesting rather than distasteful or depressing. (7)

(7)5th Div.
p 60

The experience with various raids and patrols and an occasional shelling gave the troops that feeling of confidence and seasoning that can come only by actual combat.

(8)5th Div.
p 77

After these two months in the line the regiment was withdrawn from the front to the Arches area, above Epinal. Here it enjoyed a two days rest. Equipment and clothing was replaced and a general clean-up effected. Following this a few days were allotted for training in the almost forgotten extended order formations. (8) Let us now turn from the company for the time ^{BEING CONSIDER} and the field of operations in which it was shortly to be employed.

HISTORY OF THE ST. MIHIEL SALIENT

(9)Shaw,
p 449

The St. Mihiel salient dated back to 1914 and like many salients was the result of uncompleted or halted operations (9) The Germans, being stopped on their left in the battle of Lorraine and in front of Verdun, Toul and in the Argonne,

(10)Palmer,
p 420 -

quickly grasped the natural defensive possibilities of the salient and permitted the line to stabilize. (10) In 1915 the French made an unsuccessful ^{what? (attack)} and dearly paid for attempt to regain the ground. So we find the salient in 1918. A naturally strong defensive position reinforced by every artificial means during four years of German occupation, it covered the

(11)Pershing, most sensitive section on the Western Front. (11)
p 41

The huge triangle had for a base the general line Etain--Jonville--Prency. A western face of about twenty-eight kilometers and a southern face of about 32 kilometers which turned just south of St. Mihiel, near the apex, and ran generally eastward towards Pont-a-Mousson, in all containing some 200 square miles of French territory.

Its western face was particularly strong. The rugged chain of hills rising sharply above the Meuse Valley and stretching northward to the lowlands of the Woevres. Along this line stretched the Camp des Romains, the German trenches. On the southern face the salient was strong well past Montsec and with its most vulnerable avenue of attack in the Seicheprey-Limey

(12)5th Div, region. (12)
p 89

From a German viewpoint the value of the salient ^{MAY BE} summed up as follows: Its retention offered a constant threat against the Toul-Nancy region. It served as a means for the interruption by artillery fire of traffic on the Nancy-Paris railroad and prevented any resumption of traffic by rail or otherwise northward through St. Mihiel to Verdun. From an allied viewpoint its reduction would be required prior to any attack having in view the destruction of the Sedan-Metz Railroad system which was vital to the German armies west of Verdun. Its reduction would also serve as a threat against the great Briey Iron Basis. Lastly, and of more importance considering the plans in view, its reduction was a necessary preliminary to the larger and more extensive operations in the

Meuse-Argonne which were planned as the American part of the great allied offensive of the fall of 1918. The Meuse-Argonne could not have been attempted with this deep salient threaten-

(13) Carswell, ing on our right. (13)

p 45

GENERAL PLAN OF OPERATION

The general plan of attack very briefly summed up was as follows: The main attack, starting from the southern side of the salient and driving northward toward Vigneulles-Thiaucourt, was to be assisted by a secondary attack from the western side of the triangle thus pinching off the apex of the salient. Pressure on this tip was to be applied by direct frontal attack, after the main and secondary attacks were under way. (14)

(14) Cotton,

p 49

To carry out this mission we find for the first time in France a major operation being conducted by an American Staff. It is a well established fact that General Pershing had gone to France with the idea and with definite instructions to the effect that we were to have an American Army, "for the people, by the people", that is, an American Army commanded by

(15) Pershing, Americans. (15) Our troops were not to be considered merely

p 40

as so much man power to be used as replacements to fill the badly depleted ranks of the British and French. However, prior to this time American troops had been scattered along the line from Switzerland to the North Sea, and not until after the Bombon conference of July 24th between General Pershing and Marshal Foch was the long talked of American

(16) Pershing, Army under American command a reality. (16) As a result of

p 39

this conference, at St. Mihiel were concentrated approximately 600,000 troops under American command. (17) For the first time in France more than two American divisions were side by

(17) Cotton,

p 52

(18) America side. (18) It is, however, well to remember that, though

in France,

Palmer, p 421

this was essentially an American operation, much of it was

(19) Cotton,
p 52

made possible by French materiel. Much assistance was rendered by artillery, tanks, and the concentrated air forces which came from French and British sources. (19) About 50,000 French troops were also employed in the attack. However, the command was American and the scene was set to determine whether an American Army under its own command was doomed to failure or success. Win, lose, or draw, the responsibility was American. (20)

(20) Page,
p 74

ENEMY PLAN OF DEFENSE

(21) Carswell,
p 10

In general, the enemy plan of defense was built on the basis of smaller salients within the large one, the final line of resistance to be the rear side of the triangle known as the Michael I position, main fighting zone, and Michael II rear fighting zone, both were in reality portions of the famous Hindenburg lines. (21) In speaking of the plan of defense and the German dispositions during the battle it is difficult to avoid a discussion regarding just how much the German High Command knew of the details of our plan. On this point I find the widest divergence of opinion, from those declaring that the attack was a complete surprise (22)

(22) Liggett,
p 63 ✓

on the one side to those stating that the details of the attack were published in the Swiss papers a month before hand and that it was common talk in Paris. Consideration of the various views inclines me to the belief that the truth lies somewhere between these two schools of thought. (23)

(23) Carswell,
p 7 ✓

That the German intelligence did not know that the attack was pending is ridiculous. (24) On the other hand I question

(24) Page, p
66

~~WHETHER~~ they knew the day and hour and many important details. To substantiate this later view, on the night September 11th-12th many of the major elements of their command were in full move. In a specific case the 77th Division (opposing the

5th Division) was engaged in a process of regrouping involving the entire division and much of its artillery was moving when our barrage commenced. (25) In commenting on this the German staff officer remarks that this was a matter of "American luck". Assuredly this luck would not have been ours had their information been more exact.

Von Hindenburg wrote feelingly on the subject of the salient when he said in speaking of the lines "they were a tactical abortion which invited the enemy to attempt a great blow". (26) He goes on to state that it had long been a matter of conjecture as to why the French had so long remained inactive on this front. Although he admits its value as a threat and as hampering Allied movement he questions the German policy of retaining the sector advancing the view that it would perhaps have been wiser long before to have voluntarily evacuated the position. (27) He further admits a serious defeat, all of which summed up points to the correctness of the view that our plan of attack in general was known but that the exact date was not, or if found out, was not learned in sufficient time to permit of a complete withdrawal. This is further evidenced by the large amount of material captured and the fact that much more was burned. Bridges were left intact and much rolling stock abandoned.

(26)Hinden-
burg, p 222

(27)Hinden-
burg, p 222

(28)G-2 Report (28) From German sources it appears that the High Command
GHQ, Sept.14th had no very definite information even after the battle had started, that many of their balloons were either burned or torn loose by the wind and that the information gained by their air service was meagre. (29)

(29)Von
Giehl

ORDER OF BATTLE

To carry out its mission of September 12th the American forces in the line were disposed as follows: On the right General Liggett's 1st Corps with the 82d, 90th, 5th, and 2d

Divisions from right to left, next the 89th, 42d and 1st Divisions composing General Dickman's 4th Corps. Approximately opposite Montsec were the French Colonial troops adjoining the 26th and 4th American Divisions between whom was the

(30) Carswell, 15th French D.I.C. (30)

p 5

The enemy order of battle will not be discussed from a general standpoint. For our purposes it is sufficient to say that on September 12th the 5th Division was opposed by the 77th Landwehr Division, a fact emphasized by statistics which show that of the 1139 prisoners taken on the 12th September all but three were from the 77th Division. We may carry this a point farther and state in general that the 5th Division was opposed for the most part by the 332d Infantry 77th Division. German sources state that this regiment alone opposed the entire 5th Division. In considering this let us bear in mind two things: first, that although the 5th Division was deployed in great depth, it had but two battalions in the assault, and, second, that the Division captured 788 prisoners who were not from the 332d Infantry but with the exception of three were from the 77th Division. (31) This quite obviously shows that other elements of the 77th Division were engaged. However, in the broader aspect the report as a whole may be accepted that the 332d Infantry caught the brunt of the attack. The lieutenant colonel commanding this regiment, together with personnel that probably constituted slightly more than half of the regiment, were captured. The 123d German division that was in the vicinity of Waville relieved the 77th Division during the latter part of the battle and a regiment (174th Infantry) from the 31st Division was also used against the 5th Division.

(31) 5th Div.

p 109 ✓

Authority?

MOVEMENT OF COMPANY "B" TO SCENE OF OPERATIONS

Let us now leave the larger aspect of the operation and return to Company "B" in its training in open warfare, to the north of Epinal. It is difficult now, considering the last phases of all actions on the Western Front, and the vindication of the American open warfare doctrine, to realize that we were at one time steeped in the atmosphere of fixed trench warfare. Our reverting to type, as it were, and the resumption of extended order movements in itself spoke of operations other than the occupation of well organized trench sectors. (32) We heard nothing definite however as to the coming operation.

(32) 5th Div.
p 77

Viewed in the light of history after an eight year interim, it appears now as though it was an open secret that the St. Mihiel salient was to be pinched off by an American offensive. To most of us in France however, who were leading the narrow existence of company commanders, the triangle representing St. Mihiel meant little more than a dent in the Allied line. The reason for its existence and how it was to be treated being more often open to conjecture than explanation.

On the 6th of September the night marches of the 11th Infantry started along with the rest of the Divisional Infantry. (33) Members of Company "B" were painfully aware of the fact that they were going somewhere. All movements were made at night and, as the G-2 reports would have expressed it, the visibility was extremely poor. In other words, it rained incessantly, the nights were inky black and the destination for the night's halt seemed to grow more distant as each night wore on. Of all commands the one "form for shelter tents", when you can not see your hand before you and have no idea of the terrain, appears the most ludicrous.

(33) 5th Div.
p 86

However, none more welcome can be given a leg-weary doughboy outfit at 4:00 A.M. on a cold wet morning when it finally marks the end of a seemingly endless march over slippery, hilly roads winding through darkened villages and by deserted farms. (34)

(34) 5th Div.
p 91

Such were the nights prior to September 12, 1918. As the 11th Infantry moved westward to the area of operations it became more and more apparent that a large scale push was impending. Road activities became increasingly great, other troops were encountered at more frequent intervals. Automotive transportation business was also picking up and the roads became more and more cut and rutted by the constant flow of heavily loaded vehicles. A great offensive was brewing.

The night of September 10-11th found Company "B" billeted in the vicinity of Mamey and late on the afternoon of the 11th of September an assembly of company commanders of the 1st Battalion 11th Infantry was called by Major Mahin, Battalion commander. (35) Not until this time did we have any definite information as to the nature of the attack or the part we were to play in it. The meeting over, the battalion officers returned to their respective billets armed with operation maps and with definite orders as to the attack and our particular jobs. D-day and H-hour were beginning to lose their ethereal character and loomed as an imminent reality.

(35) 5th Div.
p 93

5TH DIVISION SECTOR

The sector assigned to the 5th Division was about two kilometers wide and in general was divided into two regimental sectors by a line drawn north and south through Regnieville and Vieville with the right sector assigned to the 11th Infantry and the left to the 6th Infantry. Our

initial direction of attack was due magnetic north. The terrain over which the 11th Infantry had to pass was well organized for defense and a very stubborn resistance could have been offered had the lines been fully manned. The German first line trenches were about 400 yards from our trenches and were protected by the usual wire. They were located on the forward slope which rose gradually to Bois de la Rappe to their rear. Through the Bois de la Rappe ran the first combat position and to the rear and north of this ran the second or real combat position. This second position consisted of parallel trenches some 200 to 300 meter apart with concrete structures and amply supplied with dugouts capable of resisting heavy artillery fire, being twenty feet below ground level. This second position running through the Bois de Saulx, Bois de Grand Portions and the Bois St. Claude. North of here were artillery positions. Vieville was organized for defense with strongly constructed pill boxes and surrounded by wire. In the church tower machine guns commanded a position with over a kilometer radius. Northward from Vieville the Division sector swung to the northeast and the ground was scarcely organized for about three kilometers northeast to where the outpost line of the Third Combat Position ran through the Bois de Grand Fortaine, Bois Hanido and Bois de Troude/la Haie to La Soulevre Farm. (36) This line being the outpost line of the Michael I position or as more often spoken of in American circles a part of the Hindenburg line.

(36) 5th Div.
p 95 ✓

MARCH TO JUMP-OFF POSITION

The exact hour of leaving our billets on the evening of the 11th of September cannot be definitely determined, but it was around 7:00 P.M. when the company started on its 6 or 8 kilometer hike to our jumping-off place. It was cloudy and

---eleven---

rainy and became dark very shortly after our start. The roads at this time were, in the parlance, 'a seething mass' of humanity, mud and artillery. It became very dark and the only means of keeping contact was by each man holding on to the raincoat of his file leader. We continued northward toward the front. At the culvert under the Metz bridge a large tank complicated matters having wedged itself endwise in the passage under the bridge completely blocking the passing of any kind of vehicles. Even foot troops at this particular time were forced to go over the top of the fill rather than to attempt to crowd through.

Up to a point past this bridge we had been marching entirely by map. The customary guides that had made the relief in the various trench sectors comparatively easy, were conspicuous by their absence. It was known that our destination was some trenches immediately in rear of our jump-off position, which were being lightly held by the 2d Battalion, 357th Infantry, 90th Division. We were however having our troubles as to direction. By 9:00 P.M. we were well to the north of the Metz Bridge but were still hazy as to which of several indistinct trails we were to take. Fortunately at this time we ran across a private who knew the location of the 11th Infantry command post. The company was parked on the side of the road and a personal trip by the company commander was made to Headquarters. Any definite information was lacking, but by the lights in the dugout a more careful examination of the map could be made and a route was selected. Returning to the company we again continued the march and the next problem was to select one of several communicating trenches. The signs on all of these had been removed or destroyed. It was now about 11:30 P.M. Our artillery preparation was to start at 1 AM and our orders stressed the importance of our being in position prior to that time. A

few shells fell but we suffered no casualties. Just how this company finally succeeded in finding its correct position in the line has always been a mystery to me.

As we neared the front one or two men from the 90th Division were encountered but they were of little assistance in directing us and were themselves hastening to their own organizations. The breaks of the game were with us however and through the whim of destiny rather than to any particular good judgment on our part we located the exact trench which was designated by name in our order. We had arrived only a scant ten minutes before the artillery preparation started!

The period from 1 AM to 5 AM should appear as an eternity when the existing circumstances are considered. Four hours of irksome restless waiting in a strange front line trench, made still further dreary by a cold driving rain, should logically be recalled as a nightmare. My recollections of it are quite the contrary. Two factors shortened the long wait. One, the thrill of going over in a big attack and the other the artillery preparation that we were privileged to review. (37) This display was the most stupendous that had ever been laid down for an American Army. The Infantry man in the intimacy of his mess hall is prone to speak of artillery in terms of shorts and overs, failure to be in position, and persistency in ignoring all doughboy S.O.S. barrage signals. But when crouched in a front line trench waiting for the whistle to send you over the top, I know of nothing more cheering than the whine of friendly shells and their final burst within the enemy lines. Although incurring the risk of being accused of plagiarism or of soaring to poetical heights I cannot help but liken the barrage to the aurora borealis. For four hours the 3,000 guns blazed forth on nearly a 40-mile front and during the engagement sped 1,000,000 rounds into the enemy lines. (38)

(37) Cotton,
p 51 ✓

(38) Cotton,
p 58 ✓

---thirteen---

Turning now from the more general order of battle and recalling only that the 5th Division was between the 90th on its right and the 2d on its left, let us consider the dispositions of the 5th.

ORDERS FOR ATTACK

The 5th Division order No. 41, dated 9 September, 1918 states in part "The Infantry will attack in column of brigades, the leading brigade in line of regimental columns, each regiment with one battalion in the first line". Colonel Malone's 10th Infantry Brigade was disposed as follows as the leading brigade: The 11th Infantry on the right, 6th Infantry on the left, and each regiment having its battalions finally arranged as follows for the jump-off: 11th Infantry 3d, 1st, 2d and the 6th Infantry 2, 3, 1st. (39)

(39)5th Div.
pp 97 & 99 ✓

The 15th Machine Gun Battalion was disposed as follows:

Company A to 3d Battalion 11th Infantry

Company B to 3d Battalion 6th Infantry

Company C to 1st Battalion 11th Infantry

Company D to 2d Battalion 6th Infantry

Other troops attached to the 10th Brigade were:

2d Battalion 20th Field Artillery

2 Companies 7th Engineers

12 Medium tanks

2 Companies light tanks (30 tanks)

Gas and Flame troops. (40)

(40)5th Div.
p 294 (FO #41) ✓

Liaison troops were assigned as follows: Companies A and D of the 60th Infantry were to act as liaison units with the 2d Division and two platoons of Company E, 11th Infantry, and one machine gun platoon were to maintain a similar contact with 1st Battalion 35th Infantry, 90th Division on our right.

(41)90th Div.
p 36

(41) Of the attached artillery, Battery "E" was assigned to serve as accompanying artillery for the leading battalion of the

11th Infantry and Battery "D" had a similar mission with the leading battalion of the 6th Infantry. Battery F, 20th Field Artillery, was to fire on any special targets. The Twelve attached Medium tanks were to precede the Infantry and Company E of the 1st Gas Regiment, in the front line, was to provide a smoke screen with its 4-inch mortars. (42)

(42)5th Div.
p 99

The formation used was three companies of the battalion in line, one company in support and each company having its platoons abreast and deployed in four waves. The exact relative position of companies of the battalion cannot be recalled other than it is known that B Company was on the extreme right of the division. The orders as found in Field Order # 41, 5th Division, prescribe a leap frog movement calling for the support battalions to pass through the assault battalions at the intermediate line. The 5th Division History is not quite clear on this point as actually the 1st Battalion passed through the 3d Battalion approximately on this intermediate line; in fact the units were all very much intermingled and it is difficult to say just who was support and who reserve, although theoretically we had but one battalion in the line. (43)

(43)5th Div.
p 105

So much for dispositions and *TERRAIN* and we return to Company B and a final lunch about 4:15 A.M. in which the participants were the company commander, 1st Lieutenant George R. Stevens and 1st Sergeant Clifford Murphy. This lunch, which terminated with departure for our prospective stations with a "best of luck and give 'em hell", proved to be the last time that these three were to break bread together. Lieutenant Stevens was severely wounded before he had hardly stepped over the top, and Sergeant Murphy died an hour later as his fighting Irish heart would have it, riddled by machine gun bullets while storming a cement pill box single handed, where a squad had failed before him. Thus passed a faithful

and loyal 1st sergeant. It is easy to eulogize the dead but I cannot pass without paying tribute to a two-fisted fighter. Lacking the calm discretion and coolness that would have saved his life but full of the will to do and with the heart of a fighting soldier.

Many questions have been asked and as many answers given as to the feeling when going over the top. I cannot help likening my own, and from observation, those of others, to the 'pre kick off' feeling on a football field, when waiting for the starting whistle. Nervous, impatient and trembling-- all of this miraculously vanishes with the first crash of bodies in the initial tackle or with the first full view of enemy wire and the advancing khaki line of battle.

Synchronized watches could well have been disposed of when the hands approached the hour of 5 AM, almost in unison the fire along the entire front increased in volume and the roar was now punctuated by the staccato tattoo of machine guns.(42) Four inch mortars were laying down their beautiful thermit fountains. And with the customary indefiniteness of mortar fire were soon falling too near for comfort.

THE JUMP OFF

Leaving our trenches about 5:10 A.M. we had barely gotten through our own wire when we found that we were jamming up on the leading battalion, which was already as close to our barrage as it could get. Trouble in getting out through the wire and the indistinct light made it very difficult to keep the squads and sections intact and we were soon badly intermingled with the assault company preceding us. The process of our passing through caused more confusion and served as an excuse for any inclined to loiter. Entering the woods, the difficulty of keeping the sections intact, was greatly increased, and the spotty nature of the resistance, still

further broke down the integrity of the units. The loss of three platoon commanders as casualties made matters worse. Divided responsibility in the minds of the privates and intermingling of units was the result. By the time the intermediate line was actually reached at about 6:15 A.M., B Company had passed through and was part of the assault waves, and right company of the battalion as well as the extreme right of the division. Our advance called for a movement through the Bois de la Rappe and Bois St. Claude, both of which adjoined and formed a part of the western edge of the Foret des Vencheres. The fighting progressed through the woods and the main resistance was from groups of machine guns. At no place did the enemy infantry put up stubborn resistance but a considerable number of casualties were suffered due to their machine guns. (45) False lanes had been cleared in places and many men were shot down while in or attempting to cross these clearings.

(45) 1 Army
Corps Mes-
sage

Our advance continued and many prisoners were taken in the woods. (46) One system that worked well was to effect reorganization by small groups under any noncommissioned officer who happened along. As the men emerged into the opening they were grouped together, given a correct direction in which to advance, and sent on with the instructions to advance to the north of Vieville and await instructions there. Several of these squad groups were organized and sent on ahead. The last group that the company commander sent through was two squads under Lieutenant Gamble of Company A, 11th Infantry. It was afterwards learned that this group struck particularly hard going and Lieutenant Gamble and several of his men were killed. (47) This disintegration in the woods greatly decreased the effectiveness of the company.

(46) 5th Div.
p 105

(47) 5th Div.
p 394

Progress was made northward through the Bois St. Claude

and on emerging in the open, Vieville, about one kilometer northwest, was sighted for the first time. It was soon seen that it was already in the hands of American troops and, as it was east of our company sector, no attempt to enter it was made and we continued due north. (48) The company had so dwindled by now that our progress toward the Vencheres forest amounted to little more than reconnaissance. However, the point of the woods that marked our objective could now be plainly picked out and checked with the map. Advance in that direction drew fire from the edge of the woods. By now about 9:00 AM other detachments of the company were emerging from the woods south of Vieville and they were soon assembled and moved up toward our first day line where we tentatively occupied some of the old Boche trenches.

Having established the remnants of the company at this point, a journey was made into Vieville which was proving a magnet for all troops emerging from the woods to its rear. To a lost private the Army Objective consisting of a blue line on a map naturally meant little, but a town was a town and would bear investigation. Guides were therefore established in the town and instructed to round up the men as they came in and send them to our new location.

THE ARMY OBJECTIVE IS REACHED

As early as 10:00 A.M. the leading elements of the division were on the army objective and pushing patrols out to the front on a line running east and west through Taute-court Farm. (49) On the right B Company had lost contact with the 90th Division and this was not regained that day. (50) The 90th Division had a much wider front to cover and had met with considerable difficulty in the heavily wooded country through which they had to pass. (51) The right of the adjoining regiment (357th Infantry) had gotten up but its

(48) 5th Div.
p 105

(49) Cotton,
p 35
(50) 5th Div.
p 108

(51) Carswell,
p 32

(52)90th Div. left was not in position being too far over to the east. (52)
p 41 ✓

By 11 A.M. 12th September our original small group had grown to a fairly good sized company and we proceeded to convert our newly acquired trenches so that they faced in the right direction.

Diverging for a moment it is interesting to speculate at this point as to how we would have fared had the plans of the German Corps Commander materialized. It now is known that he had at his disposal as reserves the 123d Division, (53) Von Giehl, then at Waville. (53) He ordered this division to be at La Grange Farm at 11:00 A.M. 12th September and had also directed that a regiment of infantry and attached battalion of artillery from this division counterattack in the direction of Vieville at 11:30 A.M. His reserve actually arrived too late and his order was never carried into effect. The 77th Division had been completely routed and disintegrated and this necessitated using this 123d to fill the gap back on the Michael I position.

Another factor that had greatly facilitated our advance was that our preparation barrage caught practically all of the 77th Divisional Artillery in full move so that only four

(54) Von Giehl batteries were able to take part in any counter firing. (54)

(55)5th Div. ✓ During the afternoon of September 12th we were busy bettering our position and in pushing patrols to the front. (55)
p 107 Snipers gave some trouble in the Forêt Vencheres to our right. These were extremely hard to locate being carefully hidden in trees where they remained quiet on the approach of any patrol and only partook of very long range sniping. The afternoon passed with some intermittent shelling which was continued at irregular intervals during the night. We still had an exposed right flank and a battalion of the 6th Infantry was deployed to our right and rear (east of Vieville) to fill the gap. (56)

(56)5th Div. ✓
p 108

THE 13TH OF SEPTEMBER

(57)5th Div.
p 112

The 13th of September dawned pleasant but the enemy artillery had been able to (57) go into new positions and we were subjected to heavy shelling and the regiment as a whole sustained numerous casualties. Their ammunition supply appeared to be ample for any group of two or three men promptly brought artillery fire. The gregarious instinct seemed stronger than fear and though men were cautioned to go singly when going back for food and water they seemed drawn together as by a magnet, despite the fact that mute testimony of such congregations were all about us.(58) We continued to improve our position until shortly after 1:00 P.M. when indefinite information came through of an impending counterattack. About 3:30 the left of our line called for artillery fire but the support received was negligible as most of our Divisional Artillery had not gotten forward in position due to condition of the roads. (59)

(58)Cotton,
p 52

(59)Carswell
p 48

The 5th Division History speaks about the ambitious KPs of Battery A 19th Field Artillery, wheeling about a captured German 77 gun and firing the whole supply in the general direction of Germany. (60)

(60)5th Div.
p 112

They doubtless meant well but the above explanation is the only one that I can find for some dozen shells coming from our rear falling between Vieville and where B Company was dug in. At this time the bursts were at least some 1500 yards short of any enemy objective. Fortunately they caused us no casualties.

THE GERMAN COUNTERATTACK OF SEPTEMBER 13TH

Even at the time when the above-mentioned artillery fire was going on, the company had nothing definite on the counter-attack. (61) No enemy activity was visible and the writer therefore went back to Vieville, where the 1st Battalion Com-

(61)5th Div.
p 112

mand Post was now located, to find out what it was all about. While there information of an imminent attack and the German barrage started almost simultaneously. As this started, Captain Cromwell commanding C Company on the left, and myself made a break for our companies. We made the grade through a very short but very violent barrage.

About 4:50 P.M. the enemy infantry started to debouch from Hanido and Bois Bon Vaux. Their advance was covered by heavy rifle and machine gun fire from the edge of the woods. The infantry method of advance was interesting to watch. They would dart forward one man at a time for some ten or fifteen yards and then drop to be lost in the grass and another would go forward from another section of the line. This infiltration appeared to work successfully and the line continued to advance. Company B from its location was in a position to enfilade part of the advancing line as it continued its progress toward the Bois Gerard which was apparently the object of the attack.

It is hard to say just how effective our rifle fire was against this advance as only the enemy left was visible. The range was from 600 to 800 yards for the most part and they never succeeded in getting nearer than 500 yards to our position. On our left in the Bois Gerard there was an excellent example of the value of machine guns in repelling a counterattack of this nature. Company "C", 15th Machine Gun Battalion, was in position in the Bois de Gerard, and it was in the main part due to the effective fire of this unit that the attack was repulsed. (62) The enemy succeeded in penetrating the Bois Gerard for a slight distance in the north-east corner. His attack eventually was completely overcome, some prisoners were taken and 26 dead were found in the immediate front. The remnants of the force withdrew and by 10 P.M. the attack had been completely repulsed. (63)

(62) Heraty,
p 59 ✓

(63) 5th Div.
p 113 ✓

---twenty-one---

September 14th was a day of continually changing instructions as to our actions. The records now show that on the afternoon of the 13th September the corps commander had directed that we push forward toward the Michael I or Third Combat Position. However, the counterattack of the afternoon of the 13th, September, and the fact that the 90th Division was not then up, had delayed any attempt at a further advance. (64) Our attack was therefore postponed until 1:00 P.M. 14th September and preparations were made accordingly. This attack was to be to the northeast with a direction of 43 degrees magnetic azimuth for Company B and with our objective as La Souleuvre Farm on our right flank. (65) Considerable resistance was anticipated against any attack carrying us so near the Michael I position. Furthermore, the enemy had virtually had two days in which to reorganize his scattered units and a strong defense with both artillery and infantry was expected. The hour of attack was again delayed. Late in the afternoon it was found that our 155's could not support us and at 5:00 P.M. we went over, preceded by a very light barrage laid down by 75's on the Bois Hanido and adjoining woods. (66)

(64) 5th Div.
p 113

(65) 1st Bn.
Order

(66) 5th Div.
p 113

THE ATTACK OF 14TH SEPTEMBER

Company B was still the right of the Division with Companies A and C in line on our left and with Company D in support. The 3d Battalion of the 6th Infantry to the left of our battalion attacking at the same time.

As was expected, this attack met with strong resistance and from the individual company standpoint proved more eventful than the initial attack of the 12th September. Our artillery support was negligible and did not materially affect the action.

Our advance was immediately picked up by an observation balloon and by troops, and we had only progressed some 200 yards when their artillery fire commenced. (67) The account in the 5th Division History reads as follows, "The enemy's strong position in front and on the right of Major Mahin (1st Battalion) made it necessary for the 11th to fight for every foot of ground. Heavy artillery fire punished his men in the open and small arms fire from the edge of the Bois Hanido and Bon Vaux held the lines up."(68) This paragraph will bear analysis and amplification.

(67)5th Div.
p 114

(68)5th Div.
p 114

Attention is invited to the fact that the left of the 1st Battalion ran in to particularly hard going. On the right B Company made good progress across the open country to our front. We were deployed in four waves with some 25 yards between the first two and about 75 between the 2d and 3d and again 25 yards between the 3d and 4th. Our casualties would have been very much greater had the enemy artillery been synchronized with our advance. As it was, it continued to follow us with most of their bursts striking to our rear rather than on the waves which were their intended target. Had this barrage shortened a hundred yards we would have had very rough going.

It would have proven a most effective stop to any men with straggler intentions. However, the morale was high and while tendency to explore each dugout and trench on September 12th had been plainly evident, we found here open ground to cover, their main object being to keep ahead of the hostile artillery fire. The progress across the open was made in splendid formation. Marching fire was very effectively used during the latter part of the advance and though the actual hits were unquestionably low, it materially assisted in checking enemy small arms fire from the woods to our front. During this advance one of the two remaining sergeants was shot through the shoulder and was lost to the company. His

loss was keenly felt as he had been made acting first sergeant and his selection had proven to be an excellent one. The enemy artillery fire slackened just before we hit the woods and we could more definitely place the spots of machine gun resistance. Continuing into the woods our formation suffered. Wire and spotty resistance broke up our formation and in getting around and through the wire our line, which had maintained itself so well in the open, again was broken up as on the 12th of September. The squads followed the lines of least resistance and became separated winding through what lanes could be found in the wire. Over to our right in the dense woods of the Vencheres and Bois des Rappes we could hear sounds of fighting and the 90th Division was apparently making progress, although we had lost immediate contact with them. (69)

(69)5th Div.
p 114 ✓

It is at this point that an account of the history of the company simmers down and perhaps should be more properly told by a section leader had there been one present. Gathering what men could be located (about ten) the advance was continued through the woods. Pressure was quite evidently being placed on the hostile troops by the elements of the 90th Division, presumably the 358th Infantry, as we soon found the German infantry on our right retreating hastily and in disorder.

(70)1st Bn. ✓
Message (copy
bound herein)

The objective of the company was La Soulevre Farm, (70) this being also the boundary between divisions. Some prisoners had been taken and sent to the rear. At this point four additional prisoners were acquired, one of them an NCO of above average intelligence. He was shown a map and inquiry made as to where La Soulevre Farm lay. He promptly understood what was wanted and indicated our present location on the map and the direction of the farm. Fearing a possible ruse and that we might run into an ambush in the

fully complied with.

The organization of our position started, the next problem was to garrison it; with a Corporal Hamby and one other man a trip was made back through the woods to round up scattered men. We had not progressed very far when a German plane flying very low went over. He dived and fired but neither his nor our return fire were hits. He zoomed and his apparent request for artillery fire was complied with and we were forced to retrace our steps to keep out of the shelled area.

At this juncture a rather unusual incident happened and although having no particular effect on the action will perhaps bear repeating.

As we started back I happened to see our four prisoners and Private Matthews and while watching them saw a shell burst absolutely in the middle of the group. None of them arose and they were apparently obliterated. We continued back to avoid the shelled area. Over a year later in the fall of 1919 the writer was sent on a recruiting detail to Worcester, Massachusetts. One of the recruiting sergeants had succeeded in inveigling a prospective recruit into our tent which was on the Fair Grounds. The writer was "sounding off" on the army as a career when the tent door was pulled aside and a voice inquired if Captain Wood was in there. It proved to be Private Matthews whom I had always thought had been instantly killed on that afternoon in the Bois Hanido. He told me his story. That the shell had killed two of his prisoners outright. Matthews' throat had been virtually cut by the burst. However, one of his prisoners was a medical corps man who immediately dressed his wound and with the assistance of the other man carried Matthews some four kilometers back to Vieville. At this time in Worcester, Matthews still had a silver tube in his throat having been sent there to be under the

thick woods, these four prisoners were deployed a few yards to our front and we started toward La Souleuvre. The accuracy of our guide appeared to be excellent and some three hundred yards to our front we came on the farm. During this time the German withdrawal to our right had been continuing and we had been in the peculiar position of advancing with the enemy moving in our same direction but to our right.

OBJECTIVE REACHED

(NOTE.- Pa. 114, 5th Division History, states that Captain Wood was at LaSouleuvre at 1:15 A.M.; this will bear a word of explanation. As a matter of fact the farm itself was never reached, but we were about 100 yards in front of it at about 7 P.M. 14th September)(It is believed that this time of 1:15 A.M. was obtained from Battalion Headquarters which was possibly the time when they received the information.)

Our objective reached, the four prisoners were of no further value and were started back to the rear under a private Matthews who having been slightly wounded, ^{who?} was used for the three-fold mission of getting the prisoners back, getting his wound dressed and ^{as} a message bearer to the battalion commander.

Any attempt on our part to emerge from the woods toward the farm was promptly met with heavy fire as the position to our immediate front was in no way disorganized. Decision was made to dig in at once in the edge of the woods and not to attempt to take the farm until more of the company could be located and a reorganization effected. At this time a small group approached from our left rear and on being challenged, proved to be from the 357th Infantry. They had also become separated and were a welcome addition to our small group and were promptly set to digging in, which they cheer-

specialist who had treated him while in the service. "It's a small world after all".

Returning to our hastily dug trenches and finding that nothing further had developed we again started back as soon as the shelling had stopped to round up any of our men who had become separated. About 800 yards back of our position we came upon a company from the 90th Division (identity not known) that was dug in. (71) Upon locating the company commander it was explained to him where our group was located and that it was the left boundary of the 90th Division and the right of the 5th. An effort was made to have him move his company forward and place it on our right, this he declined to do, having been instructed by his battalion commander to remain in his present position.

It was now very dark and as this effort had failed a return trip was made to the company. The situation there remained unchanged. We were within 100 yards of our objective and apparently 800 yards in front of any friendly troops facing a strongly occupied position and with no contact on our right or left. The situation at the time appeared very critical, but contrary to our expectation the night and following day proved to be comparatively uneventful.

In the hope of getting up support before daylight a trip was started for Vieville and on emerging from the woods east of Bois Hanido supporting troops from the 3d Battalion 11th Infantry were met. At this juncture however, the enemy complicated matters by laying down shell gas in the edge of the woods and the combination of gas, masks, woods, and darkness and a not too aggressive attitude on part of a few of the men prevented getting the support forward that night.

Our narrative now draws to a close. Towards morning the company was withdrawn about 300 yards and at daylight contact was made with adjoining troops. (72) The 15th September proved to be a day of inaction as far as attacks on either side

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

Although our subject is the individual action of Company B, it will perhaps not be out of place to mention very briefly the battle as a whole. In general, one does not feel like criticizing too harshly anything that works, be it a battle that succeeds or a boy's kite that flies. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. St. Mihiel was one of the few big battles of the war that worked out according to plan and with not a major change once the troops were committed. However, the criticism of our opponents may be worth attention and the outstanding ones appear to be that. (74) We did not follow up our advantage once gained by continuing the attack, and our orders were too stiff and lacked the essential flexibility. The first of these can be partially explained when the plan of the high command as a whole is considered. There was apparently at no time any intent of attempting to break through the final line of resistance once the salient was reduced, it being a preliminary to the Meuse-Argonne action. As to the criticism of the flexibility of our orders I am inclined to agree with the critic.

1. Lack of reconnaissance.- Who among us has not been out in problems for failure to make a proper reconnaissance? Yet, in this action none of us were given an opportunity to look over the ground over which we were to attack. Even a brief reconnaissance from the rear of the front line would have been of the greatest value. As it was, we went up in the night, and started out in the dark over ground with which we were totally unfamiliar. Possibly fear of attracting attention on the front may have been the ^{REASON} ~~cause~~ for not permitting this, but certainly in a sector already held by American troops, such reconnaissance need not have caused undue concern if properly conducted. It is not believed that had the

were concerned and the line was established about one-half a kilometer southwest of La Souleuvre Farm and during the night (September 15th-16th) the 10th Brigade was relieved by the 9th. (73)

(73)5th Div.
p 115

To briefly sum up the operation as a whole, the reduction of the St. Mihiel salient was a marked success and the plan for a unified American army operating under its own staff was vindicated.

Viewed from the standpoint of Company "B", 11th Infantry, the company had in its first offensive acquitted itself with credit. We are inclined to think of St. Mihiel as an easy victory, accompanied by few casualties and lacking stubborn resistance, particularly when compared with the fiercely contested struggles of the Meuse-Argonne. However, a barometer that indicates among other things the nature of the opposition met with, is the honor roll of those making the great sacrifice. At St. Mihiel, Company "B" had more men killed than any other company of the regiment. Later the 11th Infantry participated in some of the most sanguinary fighting of the Argonne yet Company "B" lost more men at St. Mihiel than in any single phase of the great Argonne conflict. In closing, I wish to pay tribute to these.

enemy intelligence detected this reconnaissance they would have learned anything that they did not already know. The advantage of a reconnaissance would have been of inestimable value and it is believed the lack of it is open to criticism.

2. Breaking up of units and failure to maintain distance and interval, particularly when passing through wire and woods.- This was one of the major difficulties to contend with and the importance of impressing this point on junior officers and the necessity of training all troops in its importance cannot be over emphasized. It is the writer's opinion that in the piping days of peace we are too prone to train our units in the open and quibble over the variances of a few feet in distance and interval in our extended order drill.

We drill almost exclusively by daylight and lose sight of the fact that in actual warfare most of our movements and some attacks are made at night. Furthermore practically every attack involves the passage of woods and to successfully accomplish this, troops must be trained accordingly.

Had the company failed in this attack its inability to pass through woods and maintain its formation would have been blamed more than any single item.

3. The passage of the support through the assault battalion. This did not prove successful and although perhaps good tactics in the case of well trained troops, it was not effective with troops in their first attack. It lacked the simplicity so vital to success, left a sense of divided responsibility and lacked any definite line as to where this passing through was to take place. It is not to be understood that the orders were not clear on this point as it was definitely laid down that this was to occur on and when the intermediate objective had been passed. However this was not easily determined by any ground features and could not have been clear to separated groups not having maps.

4. Flanks and liaison.- Lack of liaison with the division on our right is one of the outstanding criticisms. We are all thoroughly fed up with the hackneyed expression to the effect that the "outfit on our right (left), did not get up". From most accounts it always appears that no one is ever in position except the pseudo-historian's own outfit. It is therefore with some trepidation that I touch this phase at all. However, the fact remains, place the blame where you choose, that contact was not maintained and that as a result we had an exposed flank on what should have been a continuous line. We hear much about liaison and its importance, but one more often hears of its being lost than maintained.

5. No guides were assigned the companies.- Getting into position was very much a hit or miss affair and could have been avoided by permitting proper reconnaissance by personnel from the company or by detailing men to go over the ground in daylight before hand in order to become familiar with the route and assigning one per company as a guide.

6. Traffic.- All roads to the rear were badly jammed, making passage difficult for foot troops and impassable at times for vehicles, many guns not getting in position in time to participate. No attempt will be made to suggest a specific remedy, but in general this extremely important factor of routes and road nets cannot be overlooked.

7. Objectives.- It is believed that, wherever possible, the objective should be located on some prominent physical feature, ^{AN OFFICER ARMED WITH A GOOD MAP AND COMPASS CAN LOCATE PRACTICALLY ANY POINT} but for the average noncommissioned officer this task is a difficult one unless there is some physical feature that he can definitely recognize.

8. The souvenir habit of the American soldier is too well established to need comment. However, the private in the rear rank sees nothing criminal in acquiring pictures or a bunch of apparently valueless postcards either from the dead or from prisoners. Unless he is impressed with the im-

the 12th September was all that could have been expected, its effect on the enemy wire was negligible despite the intensiveness of the preparation. However, on the 14th September they had not succeeded in getting a sufficient number of guns up to give any very substantial support and at this time none of the 155s were in a position to support us by either barrage or counterbattery work.

13. Importance of not grouping.- The tendency of men to get together to talk it over as before-mentioned caused many casualties.

14. One pounders.- These did not prove of any great assistance they were unable to fulfill their mission being put out of action by artillery fire almost immediately.

15. Lack of written attack orders.- The writer feels sure of his statement that no written attack orders were issued to include companies. It appears that in an attack of this magnitude that had long been planned ~~that~~ something more definite than a hastily dictated order should have been issued. Maps were furnished. I believe that the statement regarding the written orders is correct.

16. Although not mentioned in the text, trouble was experienced with the men discarding their unwieldy Chauchat automatic rifles in favor of the lighter Springfield. This was a decided error for although the Chauchat was an unwieldy, crude weapon it functioned and one of them proved its worth in front of La Souleuvre Farm. It is believed that this will bear stressing, i.e., that men be cautioned as to the value of the automatic weapon particularly in defense and to hang on to it even though the Springfield may temporarily seem the more desirable.

17. Intelligence.- Prior to the attack absolutely nothing filtered through to the company as to the nature of the forces opposing us or their strength or dispositions. It

portance of letting all such documents go back to be evaluated by our intelligence and of the necessity of his keeping on the job and not diverging to hunt souvenirs we must expect him to instinctively resort to this looting.

*Spelled
infinitives*

9. Lack of sufficient idea of self-preservation in untrained troops.- Examples were numerous of men failing to grasp the importance of seeking cover and in the case of some of the boldest they seemed to consider that it was a direct reflection on their aggressiveness to take cover even when it was easily available. The other extreme also existed and once behind shelter some few individuals were loath to leave it.

10. Taking advantage of enemy's disorganization.- There is no question that had we been able to push right through to the exploitation line in force on the 12th September that the line could have been occupied with very few casualties and little resistance. However, being obliged to wait for the 90th Division to fight their way through the more wooded sector assigned them prevented this advance which was eventually delayed two days with the result that the enemy had ample time in which to reorganize and was enabled to put up much more stubborn resistance than would have been the case on the first day. In other words the lack of liaison and their failure to be up, prevented us from taking advantage of the enemy's disorder and gave him the breathing spell so essential to reorganization.

11. Tanks.- The reader may recall that no mention has been made in the manuscript proper in regard to tanks other than that some were attached to the division. This omission is intentional for at no time during the three days did the writer see a tank once our front lines had been crossed. They were of no value to the company nor the 5th Division as a whole, failing to get up at the times when called for.

12. Artillery support.- While the artillery support on

would appear ~~that~~ from experience in this engagement and elsewhere in France that the company commander is entitled to a little more intelligence information than is normally furnished him.

In leaving the criticism I wish to again repeat the two ^{MOST} important ones from a company standpoint: (1) Lack of reconnaissance, and (2) inability to pass woods and maintain a satisfactory formation.

LESSONS LEARNED

For the most part the lessons learned are self-evident having been covered in the criticism and it is hoped that the necessity of the following has been brought out:

1. Reconnaissance.
2. Of keeping roads in shape and traffic controlled and moving.
3. Importance of guides when taking over trenches or new ground at night.
4. Need of training in passage of wooded terrain.
5. Need of training in night movements.
6. The difficulty of maintaining contact with adjoining units.
7. Advantage of pressing your luck once the resistance is broken.
8. The value of physical ground features in designating locations.
9. The importance of teaching the soldier to avoid exposing himself.
10. The value of machine guns in defense.
11. The absolute necessity of cover for one pounders.

The title "Principles of War" appears rather ponderous when it is recalled we are dealing with a company. However, even with the small unit they apply and early in the attack

in passing woods and wire the principles of objective, mass, and cooperation were all violated, and when this contact and integrity break down the offensive spends itself and unless these are outweighed by other factors, we cannot hope to attain success.

The principle of ~~security~~^{SIMPLICITY} was violated in the order requiring one battalion deployed in four waves to pass through another similarly deployed, in strange country and the passing point not marked by any physical ground feature.

Lack of liaison with the troops on our right violated cooperation and might have violated the principle of security.

To again overreach our bounds and touch for a moment in closing on the action as a whole, an excellent example of objective, offensive mass and movement is afforded by the American forces. On the other hand the Germans violated the principle of security for even after they were assured that the attack was soon to be made they failed to take the required steps to evacuate the position in time, and as a result lost many men, guns and much material that might otherwise have been saved. They however accuse us of violating the principle of economy of force maintaining that the attack on the apex of the salient by the French was of no value and did not affect the action as a whole.

Having listened to many monographs where divisions, corps and even armies are deftly juggled before us, one is inclined to feel apologetic when dealing at length with as small a unit as a company.

However no apology is offered for we but have to remember that good companies make good battalions, and twelve good battalions make the backbone of a division that will take its objective in the face of odds.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. St. Mihiel was fought in order to pave the way for:
(1) An attack on Metz; (2) The Meuse-Argonne Offensive; (3) An attack on the Briey Region.

Answer.- (2).

2. The movement of Company "B" to the area of operations was made by: (1) Day marches; (2) By rail; (3) Night marches; (4) By motor convoy.

Answer.- (3).

3. Prior to the attack the Commanding Officer, Company B, was permitted to make: (1) A hasty reconnaissance; (2) No reconnaissance; (3) A careful reconnaissance.

Answer.- (2)

4. During the movement into position on the night of September 11th-12th the guides furnished Company B were of great assistance. True -- False.

Answer.- False.

5. In the initial attack of September 12th the tanks were:
(1) Of great assistance; (2) Of no assistance; (3) Of assistance in some instances.

Answer.- (2)

6. The main enemy resistance encountered on September 12th was from: (1) Artillery fire; (2) Groups of Infantry; (3) Machine guns; (4) Gas.

Answer.- (3).

7. Liaison between Company B and the 90th Division was:
(1) Lost entirely; (2) Maintained with difficulty; (3) Easily maintained.

Answer.- (1)

8. In the advance of the company the main factor in causing the disintegration was: (1) Enemy resistance; (2) Enemy entanglements; (3) Thick woods; (4) Lack of compasses and maps.

Answer.- (3)

9. What principle of war was violated in the instructions that called for the passage of one battalion deployed in four waves through another battalion similarly deployed, such passage to take place in heavily wooded ground?

Answer.- Simplicity.

10. The German counterattack on the afternoon of September 13th was repulsed mainly by: (1) Artillery fire; (2) Rifle fire; (3) Machine-gun fire.

Answer.- (3)

COPY.

Hdqts. 1st Bn. 11th Inf.
14 Sept. 1918
12:00 Noon

Message to all Cos.

1. 1st Bn (this Bn) will advance about one o'clock today or when orders are received. The general line Souleuvre Farm--Rembercourt. North east edge of Bois de Vencheres--south east point Bois de Bonvaux--point 368-243. Final line will be from Souleuvre Farm to point 368-243.
2. Co's B, A, C from right to left Co D will be in support Co."C" 15th M.G.Bn. will support. Woods on right will be cleared or the C.O. will not make advance.
3. Water carts should arrive by 12:30 P.M. Company C.O.'s will send after the water at once.
4. All company C.O.'s will report Major Mahin at 2d Bn P.C. at 1 PM today.
5. Machine Gun Co. will be gotten together at South East corner of Bois Gerard except guns as are north of Bois Gerard.
6. Compass bearing of advance will be 43*.
7. Co. A, B and C, D Companies will send at once from 8/m/m munitions in Vieville at once. C Co. 15th M.G. Bn. will also report for ammunition at once.

By order of Major Mahin

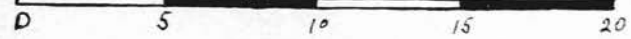
Linton S. James
1st Lieut. 11th Inf.
Adjutant.

Co.B.

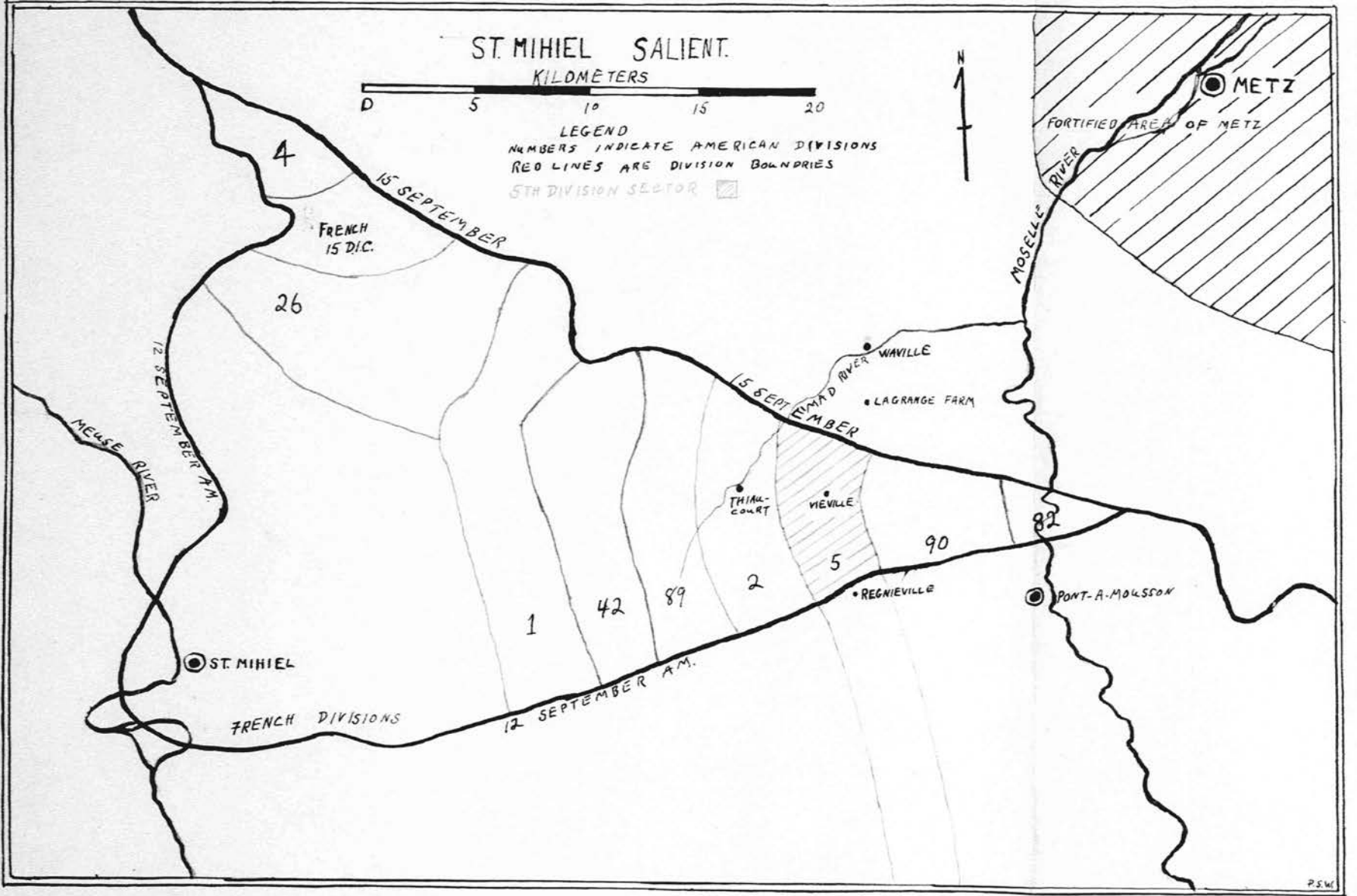
NOTE.- The above is a message covering the attack referred to of the afternoon of 14th September. This attack actually started at 5:00 P.M., not at 1:00 as indicated.

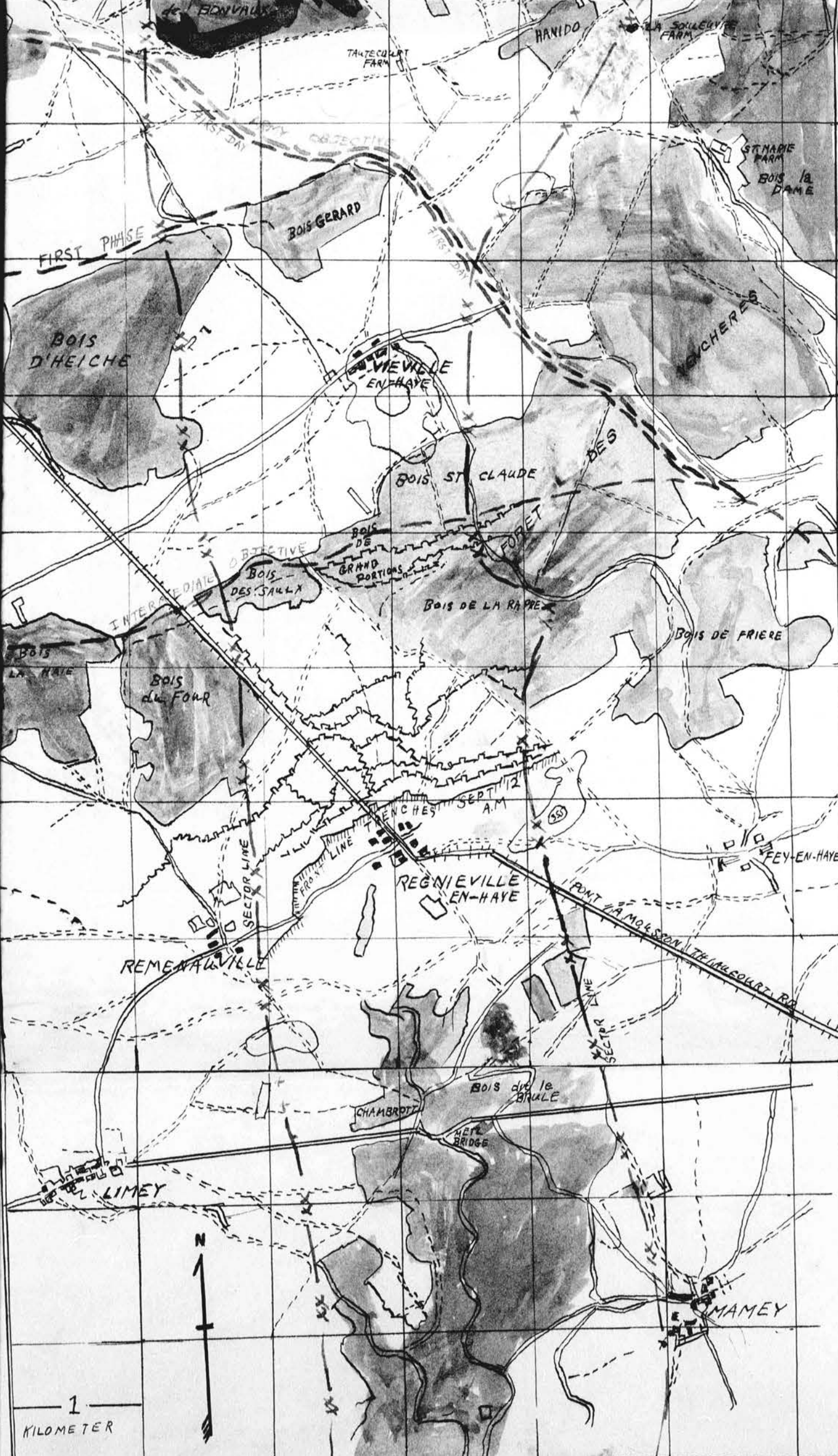
ST. MIHIEL SALIENT.

KILOMETERS



LEGEND
NUMBERS INDICATE AMERICAN DIVISIONS
RED LINES ARE DIVISION BOUNDRIES
5TH DIVISION SECTOR

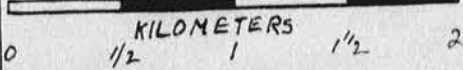




2D
DIV

5TH - DIVISION

90TH
DIV.



5TH DIVISION SECTOR ST. MIHIEL

12 SEPT. 1918