

OFFICIAL STORY OF THIRTIETH DIVISION

"OLD HICKORY'S" PROUD RECORD GIVEN.

Across Hindenburg Line

Chief of Staff Gives Plain Facts Supported by Quotations From Records.

Histories of the American divisions are being turned out by the printing press as fast as the division officers can lay aside military duties long enough to attend to the official chronicling of the organizations. Some of the histories are highly ornamental with artistic drawings, maps, photographs and decorations.

From the pen of Col. John K. Herr, chief of staff, comes the Thirtieth division's story, issued on an official document and characterized throughout by marked conservatism. It is no boastful narrative, but a marshal's facts supported by quotations from the records. The Thirtieth, he said again, is known as the "Old Hickory" division, though it has been often misnamed the "Wild Cat," because its men came largely from the same States that supplied the Eighty-first ("Wild Cat") division.

To France in May, 1918. After listing the Thirtieth's officers, headed by Major General E. M. Lewis as division commander, Col. Herr writes:

"The Thirtieth division is a distinctively American division. More than 95 per cent. of its personnel is of American-born parents. The division is constituted of National Guard troops of North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee, augmented by many thousands of selective draft troops from the States of Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

"The division was dubbed 'Old Hickory' after the warrior and statesman Andrew Jackson, who was so closely identified with the history of the States furnishing the major portion of its personnel.

"The Old Hickory division landed at the port of Calais, France, on the 24th day of May, 1918, and was billeted in the Eperlecques training area. While in this area the officers of the division reconnoitered the Terdeggen switch line south of Cassel, and complete plans were formulated for the occupation of this line by forced marches in case of emergency.

"Before the completion of its training period the division was transferred to the Second British corps, second army, in the Ypres sector, to be in close support in case of the expected German offensive. This division, the first American division to enter that kingdom, marched into Belgium on July 4, with division headquarters at Watou, to be in close support of the Thirty-third and Forty-ninth British divisions, and was employed in completing the construction of the east and west Poperinghe defense systems immediately in rear of these two divisions. An immense employment in completing the construction was done. Complete plans and orders were issued for the occupation of the east and west Poperinghe systems by the Thirtieth division in the event of a German attack and a forced withdrawal of the British divisions in the front. The division received training in the front lines with the Thirty-third and Forty-ninth divisions, first as individuals, then by platoons, and lastly by entire battalions.

"On August 17, 1918, the division took over the entire sector occupied by the Thirty-third British division, Sixtieth brigade being in the front line, Fifty-ninth brigade in support. This was known as the Canal sector, and extended from the southern outskirts of Ypres to the vicinity of Voormezele, a distance 2,400 meters.

Division's First Offensive. "On August 31 and September 1 the division engaged in an offensive in conjunction with the Fourteenth British division on the left and Twenty-seventh American division on the right. The Thirtieth division captured all its objectives, including Lock No. 8, Lankhof farm, and the city of Voormezele, advancing 1,500 yards, capturing fifteen prisoners, two machine guns, and thirty-five rifles. As a result of this advance the 236th division, which was considered an average German division, was identified. During the six weeks previous to this advance many attempts had been made by the British and our own troops to identify the German division.

"On September 4-5 the division was withdrawn from the Canal sector and placed in British G. H. Q. reserve, with division headquarters at Raellecourt, France. While in

this area the entire division was trained in attacking in conjunction with British tanks.

"On September 17 the division was again moved further south, with division headquarters at Herissart, and on September 22 was moved to the British Fourth army, with division headquarters at Bois de Buire, near Tincourt, taking over a front line sector from the First Australian division on the night of 23d-24th.

On the Hindenburg Line.

"On September 29 this division, with the Twenty-seventh American division on the left and the Forty-sixth British division on the right, assaulted the Hindenburg line. The Hindenburg line at this point curves in front of the Tunnel St. Quentin. This was considered impregnable by the Germans for the following reasons: The Hindenburg line, curving west of the tunnel, consisted of three main trench systems protected by vast fields of heavy barbed wire entanglements skillfully placed; this wire was very heavy and had been damaged very little by artillery fire. The dominating ground enabled them to bring devastating machine gun fire on all approaches. The lines had been strengthened with concrete machine gun emplacements. It contained at this point a large number of dugouts lined with mining timbers, with wooden steps leading down to a depth of about thirty feet, with small rooms capable of holding from four to six men each. In many cases these dugouts were wired for electric lights. The large tunnel through which the canal ran was of sufficient capacity to shelter a division. This tunnel was electrically lighted and filled with barges. Connecting it with the Hindenburg trench system were numerous tunnels. In one case a direct tunnel ran from the main tunnel to the basement of a large stone building, which the enemy used for headquarters. Other tunnels ran from the main tunnels eastward to the city of Bellicourt and other places. This complete subterranean system with its hidden exits and entrances, unknown to us, formed a most complete and safe subterranean method of communication and reinforcement for the German sector.

"The Thirtieth division, the Sixtieth brigade, augmented by units of the 117th infantry, attacking assaulted this line at 5:50 a. m., September 29, on a front of 3,000 yards, captured the entire Hindenburg system of that sector, and advanced further, capturing the tunnel system of that sector, with the German troops therein, and took the cities of Bellicourt, Nauray, Riqueval, Carriere, Etricourt, Guislaine, Ferme and Ferme de Riqueval, advancing 4,200 yards, defeating two enemy divisions of average quality, (the Seventy-fifth Reserve division and the 185th division), taking as prisoners 47 officers and 1,434 men.

"On October 1 and 2 the Thirtieth division was relieved by the Fifth Australian division and moved to back area, with division headquarters at Herbecourt. The division scarcely reached this area when it was marched back and took over the front line in the same sector from the second Australian division near Monthrehain on the night of the 4th-5th.

Attacking Day After Day.

"On October 8, 9, 10, and 11 the Thirtieth division attacked each day, advancing 17,500 yards and capturing Le Tilleul d'Archies, Le Petit Cambresis, Becquigny, Mon Sarasin, Le Trou Aux Soldats, Busigny, Goriotte, Le Vert Dnjon, Escafort, Le Bon Font, Vaux Andigny, Vallee Hasard, La Haie Menngresse, La Rochelle, Le Vent de Bise, St. Souplet, St. Benin, Malassise, Geneve, half of Montrehain, Brancourt, Preumont, Vaux de Pretre Brancoucourt, Fraicourt Ferme, Bois Mirand, Butry Ferme, La Sabliere, Bois, Becquignette Ferme, Bois de Malmaison, Malmaison Ferme, Bois de Busigny, Bois l'Ermitage, Bois Proyard, Imberfaye, and Du Guet Fassiaux Fermes, taking prisoner 45 officers and 1,889 men. The Fifty-ninth brigade began this attack on October 8 and captured all their objectives, including Preumont and Brancourt. During this operation from October 8 to 11 the Thirtieth division encountered fourteen units from fourteen German divisions, classified by the British high command as follows: Thirty-fourth division, average; Twentieth division, very good; Twenty-first division, average good; Twenty-first division, average; Twenty-first Reserve division, average; Thirty-eighth division, very good; 119th division, average; 121st division, average; 187th sharpshooting section, very good; 20th division, average; 208th division, average; Third Naval division, very good; Fifteenth Reserve division, average.

"The Thirtieth division was relieved by the Twenty-seventh division on October 11-12, but returned on October 16 and took over a part of the same line at the same place, being the right half of the sector

(Continued on page 6, column 2)

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