

TROOP D BOYS AS PART OF 66TH ART. BRIG. PLAYED HEROIC PART DRIVING GERMANS FROM W. FRONT

(Continued from page 2)

July 7. They proceeded to the regimental mobilization point at Invermay. July 9 the second battalion conveyed to positions near Bruxelles, southwest of Chateau Thierry; the third battalion took position near Villers-sur-Marne on July 10, followed the next day by the first battalion, which took position near Montreuil. All positions were south and west of Chateau Thierry. The 146th P. A. regimental post of command was at Chamigny Farm, five kilometers from Chamigny. Brigade post of command was located at L'ange Gardin.

The first shots of the brigade were fired July 8, by the first battalion of the 146th, followed by the 2d battalion, 146th, July 11, and after these dates the batteries took up their work of bombardment of the German lines across the Marne river. The brigade, as were all the American units, occupying the line at this time, was attached to the French 6th Army.

The German army was known to be preparing for their biggest attack of the war; hoping by the final drive to reach Paris. The French high command had fringed the salient with masses of troops, a part of the general plan of mobility that had characterized the French defense. Artillery arrived in a steady stream and all roads to the front were massed with men, infantry, machine gun units, supplies, artillery and ammunition.

All Batteries Take Part

From the time of taking the first position of the brigade until the opening of the Marne-Champagne defensive, the battle of Chateau Thierry continuous firing was due by all batteries.

The main attack of the German army at Chateau Thierry was launched at midnight July 14 but the French and Americans anticipating them, opened their counter preparation artillery 10 minutes earlier and from

comparative quiet the area blazed with the firing of the masses of artillery. So started the battle.

The three days following were days full of all the horrors of war. The guns of the 66th fired continuously; fired until they were too hot to fire more; men cooled them and continued firing, fired until the gun crews were exhausted; then fired again and again.

A feature of the firing of the shots was the mechanical skill that characterized modern artillery. Each shot of the 8.8 big guns carried nearly 100 pounds of high explosive into the German lines; onto their roads; their concentration points, and the brigades they threw up over the Marne.

Germans Advance

South of the Salient, from Thierry to Dormans, the German hordes had forced a crossing and seemed actually headed toward their objective. The Third Division, American, was now fighting with a determination far beyond the comprehension of the Hun. Again and again the enemy should have by all rights of war forced an entrance, but still the American line did not break. It drew back willingly but it held. They fought as soldiers have seldom been called upon to fight while the Germans paid in enormous tolls for every foot of ground they gained.

The French command, realizing that the 146th P. A. Guns were in the line of advance from where the Germans had forced a crossing over the Marne, and their hoped for objective, were approaching so close to the position of the big guns, that there would be no time to take them from their positions if the Germans advanced again, issued orders for blowing up guns if it became necessary. It was not necessary. The American army was fighting the kind of fight that German man power could not break down, and the German losses by the end of the second day of the



Indians in the Grand Parade

battle were staggering to them, and the allied command was quick to take advantage of this situation.

The offensive was taken by the Americans and the 66th brigade artillery was utilized in laying down a fire that would assist in cutting off all additional troops from crossing the Marne with supplies. The infantry, counter attacking in the face of what was nearly a German victory completely upset the German plans, and when the day was over, all enemy troops had either been taken prisoners, or driven back. Then and only then did the members of the 66th P. A. brigade have an opportunity to relax. Casualties of all units were reported, men rested, and the batteries prepared to take up the second phase of the battle, that of driving the Hun back from the Marne line to the Vesle.

First Corps Is Formed

The First Corps of the American army was formed at this time, and as First Corps artillery the brigade reported to Major General Hunter Liggett, commanding the First American Army Corps, and on July 19th, began the advance that opened the Marne-Aisne offensive, the second battle in which the brigade took part. Battalions were hurried over the Marne, positions, being taken amid the ruins of the Chateau Thierry battlefield. All units crossed to the left of Chateau Thierry forming a part of the gigantic phalanx that, with the French army on the right, was closing in on the defeated German army, Soissons on the left, and Rheims on the right being the pivotal points.

Moving steadily with the advancing army through the salient positions were occupied in Vaux, in the edge of Belleau woods, Epides, Beauverdes, Lhuys, Mareuil en Dole and Chery Chartreuse, as well as in many other locations. At the Beauverdes location the Germans attempted a stiff counter attack, and the commanding General of the American division opposing them at Fere en Tardenois requested counter fire from the brigade. It was delivered within two minutes by the entire brigade, and so successful was the giant barrage laid down by the heavy guns, that the attack was broken up after twenty minutes firing, and the brigade received the personal thanks of the divisional commander.

Fighting Is Terrific

As divisions came into the line, fought, advanced, were relieved by fresh divisions, who fought and advanced, the brigade moved forward without a rest, a battalion moving in each regiment, while two battalions fired.

Instant bombardments, gas and shell, were daily and hourly occurrences going into position at night, close up to the advancing infantry. Firing with a steadiness that worked havoc in the German lines communication, and engaging battery after battery of German artillery, the two regiments moved up steadily towards the Vesle. As batteries were moved up, new positions taken, battalion post of commands moved and regimental and brigade posts moved up, communication was established, supplied and ammunition brought up in steady streams, every portion of the regimental organization functioning like veterans.

The last phase of the fighting for the Vesle was probably as severe as any portion of the fighting since the two regiments had entered the line as the only heavy American G. P. P. artillery to take part until now in the two historic fights. The enemy offered strong resistance along the Vesle and his lines of communication, extending back to and across the Aisne, made it necessary for the long range guns to be brought up as close as possible to the contact line that the Aisne bridges, and rear points of concentration of the German army could be reached. The mission was carried out successfully and the missing of G. P. P. guns in and around Chery Chartreuse offered the German artillery a chance for an attempt at successful counter battery work. The brigade, however, after being bathed in fire, directed by airplanes over their positions, did not lose a gun, although casualties among the personnel were heavy.

End of First Battle

The Vesle being taken by the American troops the salient of which Chateau Thierry was the apex had been removed and the German line had been thrown back far enough to remove the danger of a successful attempt on Paris. The American army was withdrawn, the 66th P. A. brigade received orders on August 11 to leave the salient. The brigade rendezvous was established at Moucheaton chateau and vicinity, where the guns, carefully hidden in forests, were overhauled, men rested and preparations made for the entrance into the St. Mihiel sector, the seat of the next successful operations of the American army, in which the two regiments of army artillery played an important part.

Thoroughly tired out, but happy in the knowledge that the two regiments of guns had done much towards stopping the Germans advance on Paris, and in taking up the offensive action that showed the nearly victorious Hun armies back to the Vesle, the brigade went into "rest" near Ferte-sous-Journe, remaining there until August 21.

Rest For Four Days

The rest amounted to four days during which time all equipment was overhauled, cleaned, personal equipment polished and units made ready

for their part in the next major operation in the American army. During this period the 66th Brigade remained as corps artillery of the first corps, but August 21 the brigade was made army artillery of the first American army, thus maintaining the record the brigade has established of being the first American brigade of heavy artillery in the fighting lines of Europe; the first brigade of corps artillery of the First Corps, and the first brigade of army artillery of the First American Army then being formed.

With orders transferring the brigade to the First Army, orders were received to report at the St. Mihiel sector, naming Ancement as the concentration point of the units. The road march in the rear of the front, moving by night with the exception of the first day, hiding the long columns of guns and trucks along the way under camouflage, was undoubtedly one of the achievements of the two regiments.

Great Secrecy Required

The secrecy required that Germany should not be advised of any concentration of troops in the St. Mihiel sector. The immensity of the guns, and the length of columns, and the five days of traveling added much to the reputation of the brigade that they could do things without mistakes, and play the fighting game not only in the front, but that portion of the game that demands much and gives no reasons at the time for the demands. The convoys moved as a vast machine, reaching appointed places on perfect schedule, driving at night, without a light of any kind to guide them, hiding out in the day time that a German aeroplane could not gain the information of a heavy gun movement to a new sector, and arrived at Ancement, near the St. Mihiel-Verdun front line on August 25th to take part in the now famous St. Mihiel offensive.

Just prior to leaving the Ferte-sous-Journe center for the St. Mihiel sector, the brigade lost many officers and men who were detailed to the United States as instructors of the G. P. P. in the newly forming armies yet to be sent across to assist in the American offensive.

The St. Mihiel sector had always been a thorn in the side of the French armies defending it, and forming as it did a portion of the German enveloping rush to cut off Verdun. It protruded into the French lines in a manner similar to the Chateau Thierry salient. St. Mihiel was the apex of the salient and by virtue of holding that town the German armies had cut off railroad communication between rear areas and Verdun along the Paris Verdun railroad.

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