

Chapter V

AMERICAN OPERATIONS IN THE CHAMPAGNE REGION

IN this chapter are described the American military operations which took place during the World War on that part of the battle front in the Champagne region between the city of Reims and the western part of the Argonne Forest. They include combat services of the 2d, 36th and 42d Divisions; the 369th, 371st and 372d Infantry Regiments of the 93d Division; the so-called "Lost Battalion" of the 77th Division; and the 368th Infantry Regiment of the 92d Division.

region are shown on the general map at the end of the chapter and each operation is illustrated by a sketch which accompanies the text of the itinerary.

The described tour begins at Reims and ends at Le Four de Paris, near the western edge of the Argonne Forest. It takes the visitor to each of the areas where American fighting occurred and to the monument constructed by the United States Government north of Sommepey to commemorate the achievements of American



German Troops Attacking Village Behind Smoke Screen, July 15, 1918. © G

The operations of the "Lost Battalion" were part of the Meuse-Argonne offensive of the American First Army but because the area concerned is near the west side of the Argonne, and therefore more easily reached from the direction of Reims, the detailed description of them is included in this part of the book.

This chapter also includes a described tour of the American battlefields. The locations of all American operations in the

and French troops who fought in the Champagne region during the World War.

This itinerary differs from those in the preceding chapters in that it does not form a complete loop. Such a change was considered advisable because it is believed this tour will be used mainly by tourists passing through the Champagne region on their way to visit the American Meuse-Argonne or St. Mihiel battlefields or other places still farther to the east.

42D DIVISION IN THE CHAMPAGNE-MARNE DEFENSIVE

JULY 15-18, 1918

EARLY in July the French secured information indicating that the next enemy attack would be launched near Reims. As part of the preparations to meet it the American 42d Division was sent to reinforce the French Fourth Army, which was then holding the front line from a point about 7 miles east of Reims to the edge of the Argonne Forest.

General Pétain, the Commander-in-Chief of the French Army, on June 24 had prescribed in considerable detail the plan to be followed in defending against the expected attack. Under this plan the front lines were to be held by but few troops, who were to withdraw in case of a determined assault, and the main defense was to be made at a position, intermediate between the then-existing first and second positions, about 1½ miles from the front line. The preparation for defense of this intermediate position and the existing second position in rear of it was an emergency task requiring immediate attention. Consequently, when the 42d Division arrived all available units were immediately assigned to work to strengthen these two positions.

The 42d Division was attached to the French XXI Corps, which was charged

with the defense of that part of the front including Perthes-les-Hurlus, Souain and St. Hilaire-le-Grand. (See map page 343.) The intermediate position ran just north of these towns and the second position about 1 mile south of them. The 42d Division was given the mission of preparing for defense and holding that part of the second line south of Souain and St. Hilaire, and, in addition, three of its battalions were placed on the intermediate position in front of those places. All troops on the intermediate and second positions were directed to maintain their ground "in any event and at all costs".

The French Intelligence Service discovered further details of the impending attack, and by July 11 was able to forecast its direction, the frontage it would cover and the probable day it would take place. As a final stroke of good fortune it was learned during the evening of July 14, from prisoners captured by the French east of Reims, that the German artillery bombardment would start about midnight of that day and that the German infantry assault would be launched several hours later.

Thus forewarned, the French were able to complete their plans to break up the

German Infantry Mopping Up a Destroyed and Still Burning Village, July 1918. © G





German Anti-Aircraft Battery in Position Near the Champagne Front. © G

expected attack. They had previously moved a large quantity of artillery into the sector and, shortly before the German bombardment began, the French and American guns placed an intense bombardment on the German artillery emplacements and assembly points for troops. This caused severe casualties in the hostile ranks and resulted in the replacement of several German units before the infantry assault was even started.

The Germans likewise had concentrated a great mass of artillery for the battle, and soon after midnight on July 14-15 such cannon as had not been put out of action by the French bombardment deluged the French and American positions with a tremendous concentration of gas and high-explosive shells. While there were many casualties, the losses were much less than in the previous German offensives, as a large part of this bombardment was on the first position from which most of the French troops had been previously withdrawn.

The few troops manning the front line had the mission of giving warning of the attack to the units in the intermediate position and of delaying the enemy as long

as possible. They sent back information mainly by telephone, rockets and flares. The story of these men, exposed to almost certain death under the heavy shelling, is an epic of heroism. Among them was a group comprising one officer and 25 men of the 42d Division who were posted $\frac{1}{2}$ mile in front of the main line of resistance to defend an anti-tank gun. This entire group was sacrificed, not one returning to the division after the attack.

The infantry assault began at 3:50 a. m. on a battle front extending east of Reims to Tahure and southwest of Reims to a point about 4 miles east of Château-Thierry. Because the Germans progressed rapidly through the French front line their first reports were highly favorable and reserve troops were rushed forward in the belief that the shock of the initial onslaught had been irresistible.

On the front of the French XXI Corps, the Allied and American artillery was kept informed of the progress of the German infantry attack by watchers in the forward positions. Consequently, the gunners were able to shorten their range progressively so that the German troops from the time the attack started



German Infantry Advancing on the Western Front, 1918. © G

were constantly under a rain of Allied shells, with no shelter available, the French having previously destroyed or made untenable by poison gas all dugouts in front of their intermediate position. Under this deluge of fire the Germans approached the intermediate position where the French and Americans were waiting. They repeatedly attacked that position during the first day, suffering terrific losses, but were everywhere repulsed, except at two places. In those places the hostile troops who penetrated the French and American lines were promptly driven out by counterattacks.

During this fighting six more American infantry companies were sent forward to the intermediate position, now become the front line, and the 150th and 151st Machine Gun Battalions and the artillery brigade of the 42d Division all actively participated in driving the enemy back.

The Germans continued their attacks on some parts of this front on July 16, but made no gains of importance.

In the sector of the French Fifth Army southwest of Reims the Germans on July 15 pushed several divisions across the Marne River and advanced a short dis-

tance in the direction of Epernay. Hard fighting continued there until the 17th when the advance was definitely stopped.

Although this powerful and ambitious drive was made by the enemy in a desperate effort to win the war, it lacked the quality of surprise which had characterized most of the other German attacks of 1918. The Allies not only avoided exposing their men to much of the devastating effects of the hostile preliminary artillery bombardment, but they fought the battle on a position of their own choosing, inflicting heavy losses and a serious repulse on the enemy.

The 42d Division, which suffered more than 1,600 casualties, was enthusiastically commended by General Gouraud, commanding the French Fourth Army, for its gallant conduct in the defense. It was withdrawn from the line on July 19 preparatory to moving westward to take part in the Franco-American offensive against the Marne salient which had begun with great success the day before.

The exact locations of the infantry units of the 42d Division are shown on the sketch on page 343 and further details of the fighting will be found in that part of the text.

German 15-cm. Howitzer Battery Firing While Infantry Is Moving Forward, October 1918. © G



2D AND 36TH DIVISIONS WITH THE FRENCH FOURTH
ARMY, SEPTEMBER 29-OCTOBER 28, 1918

THE French Fourth Army, holding most of the front between the Argonne Forest and Reims, attacked on September 26, in conjunction with the northward drive of the American First Army between the Meuse River and the Argonne. By September 30 the Americans east of the Argonne Forest had progressed more than 6 miles, whereas the French Army near Sommepey, after an advance of about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles, met with desperate resistance just south of Blanc Mont Ridge and were unable to take that position. (See map on page 349.)

On October 2 the 2d Division took over a zone of action north of Sommepey, as part of the French XXI Corps, preparatory to launching an attack against Blanc Mont Ridge. If this ridge could be captured the enemy would be compelled to retire to the Aisne River on the entire French Fourth Army front. The American troops had therefore the most important assignment in the attack and were expected to lead the advance, which they succeeded in doing in a splendid manner.

Prior to the general attack on October 3 the 2d Division, with characteristic



German Airplane Shot Down by American Anti-Aircraft Gun

Blanc Mont Ridge was the key point of the German defenses in the region, being on the last natural defensive line south of the Aisne River, 16 miles away. It had been greatly strengthened by an elaborate system of trenches, underground shelters and barbed-wire entanglements. The capture of the ridge was essential to further progress in the region; so, at the request of the Allied Commander-in-Chief for two American divisions, General Pershing sent the 2d and 36th Divisions from the American First Army to assist the French Fourth Army in its efforts to take the ridge.

energy, captured certain sections of the hostile trenches which were necessary to provide a suitable jump-off line. It formed for the general assault with its Infantry Brigade on the right, to drive forward from the southeast against the eastern end of Blanc Mont Ridge, and its Marine Brigade on the left, to strike the western part of the ridge from the south.

Early on October 3 the 2d Division jumped off and in spite of desperate resistance within three hours had the crest of Blanc Mont Ridge firmly in its grasp. The French divisions on its flanks were left far behind. The one on



German Machine-Gun Emplacement, Blanc Mont Ridge, Captured by the 2d Division, October 3, 1918

its left made no progress, and the western slopes of Blanc Mont remained in the possession of the Germans. This enabled them to keep up a deadly enfilade fire against the 2d Division, and the Marine Brigade was compelled to deploy part of its forces facing to the west to cover that exposed flank. While facing in that direction these American units repulsed a determined German counterattack.

During the afternoon the Infantry Brigade again pushed forward. It reached a point about 1 mile from St. Etienne-à-Arnes where it remained that night with its flanks temporarily unsupported.

The deep advance of the 2d Division on October 3 caused the Germans to initiate at once preparations for a hasty withdrawal to the Aisne River valley.

On October 4 the Marine Brigade pushed its front lines abreast of the Infantry Brigade, while some of its troops continued to hold off the Germans on the left where the French still found it impossible to advance. It attacked again about noon but was not able to hold all of its gains. The Infantry Brigade, after defending its position against a number of vicious

counterattacks early in the morning, launched an assault in the afternoon but after heavy losses retired to its jump-off position. The fighting on this day was of exceptional severity, the Germans launching many counterattacks in an effort to regain the ground which they had lost.

During most of October 5 it was necessary for the 2d Division to wait until the French divisions on its flanks had advanced farther. The Marine Brigade cleared the enemy from the western slope of Blanc Mont, thus enabling the French troops on that flank to progress, and later in the day pushed on several hundred yards in conjunction with them. On the 6th both brigades again moved forward.

The 71st Brigade of the 36th Division went into the line with the 2d Division during the night of the 6th, and on the 8th the attacks were renewed. St. Etienne-à-Arnes was captured that day, and several heavy counterattacks were repulsed.

The 2d Division, except for its artillery brigade and engineer regiment, which continued on with the 36th Division, was relieved by that division on October 10.

In the operations up to this time the 2d Division had lost about 6,300 officers and men. It had broken into the German lines to a depth of about 4 miles, and had captured over 2,000 prisoners and the vitally important Blanc Mont Ridge. The accomplishments of the 2d Division in this operation were responsible for the advance of the entire French Fourth Army, and for its brilliant exploits it was commended in the highest terms by the French Corps and Army Commanders.

German Tanks Disabled on the Western Front. © G





German Trench Mortar Detachment in the Assault, July 15, 1918. © G

For further details of this 2d Division fighting see pages 351-355 of the itinerary.

The 36th Division, which was entering the front line for the first time, took immediate advantage of the favorable conditions created by the successful advance of the 2d Division, and attacked east of St. Etienne-à-Arnes on the 10th. After considerable fighting it made some gains. (See the sketch on page 356.)

That evening information was received from the French XXI Corps, with which the division was serving, that the Germans were retiring, and the Corps directed a vigorous advance. As a result the 36th Division attacked the next morning, and after overcoming machine-gun resistance, drove the Germans back about 3 miles to beyond Machault. Its aggressive advance, in conjunction with the French, was continued on the 12th when Dricourt and Vaux-Champagne were captured. The division front line was established that night on the high ground just to the north of the latter place. On the 13th the 36th Division again moved forward and that day took up a defensive position along the canal near the Aisne River.

During the next few days it extended its flanks to take over sectors from French units leaving the line. On the 18th it was placed under the French XI Corps and on the 23d it assumed control of the front facing the bend of the Aisne in which are located Rilly-aux-Oies and Forest Farm. At that point enemy troops had remained south of the Aisne River and had organ-

ized a strong position across the base of the bend which a French division had assaulted unsuccessfully on October 16.

On the afternoon of October 27 the division attacked that position, drove the Germans beyond the river and organized its line north of Forest Farm.

The operations of the division, which were begun in the vicinity of St. Etienne-à-Arnes about 12 miles to the south, were terminated on October 28, and on that date the division passed into reserve, having lost close to 1,100 men. (For further details consult pages 355-357.)

This successful operation was the only one in which the 36th Division participated, although when the Armistice was signed it was again preparing to enter the battle line as part of the American Second Army for an attack near the Moselle.

German Troops Combatting Tanks With Flame Throwers, October 1918. © G



369TH, 371ST AND 372D INFANTRY REGIMENTS
93D DIVISION WITH THE FRENCH FOURTH ARMY
SEPTEMBER 26-OCTOBER 8, 1918

WHEN the French Fourth Army advanced northward in the Champagne region on September 26, three infantry regiments of the American 93d Division¹ were serving in that Army as integral parts of French divisions. These French divisions were with the French IX Corps, which attacked from a position on the battle front lying a few miles to the west of the Argonne Forest.

The 369th Infantry had entered this general area on April 8 with the French 16th Division and was slightly engaged on July 15 during the German offensive of that date. Reassigned to the French 161st Division it was in support when the attack of September 26 started. (See the map on page 359.) On that day it entered a gap in the line, took the town of Ripont, captured a number of prisoners and several pieces of artillery, and continued forward during the 27th and the 28th. On the latter day it gained a foothold on the side of the Bellevue Signal Ridge after a stubborn fight.

On October 28 the 371st and 372d Infantry Regiments entered the line as part of the French 157th Division and attacked at once, advancing about 600 yards against machine-gun resistance.

During the morning of September 29 the 371st Infantry captured Ardeuil and Montfauvelles and the 372d made an unsuccessful assault against Séchault from the west. Although patrols entered the

¹ The units of the 93d Division were composed of colored troops from all sections of the United States.

town the units of the regiment became so intermingled that it was withdrawn for reorganization. The town of Séchault was finally taken that afternoon by the 369th, in an attack launched from the heights to the south of it.

On September 30 the 369th Infantry advanced about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile and was relieved from the line that night, after having suffered heavy casualties. On the same date the 371st captured Trières Farm.

On October 1 the 372d Infantry relieved the 371st and on October 2 advanced about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to a point south of Monthois where it was subjected to enfilade fire from the high ground to the southwest of that town. It repulsed a strong enemy counterattack on the 5th and held its position about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south of the village of Monthois until it was relieved on October 7.

All three regiments won the praise of the French authorities for their conduct in the attack. The 369th Infantry suffered 785 casualties during the fighting in this region and the 371st and 372d Infantry, 882 and 579, respectively.

For further details of the operations of these regiments consult pages 358-360.

While this fighting was going on, the other infantry regiment, the 370th, of the 93d Division was serving with a French division northeast of Soissons.

Soon after October 8 these three regiments of the 93d Division entrained with their French divisions to enter sectors of the front line in the Vosges Mountains.

Troops of the 369th Infantry, 93d Division,
in the Front-Line Trenches



“LOST BATTALION” OF THE 77TH DIVISION, OCTOBER 2-7, 1918

ON October 2 the 77th Division, attacking northward in the Argonne Forest as the left division of the I Corps and American First Army, encountered heavy resistance and made little progress except in the zone of action of the 308th Infantry. Six companies of that regiment and parts of two companies of the 306th Machine Gun Battalion, which were operating under orders to proceed without regard to the progress on their flanks, penetrated the enemy lines by following a small valley and established themselves, just before dark, on the northern slope of the ravine to the east of Charlevaux Mill. (See map page 363.) Communication had been maintained with the troops in rear during the day, and late in the evening one company of the 307th Infantry succeeded in moving forward to join this advanced force in the ravine.

The Germans, however, pushed troops between the main body of the division and these companies, with the result that by daybreak on October 3 the companies were completely surrounded.

This little force, holding a position about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile in advance of the front line of the division, was subjected to repeated assaults and exposed to incessant machine-gun and minenwerfer fire from all sides. Food was exhausted on the second day, water could be procured only with difficulty from the muddy creek, which was exposed to hostile fire, and suffering from hunger and thirst became more and more acute. Ammunition soon became scarce and to defend themselves the men in the position were forced to salvage rifles and ammunition from the German dead.

The Air Service did not succeed in its

attempts to deliver messages or to drop food, medical supplies and ammunition into the position, and the efforts of the 77th Division to push forward to relieve its isolated troops were also unsuccessful. Disdaining any thought of surrender, however, the detachment maintained its unequal fight day and night.

Finally, on October 7, the right of the American I Corps launched an attack from the east against the flank and rear of the hostile position in the Argonne Forest and at the same time the 77th Division renewed its attacks.

This flanking movement forced the Germans to withdraw, and that evening the troops of the 77th Division advancing from the south rescued the “Lost Battalion”, which that afternoon had beaten off the last and fiercest attack against it.

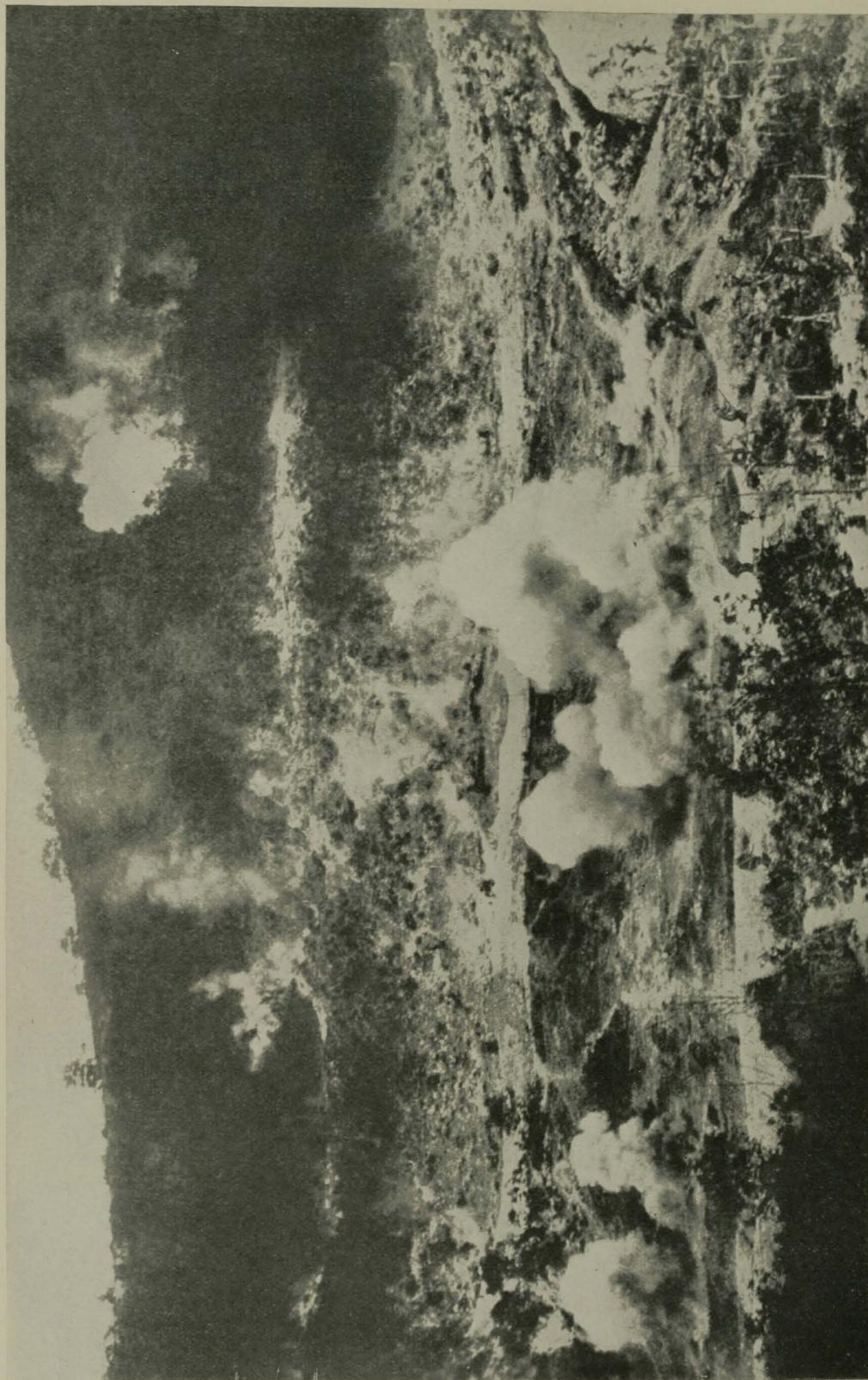
When relieved on the night of October 7, after having been cut off for five days and nights, only about one third of the more than 600 men who had entered the position were able to walk from it.

The American First Army at the time this operation started was engaged in the Meuse-Argonne offensive and, in the Argonne Forest, was facing the German second position, a strongly-organized defensive line. The “Lost Battalion” penetrated that line at a place temporarily unoccupied by German troops. When reoccupied by the Germans the defenses were so strong that, in spite of the greatest efforts, the 77th Division could not break through until the flank attack of the I Corps forced the enemy to retire.

For additional information concerning this “Lost Battalion”, refer to pages 362-365 of the itinerary in this chapter.

Scene of the “Lost Battalion”, 77th Division, in the Argonne Forest
The American troops occupied the slope below the road identified by the white gash
on the hillside near the right side of the picture





Airplane View of a Battle in France
Probably in the Champagne region; date unknown

368TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, 92D DIVISION

IN THE MEUSE-ARGONNE OFFENSIVE

SEPTEMBER 26—OCTOBER 4, 1918

ON September 26 the connecting force between the French Fourth Army, attacking northward from the Champagne front, and the American First Army, attacking from the Meuse-Argonne front, was composed of the 368th Infantry, 92d Division,¹ and the French 11th Cuirassiers-à-pied, and operated under the command of the French 1st Cavalry Division (dismounted) which was the right element of the French XXXVIII Corps.

These units went into line on September 25. The next day part of the 368th Infantry advanced about 1 mile but with the exception of one company which spent the night about 200 yards in front of its starting point, the rest of the units retired during the evening to behind their jump-off positions. (See map on page 366.)

On the 27th the connecting force moved forward an average distance of 1 mile, encountering little opposition.

On the 28th the 368th Infantry, reinforced by two companies of the 351st Machine Gun Battalion of the 92d Division, French artillery units and a squadron of the French 10th Dragoons, attacked in the direction of Binarville and although considerable movement backward and forward took place during the day the total ground gained was quite small.

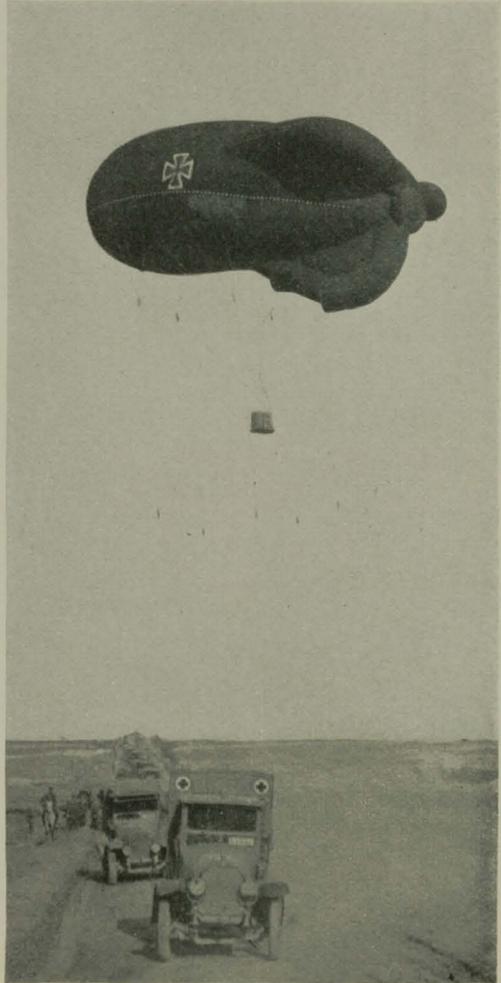
The American First Army placed the remainder of the 92d Division, less its artillery, engineers and 183d Brigade, at the disposal of the French XXXVIII Corps on September 29. The corps reduced the width of the zone of action of the 368th Infantry at that time and the regiment spent most of the day in re-arranging and reorganizing its units.

On the 30th a French regiment, the 9th Cuirassiers-à-pied, was directed to capture Binarville. Seeing this unit advancing, and having failed to receive the orders to stand fast which had been sent it, elements of the 368th attacked with

the French. Binarville was captured and the front line was established beyond it.

During the morning of October 1 the American regiment was relieved from the front line, and it passed into reserve with other organizations of the 92d Division.

The division was returned to the con-



German Balloon Detachment Advancing Along Road, 1918. © G

trol of the American First Army on October 4, after having suffered casualties which totaled 270 officers and men.

For further information of the fighting of this detachment consult pages 366-367.

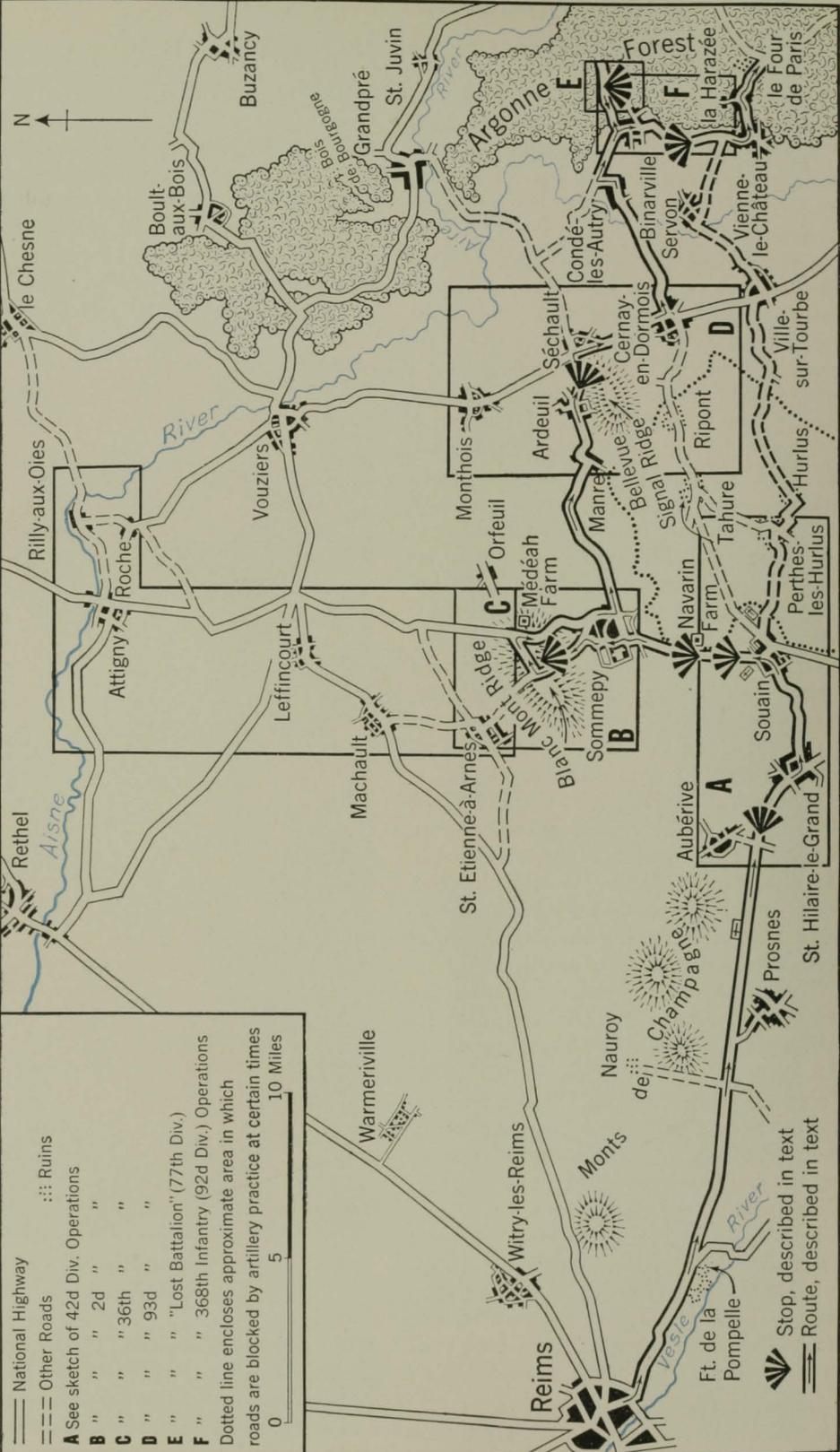
¹The 92d Division was composed of colored soldiers from various parts of the United States and all of the company officers of the 368th Infantry were colored.

Map Indicating Described Tour of American Battlefields in the Champagne Region

—	National Highway
- - -	Other Roads
A	See sketch of 42d Div. Operations
B	" " " 2d " "
C	" " " 36th " "
D	" " " 93d " "
E	" " " "Lost Battalion" (77th Div.)
F	" " " 368th Infantry (92d Div.) Operations

Dotted line encloses approximate area in which roads are blocked by artillery practice at certain times

0 5 10 Miles



Stop, described in text
 Route, described in text

A TOUR OF THE AMERICAN BATTLEFIELDS
IN THE CHAMPAGNE REGION

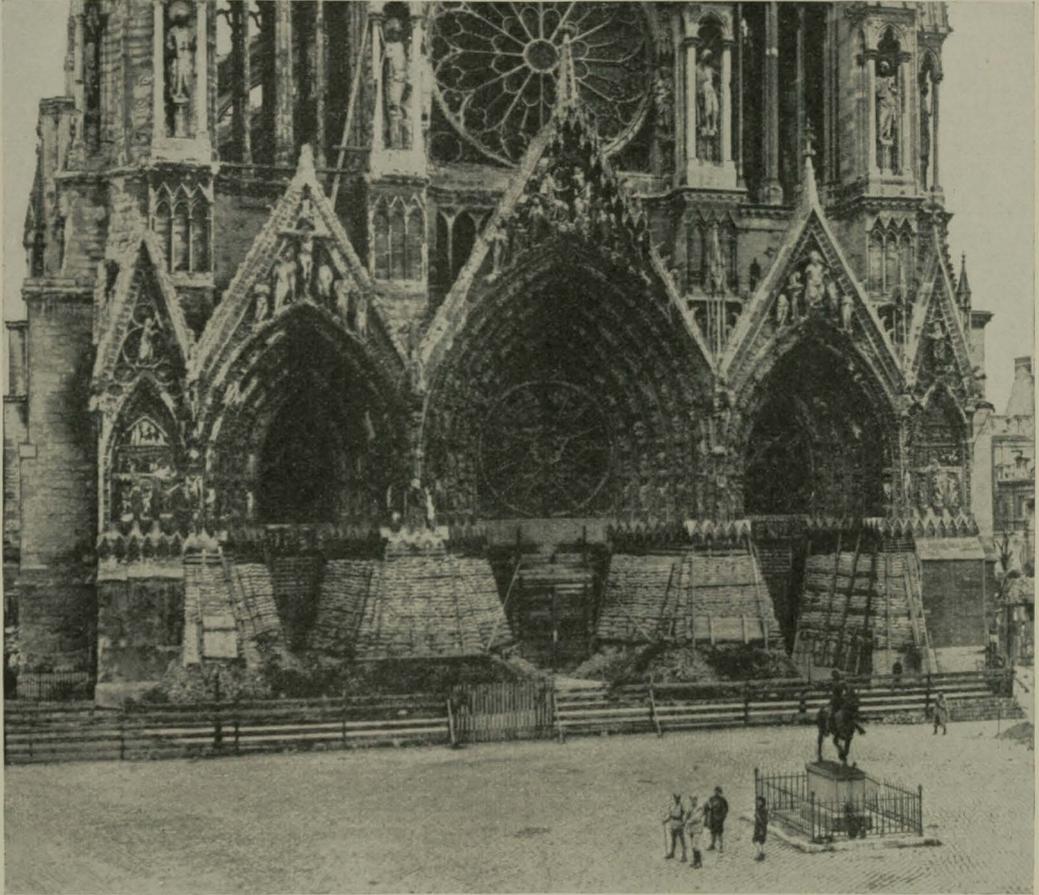
THIS tour begins at Reims and ends at Le Four de Paris. It is 68 miles (109 kilometers) long and can be completed in four hours if care is taken not to spend too much time at the interesting points.

The described tour is only slightly greater in mileage than the direct route across the area, and for that reason it is

following this tour and it should be read by the tourist before he starts on his trip.

The mileage figures in the text are given merely as an aid to the reader and are not essential in following the itinerary.

When following the described route, unless contrary road instructions are specifically given, continue straight ahead.



Reims Cathedral During the War
Note the sandbag protection

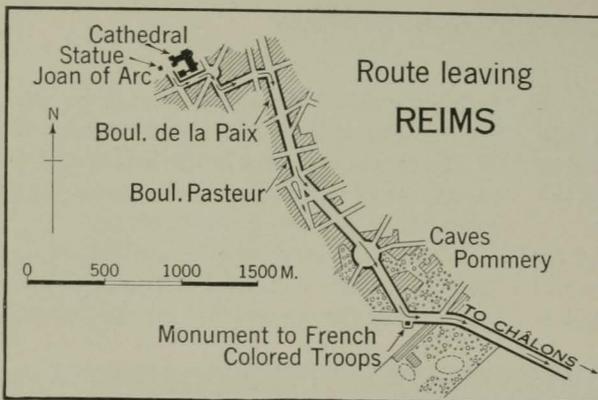
expected that it will be used most often by those who cross the region from west to east en route to other places. An interesting return road is suggested for those desiring to visit other battlefields in this region while going back toward Reims or Paris.

The information which is given on pages 520-521 will be helpful to those who are

EN ROUTE REIMS CATHEDRAL TO NORTH-
WEST OF ST. HILAIRE-LE-GRAND

Speedometer distance is measured from the statue of Joan of Arc which is located on the plaza in front of the cathedral.

(0.0 m 0.0 km) With automobile facing cathedral, set speedometer to read zero.



Leave plaza by street to the right front and follow the route to the exit of town shown on the above sketch.

(1.5 m 2.4 km) Near edge of town, at road junction where street ends, is located a small monument to the colored troops who fought in the French Armies.

(4.3 m 6.9 km) Beyond town, after crossing railroad, on the sky line just to the right of the road ahead are seen the battered ruins of the Fort de la Pompelle, a French fort built many years before the World War for the defense of Reims. It was captured by the Germans early in September 1914 and recaptured by the French soon thereafter. During the fighting in 1918 it was encircled by the German troops but not captured. Severe fighting took place all around it.

Across the road from the fort is a monument to the defenders of this part of the front during the World War.

At road junction near fort, close to the right side of the road, is one of a number of small markers erected at various points along the roads of France and Belgium to indicate the line from which the German forces were hurled back by the Allied Armies in the summer and fall of 1918.

(5.6 m 9.0 km) At the road junction near Fort de la Pompelle, bear to the left.

(6.1 m 9.8 km) Beyond junction, about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile, alongside the road are seen (1937) the remains of a large British tank. It was captured by the Germans in Picardy, used by them here on July 15 in their last great offensive, and put out of action at this spot by French artillery fire.

The road for the next 14 miles follows the trace of an old Roman road and for the greater part of the next 20 miles was either on or just in rear of the French front

line during most of the war. For a large part of the way a trench followed the left side of it. Many traces of other Allied and German trenches are still visible (1937) in the fields along this road.

(6.3 m 10.2 km) To the right and right rear in the distance is seen the Montagne de Reims. It is a high wooded plateau, forming a very strong natural defensive position, and was the main objective of the last great German offensive. Important French observation posts were located along its near edge.

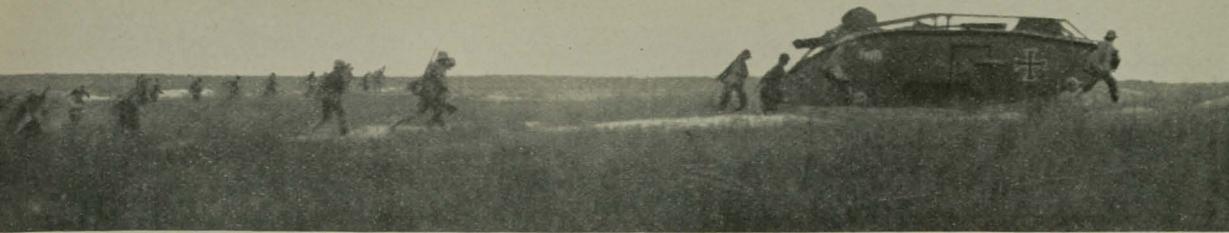
(10.8 m 17.4 km) About $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles farther on, while approaching main crossroads, to the left front are seen the shattered crests of the Monts de Champagne. These were in the hands of the Germans until April 1917 when a general French attack launched from near this road pushed the enemy from them.

The French Government is attempting to preserve there a number of trenches, concrete machine-gun emplacements and tunnels. To visit some of them, turn left at next crossroad toward Nauroy and proceed to first high crest. Length of detour—3 miles. Time required—30 minutes.

(11.4 m 18.4 km) Just before reaching the main crossroads, to the left alongside the road, are seen two small markers, one

Fort de la Pompelle, Part of the Eastern Defenses of Reims





German Infantry Attacking With a Tank Which Had Been Captured From the British. © G

indicating the farthest advance of the German Armies in this region during 1918 and the other commemorating the 27th Infantry Regiment of the French Army.

(12.8 m 20.6 km) **The next village seen to the right is Prosnès.** At its near edge is seen a small monument which commemorates a French infantry regiment.

(16.7 m 26.9 km) **About 4 miles farther on, along left side of road,** is seen a large World War cemetery, containing in different sections the bodies of 6,424 French, 66 Polish and 5,333 German dead.

(17.1 m 27.5 km) **2½ miles to the left of this road** is located the scene of the raid by the French 366th Infantry, 132d Division, IV Corps, French Fourth Army, about 8:00 o'clock on the evening of July 14 which resulted in the capture of 27 prisoners from whom were obtained the time schedule and other priceless information concerning the great Ger-

man offensive which was made later that same night along this entire battle front.

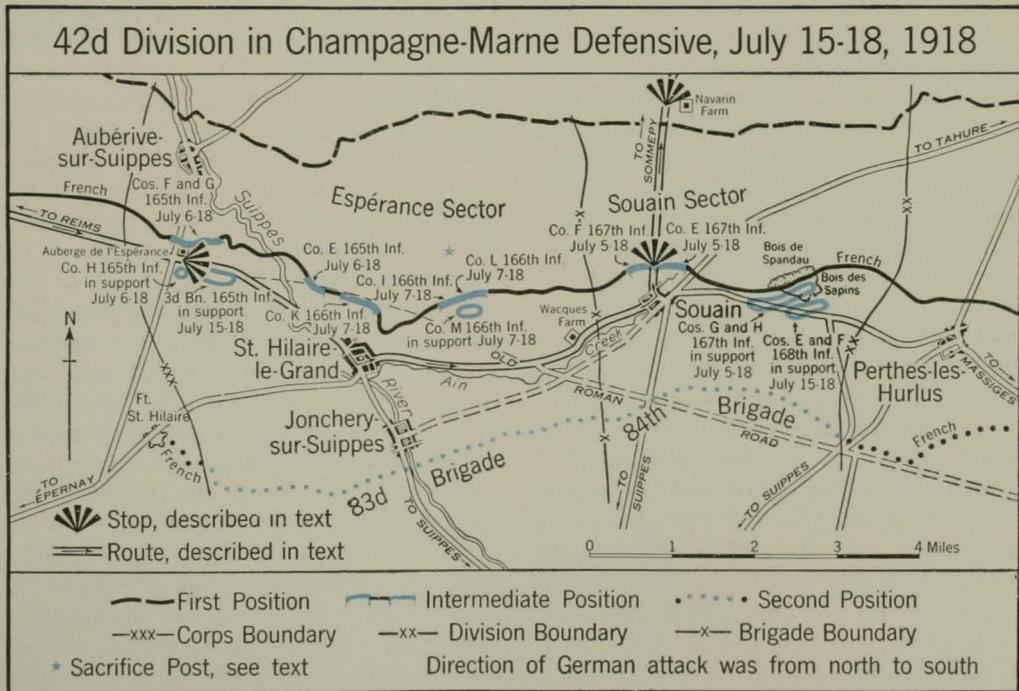
(19.0 m 30.6 km) **Beyond next main crossroad, about 200 yards, just over the first slight crest, STOP.**

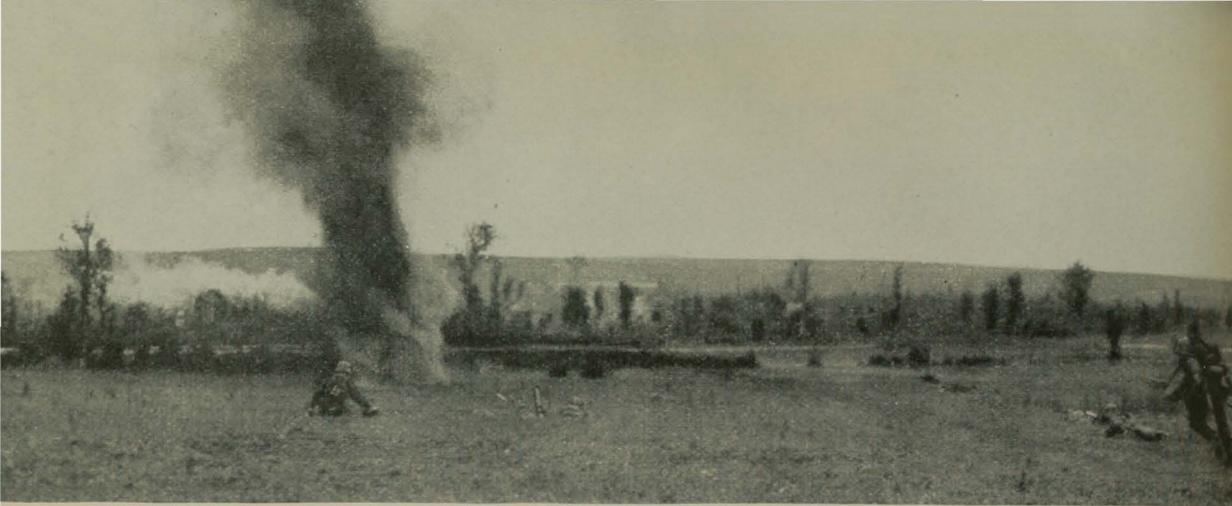
Face down the road, which direction is approximately east.

The last large German offensive of the war which was launched on July 15, was stopped in this vicinity with terrific losses to the attacking forces.

The tourist has now reached that part of the front where elements of the American 42d Division fought. The operations of that division have been previously described in this chapter. The following should be read with that description in mind and with frequent references to the map of the 42d Division operations which appears at the bottom of this page.

The intermediate position selected to be defended at all costs against the





German Assault Detachment Advancing Under Enemy Fire During the Attack of July 15, 1918. © G

expected German attack included this road near here. The forward trench of the position ran approximately parallel to this road about 300 yards away to the left. Some of the support trenches were along this road and others approximately 150 yards to the right of it.

One battalion of the 42d Division held a sector here, about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile long, with two companies in the forward line and one company in support in the trench system just to the right of this point. The remaining company of this battalion held a position in the forward line about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles away in the direction the tourist is facing. Another battalion was in the position defending St. Hilaire-le-Grand, about 2 miles to the right front but invisible from here, and still another was near the village of Souain, which is passed through later in the tour.

During the night of July 14-15 the excitement at this point was intense. With full knowledge of the German plans the American and French artillery, located a mile or more to the right of this road, opened fire about 11:20 p. m. upon the German masses forming for the attack. Exactly on scheduled time, 12:10 a. m., the German artillery commenced firing. Some of its fire was directed against the positions here but most of it pounded the trenches and wire of the first line, which ran about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles away, beyond Aubérive-sur-Suippes, seen to the left, and along the top of the ridge seen to the left front. As that line had been practically abandoned, except for the

so-called "sacrifice posts", much of the German fire which fell upon it was wasted.

At 3:50 a. m. the German infantry assault was launched, this fact being signalled to those near here by rockets sent up by men in the "sacrifice posts" who then attempted to disorganize the first enemy assault waves by machine-gun fire while retreating slowly to the lines near here. At that time the American soldiers near this point prepared to receive the assault, but so effective was the delay caused by the small posts in the front line that it was not until shortly before 8:00 a. m. that the German troops succeeded in reaching the position just to the left of this road. The first waves were beaten off and by 10:00 a. m. the French and Americans in this vicinity had repulsed, with terrific losses to the Germans, seven separate assaults. About 11:00 a. m. the attack lost its impetus and the enemy was compelled to withdraw for reorganization.

Further attacks by the enemy in the afternoon and early evening were repulsed, and during the night another battalion of the 42d Division was sent forward to support the lines near here. It took up a position in trenches running immediately along the right side of this road with the center of the battalion approximately 800 yards ahead.

At 10:30 a. m. on July 16, after heavy artillery preparation, the Germans renewed their efforts to break through the line near St. Hilaire. In spite of repeated attacks, however, continued until

2:00 p. m., their assaults were everywhere repulsed with severe losses. These attacks were probably launched in an effort to conceal from the Allies the decisiveness of the defeat suffered by the German Armies on the previous day and they marked the end of the German attempts to advance on this front.

On July 16 and 17 American and French patrols operated as far as the former French first line, then held by the Germans, and on the morning of July 18 the American troops made a successful raid on a German position to the left of here as a result of which information and a number of prisoners were secured.

On July 19 the 42d Division was relieved from the trenches on this front, preparatory to moving westward to join the fighting in the Aisne-Marne region.

The headquarters of the 42d Division during the operations on July 15 and 16 was located at Crête Niel about 6 miles away to the right of this road.

From here to Souain the intermediate position from which the German attack was repulsed ran approximately parallel to the road followed by the tour. It was located from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the left of it.

EN ROUTE NORTHWEST OF ST. HILAIRE TO
THE NAVARIN FARM MONUMENT

(21.5 m 34.6 km) **In the next village, St. Hilaire-le-Grand, immediately beyond the church, turn to the left.**

On July 15 and 16 the troops of the 42d Division played a prominent rôle in the defense of St. Hilaire-le-Grand.

(23.8 m 38.3 km) **Approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the right of this road** was located the second position, organized and held by the greater part of the 42d Division. That position was heavily shelled during the attack but no active fighting took place there as the Germans were unable to force their way through the intermediate position to the left of this road.

Beyond next town, Souain, on road to Tahure are a monument and cemetery of the French Foreign Legion, the funds for which were furnished by an American. It is easily reached and well worth seeing. To visit, turn right at church in Souain, cross creek and then turn left. At road fork near edge of town take left-hand branch and proceed about 1 mile to monument and cemetery which are on right side of road. Length of side trip—3 miles. Amount of time required—30 minutes.

(25.5 m 41.1 km) **Where road ends in the next village, Souain, turn left.**

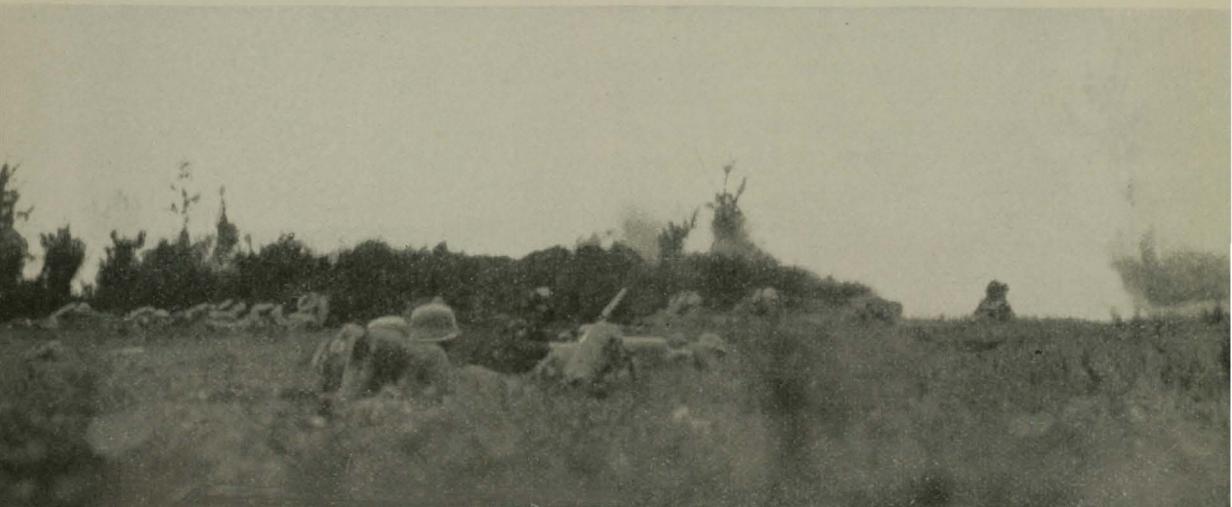
(25.7 m 41.4 km) **Beyond town, to the left of the road** is seen a large World War military cemetery containing 29,507 French and 13,708 German dead.

(25.9 m 41.7 km) **About 300 yards farther on, at small crest marked (1937) by two concrete shelters to the left of the road, STOP without leaving automobile.**

Through this point, running at right angles to the road and extending about 600 yards on each side of it, were located trenches held by two companies of the 42d Division from July 15 to 19.

Early on the morning of July 15 when the isolated groups in the front line, which were on the ridge 2 miles ahead,

German Assault Against Village After an Artillery Preparation, July 1918. © G





German Artillery and Infantry Observers at Berry-au-Bac, 1918. © G

retired before the German onslaught the American troops here were caught by the full force of the attack. After vigorous assaults the Germans penetrated the American lines in this vicinity about 7:50 a. m., but were thrown back at 8:30 a. m. after vicious hand-to-hand fighting. Further attacks by the enemy during the afternoon and early evening were so decisively repulsed that the German efforts to advance in this vicinity were not renewed the following day.

The following are verbatim extracts from an account written by an officer of an American company in line immediately to the left of this road:

"Just before midnight . . . our artillery opened up and the sky was red for miles, at midnight the enemy opened up with artillery and I could see hundreds of trench mortar shells being thrown into the first position where the French were holding the lines with a skeleton force. The shelling lasted until just before dawn. Tanks were heard during the night, these were put out of action before reaching our lines. The enemy infantry and light machine gunners . . . reached our wire at dawn, some of these broke through into our trenches but were killed . . . all attacks were beaten off.

" . . . Some Germans attacked near the road in French overcoats but were detected in time. Before the second attack, the Germans could be plainly seen coming over the hill and down the Sommepy-Souain road in the distance in small groups and moving off to the east of the road to form. This attack when it came did not hit our line head on but struck us on a slant from right to left as

a result of which large numbers of the enemy passed in front of our wire and were exposed to our fire at close range. One German under officer stood on a little rise out in front of us and gave arm signals until he was picked off, the enemy withdrew in good order when the attack ceased. I could see a group on a hillside at a considerable distance send up a rocket signal, a parachute with what appeared to be a triangle suspended from it, the attack ceased shortly after this.

"Our planes brought down a number of enemy observation balloons directly in front of us. The enemy planes were numerous and active. On July 16th I counted 36 Red Nose planes in one formation which passed over us firing on the trenches with machine guns."

Continue.

(26.2 m 42.2 km) **About 600 yards farther on, to the right of the road** was located Wagram Dugout, occupied by the 2d Division Headquarters, October 2-6, during the fighting for Blanc Mont Ridge.

(28.0 m 45.1 km) **On the next hill, at the large monument with the sculptured group on top, seen to the left of road, STOP.**

This monument is across the road from the site of Navarin Farm, which was completely obliterated during the war. It takes its name from that place. From September 1915 to July 1918 the German

A Brigade Headquarters of the 42d Division
Near Suippes, July 10, 1918





French Monument Near Navarin Farm

front-line trenches which ran at right angles to the road crossed it at this point. The French front-line trenches were about 400 yards back toward Souain.

The monument, erected by the French, commemorates the dead of the armies of Champagne. One of the three sculptured figures on top represents an American automatic rifleman. The inscription names the American units which fought side by side with the French in this region.

In defending against the German offensive of July 15 the French held their front-line trenches only lightly and consequently the main fight in this vicinity was made near Souain at the place where the tourist recently stopped.

After the German attack in July had failed, the French lines on this ridge were not reoccupied and their front line was located about $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles from here in the direction of Souain. On September 26 the French troops in this vicinity attacked in conjunction with the Meuse-Argonne offensive of the American First Army. By September 30 they had advanced to beyond Sommepey, seen down the road in the valley ahead, where they were held up

in front of strong German positions on Blanc Mont Ridge just beyond that town.

The ground in the vicinity of this monument has not been restored and a walk around it will prove most interesting.

On a clear day the square tower of the American monument, on the ridge beyond Sommepey, can be seen on the sky line by looking in a direction some distance to the left of that followed by the road ahead.

EN ROUTE NAVARIN FARM MONUMENT TO
AMERICAN MONUMENT NORTH OF
SOMMEPEY

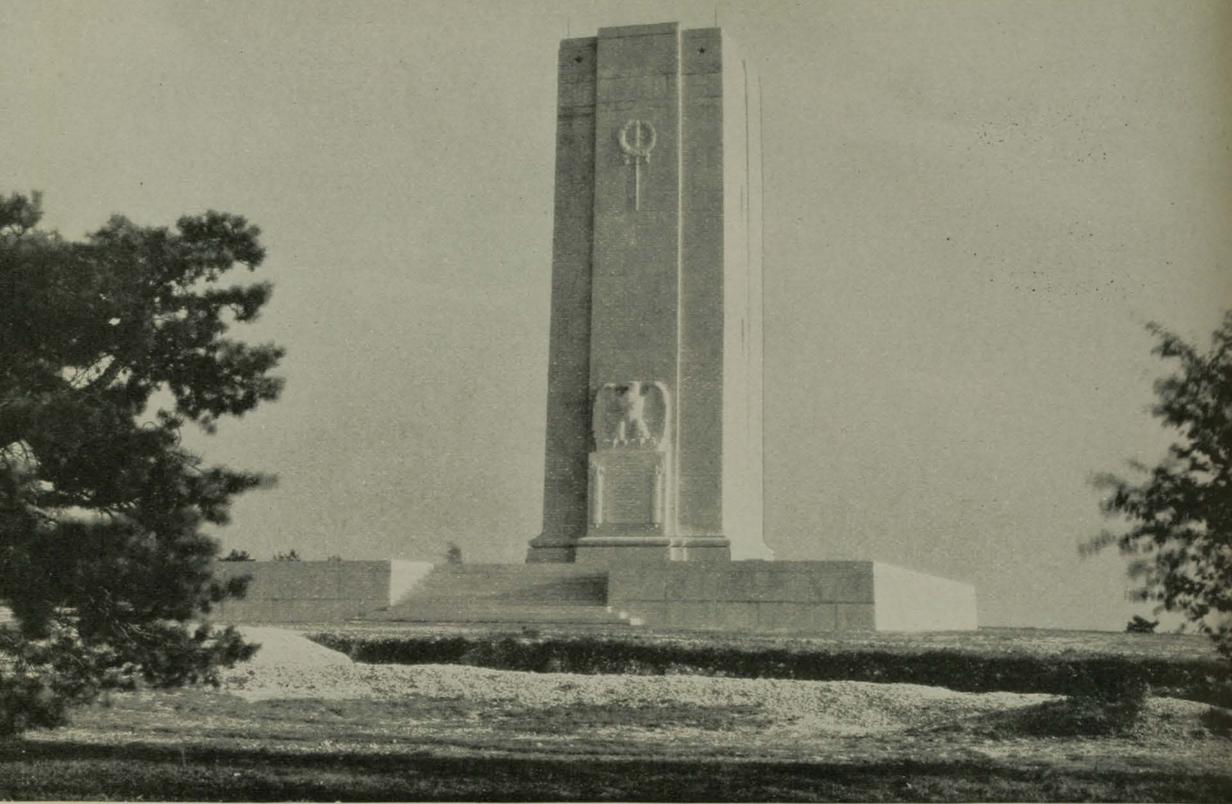
In the next village, Sommepey, under the church are (1937) German dugouts which were used by the American 2d Division Headquarters, October 6-10, and by the 36th Division Headquarters, October 10-12. The town hall of the village was reconstructed with funds raised by a committee of American women.

(30.3 m 48.8 km) In Sommepey, after crossing the railroad, when church steeple is seen to the LEFT front, turn left.

(30.6 m 49.3 km) At the road junction about $\frac{1}{3}$ mile farther on, turn to the left.



37-Millimeter Gun of the 2d Division Infantry in Action Against the Germans



American Memorial Near Sommepey
Commemorating the Fighting in the Champagne Region

advanced over by the Marine Brigade on October 3. The direction of advance of the brigade was approximately parallel to that which the tourist is now traveling.

(33.2 m 53.3 km) **At next crossroads, turn to the right, proceed to the site of the monument and STOP.**

This monument was erected by the United States Government to commemorate the achievements of her soldiers and those of France who fought in this region during the World War. It stands on the crest of Blanc Mont Ridge which was captured by the American 2d Division on October 3, after terrific fighting.

The memorial has the form of a tower and its sturdy, though graceful, shape harmonizes with the bleak and desolate landscape. The golden brown stones, of different shades, give an unusually attractive effect to the exterior and the monument as a whole is representative of a fine type of American architecture.

Between the road and the monument is a German trench and beyond it in the

open field are the entrances to several German dugouts. The neighborhood contains many trenches and other indications of the war. A walk in the vicinity will prove to be most interesting.

On the exterior walls of the monument are carved the dedicatory inscription and the names of the American divisions which the monument commemorates, their insignia, the inclusive dates that they served in this region and four places where each division had hard fighting.

The tower is now (1937) open to visitors only on Sundays. Inside the door, on a stone panel visible through the bronze grille, is a brief description of the American operations in the vicinity.

The following details of the fighting are written to be read from the top of the tower. If read from the lower terrace a large part of the description will be clear and many of the places can be identified.

The direction arrows on the upper parapet walls will be of help in locating the places mentioned on the following pages.

The American monument on Mont-faucon, 27 miles away, can be seen when the atmospheric conditions are favorable.

Climb tower, go to side of terrace over entrance door and face out with line of vision at right angles to the parapet wall.

Sommepey is in the valley ahead.

If the tourist is not familiar with the account of the operations of the 2d and 36th Divisions, given previously in this chapter, it should now be read.

This monument is near the center of the dominating Blanc Mont Ridge. The ridge is crescent-shaped, Blanc Mont being that end about 1 mile away to the right and Hill 210 the end about the same distance to the left front. On an offshoot of this ridge was located Médéah Farm, which is about 1 mile to the left.

The ridge has great natural defensive strength due to its height above the surrounding country and the many wooded

Inscription on the American Sommepey Memorial



Entrance to the American Memorial
Near Sommepey

and cleared places on its summit. The chalky character of its soil made the construction of field fortifications comparatively easy and many trenches, dugouts and obstacles had been constructed.

The offensive of the French Fourth Army, which started on September 26 from a line about 1 mile beyond the location of the Navarin Farm monument, the pyramid-shaped monument seen to the right of and beyond Sommepey, was shattered against the German positions at the foot of this ridge. The repeated French assaults were without avail and the French advance had been definitely stopped when the American 2d Division on October 2 took over the front line just this side of Sommepey.

A general offensive was fixed for October 3. The 2d Division's task was to force the enemy from this ridge and thus open the way for the French Fourth Army to advance to the Aisne River, about 14 miles to the rear of the observer.

The division plan of attack, though hurriedly drawn, was cleverly conceived. An assault was not ordered for its entire front, but the Marine Brigade was directed to advance from the low ridge seen just this side of and to the right of Sommepey, and the Infantry Brigade was directed to jump off from a line just beyond the far edge of the wood seen to the left of front. The direction of advance of this last attack was directly against the eastern end of Blanc Mont Ridge and then along it. The zones of action of the two attacks



Tank Preparing the Way for a German Assault, September 1918. © G

converged at the crossroads seen to the right rear near this monument. No assault was made from this side of Sommepey thus avoiding a frontal attack against a very strong part of the ridge.

The attack was launched at 5:50 a. m. on October 3, after a brief but heavy artillery bombardment. It was accompanied by tanks and was preceded up these slopes by an artillery barrage. The Infantry Brigade found its jump-off line, which was in the zone of action of a French division, occupied by Germans who had made a local attack and had advanced there the day before. In spite of this and heavy enemy shellfire, the assault units lined up farther to the rear and attacked with overpowering force on scheduled time. Hill 210 was soon captured and the advance progressed rapidly along the ridge. By 8:30 a. m. the brigade objective, that part of the road in rear of the observer extending to the left from here as far as Médéah Farm, was reached and a defensive position along it was promptly organized.

The Marine Brigade, attacking from the right of Sommepey, drove forward vigorously and about 8:30 a. m. reached its objective, that part of the road in rear of the observer from the crossroads near here to the right as far as Blanc Mont. Its greatest troubles then began, as the French division alongside it had made no appreciable gain and the brigade flank, about 1 mile to the observer's right, was 2 miles ahead of the French line and entirely exposed. The Germans, realizing the critical situation of the unit, drove in heavily against the exposed flank but

were repulsed with severe losses by a company on that flank which had previously faced in the direction of the observer's right in preparation for such a contingency. Other support units faced in that direction also and thus filled the wide gap which had existed in the line.

To the right front, just to the right of the line of the direction arrow pointing out St. Hilaire, is the high, partially wooded ridge called Notre Dame des Champs, which was holding up the French. On the left end of that ridge was a powerful German position called Essen Hook. That strong point had been unsuccessfully attacked by the French several times, the last attack having been repulsed by the Germans early on October 3. During the morning of October 3 the position was taken by the marines in a flank attack and turned over to a French division, which lost it later in the day when the German troops counterattacked.

Go to opposite side of terrace.

St. Etienne-à-Arnes is the village which is seen to the left front.

The 2d Division at 2:00 p. m. on October 3 ordered an advance from its newly-won positions along the road running in front of here. The marine units, in line beyond the road junction seen to the left, between 6:00 and 7:00 p. m. received this order to attack but being heavily engaged on the division's left flank the battalion commanders agreed among themselves to attack early the next morning. The Infantry Brigade, in front of and to the right of here, jumped off late in the afternoon of the 3d and advanced more than a mile, well beyond the units on each side of

it. In spite of its precarious position with both flanks exposed, the brigade tenaciously held to its gains.

At the end of its first day of attack the crest of Blanc Mont Ridge was firmly in the grasp of the 2d Division and both of its flanks were far ahead of the adjoining French units. Its main mission had been accomplished and as a result the German High Command that day decided to retreat to the Aisne River on all the Champagne battle front. This decision caused no great change in the severity of the fighting in this region as from then on the Germans fought even more desperately to gain time to make the withdrawal in good order and thus avoid excessive losses of men, supplies and matériel.

Illustrative of the aggressive spirit and heroism of the individual soldier during the intense fighting on October 3 are the deeds for which Corporal John H. Pruitt, Private First Class Frank J. Bart and Private John Joseph Kelly of the 2d Division were awarded Congressional Medals of Honor, the highest award given by the United States Government for bravery.

Corporal Pruitt of the Marine Brigade attacked singlehanded two machine guns, located not far from the site of this monument. He captured them, killed two of the enemy, and then captured 40 prisoners in a dugout near by. This gallant soldier was killed soon afterward by shell-fire while sniping at the enemy.

Private Bart of the Infantry Brigade was on duty as a company runner when the advance was held up by machine-gun fire not far from Médéah Farm. He voluntarily picked up an automatic rifle, ran out ahead of the line, and silenced a hostile machine-gun nest, killing the German gunners. The advance then continued and when it was again hindered shortly afterwards by fire from another machine-gun nest this courageous soldier repeated his bold exploit by putting the second machine gun out of action.

Private Kelly of the Marine Brigade, while his unit was attacking a German position between here and Sommepy, ran through the American barrage 100 yards

in advance of the front line and attacked an enemy machine-gun nest, killing the gunner with a grenade, shooting another member of the crew with a pistol and returning through the barrage with eight prisoners which he had captured.

The dangerous position of the Infantry Brigade, whose front line about halfway between here and St. Etienne formed a deep salient into the German lines during the night of October 3-4, was somewhat relieved when the Marine Brigade attacked at 6:00 a. m. on October 4 and moved up abreast of it. Early in the morning, however, the Infantry Brigade had withstood fierce German counterattacks against its flanks, launched from the vicinity of Médéah Farm and from St. Etienne.

That afternoon the attack was renewed on the entire front of the division. In front of here the Infantry Brigade advanced at 2:30 p. m. but came under severe machine-gun fire from German positions along the road joining St. Etienne with Orfeuill, seen to the right, and was forced to retire after severe losses.

The Marine Brigade attacked about noon toward St. Etienne and reached the edge of the wood on this side of the town before it was stopped. During the afternoon a counterattack against its left flank was repulsed. The gains made during the afternoon were not held as the advanced troops, after suffering heavily from hostile machine-gun and shell fire, were forced to fall back. Meanwhile, the marine units facing to the left at the end of Blanc Mont Ridge had beaten off two determined German counterattacks.

Men of the 42d Division at a Dugout Near the Second-Line Trenches Northwest of Suippes, July 10, 1918





German Troops Occupying a Gigantic Mine Crater Just After the Mine Exploded, July 11, 1917. © G

Most of the German assaults on this day were determined, carefully planned attacks to regain the high ground between here and St. Etienne. Many of them collided with 2d Division attacks and thus the area became one great maelstrom of violence. Reports of 2d Division officers speak of this day's fighting as the most severe in their experience.

The line organized by the 2d Division on the night of October 4-5 was about half way from here to St. Etienne. The left flank of the division was far ahead of the adjoining French unit.

During the day, the French division on the right had advanced about 700 yards beyond Médéah Farm. On the left the French had moved forward in the 2d Division zone of action and attacked to the west (observer's left) forcing the Germans to evacuate all of the Notre Dame des Champs Ridge, which was recently pointed out to the left rear.

On October 5 the 2d Division ordered an attack which was only to be launched when the French units came up on the flanks. Due to the withdrawal of the German troops to the left of here, the French advanced during the day and the Marine Brigade attacked in the afternoon, moving forward several hundred yards. Other local fighting took place in the 2d Division zone of action but no further changes in the front line occurred.

On October 6 the division advanced its lines about 700 yards all along its front, the heaviest fighting taking place just this side of St. Etienne. During that night, a brigade of the American 36th Division took over all of the 2d Division front line except that held by two of its battalions. No attacks were made on the 7th by American units.

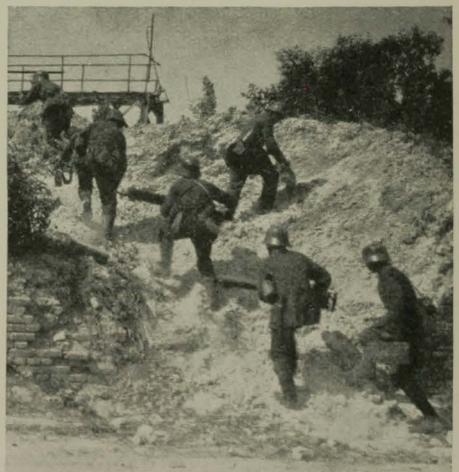
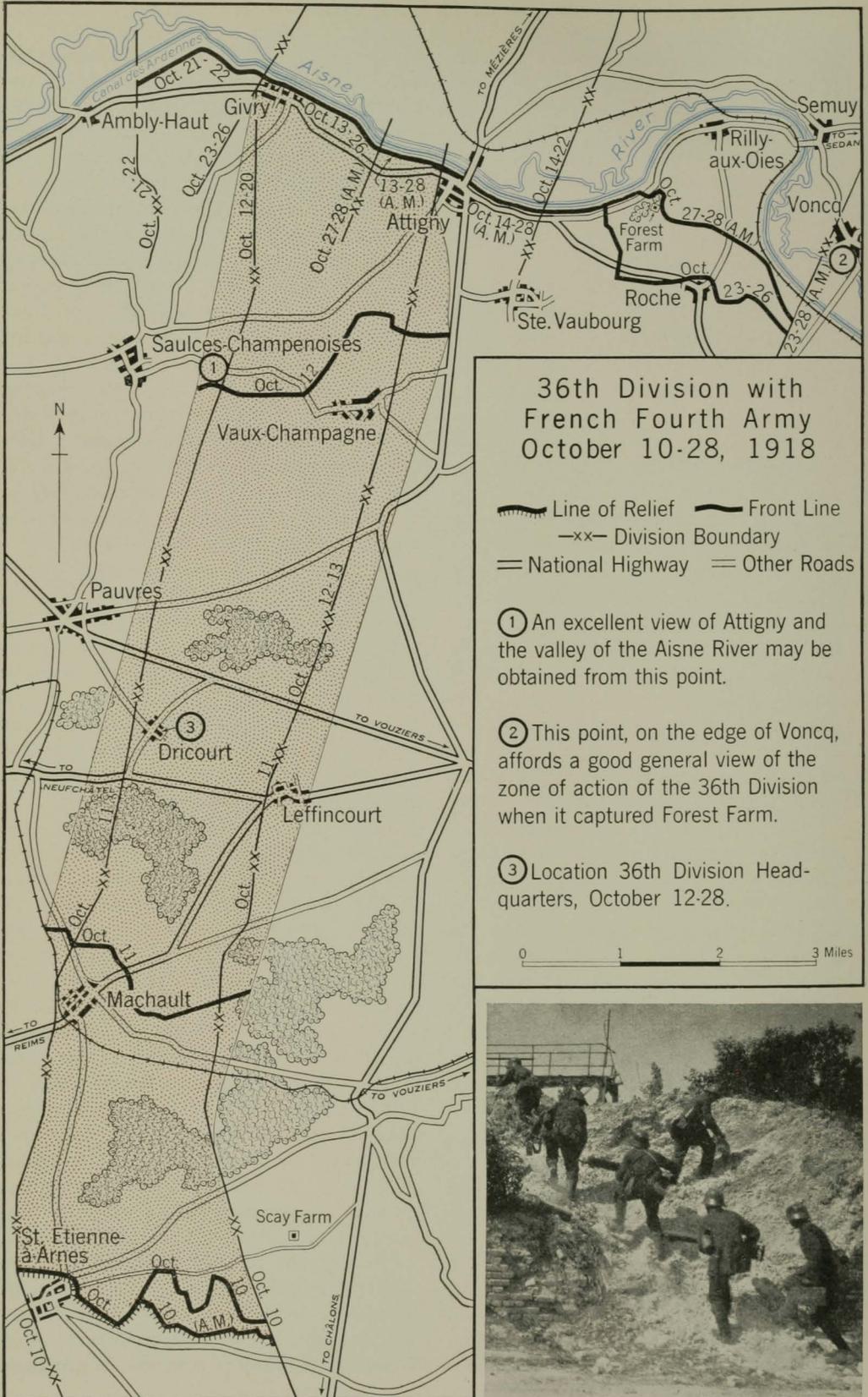
Early on October 8 an attack, accompanied by tanks and a heavy artillery barrage, was launched on the entire division front. It was opposed by severe artillery and machine-gun fire, and the fighting waged fiercely in St. Etienne and just beyond the St. Etienne-Orfeuill road during most of the day. Two strong German counterattacks were repulsed and

by that night St. Etienne had been captured by a marine battalion still in the line, and the division front line had been advanced an average distance of 600 yards. On the right the French came up alongside the American division.

It was during this fighting near St. Etienne that there occurred the deeds, indicative of the fine spirit and bravery of the 36th Division, for which Corporal Samuel M. Sampler and Private First Class Harold L. Turner were awarded Congressional Medals of Honor.

Corporal Sampler's company having suffered severe casualties from enemy machine-gun fire was finally stopped. Corporal Sampler discovered the location of the hostile machine guns on an elevation, and armed with German hand grenades which he had picked up, he rushed forward in the face of heavy enemy fire until he was near the guns, where he threw his grenades into the hostile position. His third grenade landed among the enemy, killing two of them, silencing the machine guns, and causing the surrender of 28 German soldiers, whom he sent to the rear as prisoners. As a result of his courageous act the company was enabled to resume the advance immediately.

After Private Turner's platoon had started the attack, he assisted in organizing a platoon consisting of the battalion scouts, runners and a detachment of Signal Corps troops. As second in command of this platoon he fearlessly led them forward through heavy enemy fire, continually encouraging the men. Later deadly machine-gun fire was encountered which reduced the strength of his command to four men, and forced these to take shelter. The enemy machine-gun emplacement, 25 yards distant, kept up a continual fire from four machine guns. After the fire had shifted momentarily, Private Turner rushed forward with fixed bayonet and charged the position alone, capturing the strong point, 50 German soldiers and the four machine guns in it. His remarkable display of courage and fearlessness was largely instrumental in enabling his company to continue its advance.



On October 9 some fighting occurred in front of here but no appreciable gains were made. The French were now up with the 2d Division on both flanks.

The 36th Division took command of the zone of action of the 2d Division on October 10. The artillery and engineers of the 2d remained with the 36th Division until that division was relieved.

The importance of the achievements of the 2d Division here can not be overemphasized and too much credit can not be given it. Blanc Mont Ridge was the key to any advance in this region and its capture caused the Germans to start a withdrawal which enabled the entire Fourth Army to move forward.

On the morning of October 10, based on information that the enemy was retreating, the 36th Division was ordered to keep in close contact with the German forces and pursue them vigorously. It attacked that afternoon and reached the road between St. Etienne and Scay Farm, seen to the right front, in the right part of its zone of action. The French were then held up near Scay Farm. The lines near St. Etienne were unchanged.

During the evening of October 10 information was again received that the Germans were withdrawing so the 36th Division ordered its units to start the pursuit at 9:30 a. m. on the following day. Considerable machine-gun resistance was overcome during October 11 but by evening the division was beyond Machault, seen about 5 miles directly ahead.

The pursuit was continued on the 12th when Dricourt and Vaux-Champagne were captured, the division advancing about 7 miles. On the next day the Aisne River, about 14 miles to the right front from here, was reached. The high ground seen on the horizon in that direction is just beyond the river.

After further fighting near the Aisne River the 36th Division was relieved from the line on October 28. Its fine accomplishments in this region are even more creditable when it is considered that the division had been in France but two months, had never served at the front

even in a quiet sector, was separated from its engineer regiment and field artillery brigade, and was critically short of transportation of all kinds.

Before leaving the upper terrace go to the side opposite the stairway leading to this terrace and note the village of Séchault to the right front, 9 miles away. That town and Bellevue Signal Ridge, the wooded nose of land seen to the right of it below the horizon, were the scenes of hard fighting by the infantry regiments of the 93d Division whose zones of action are to be visited later during this tour.

EN ROUTE AMERICAN MONUMENT NORTH OF SOMMEPY TO SOUTHEAST OF ARDEUIL

Continue along road toward the northeast, without retracing route.

This road marked the front line of the 2d Division Infantry Brigade at noon on October 3. On the slopes to the left of it were many German dugouts and shelters built by German troops during the early years of the World War when the battle line was about 5 miles to the right.

At the next road junction was located Médéah Farm. The right of the 2d Division line remained near it from October 3 to 6, in contact with the French.

(34.5 m 55.5 km) **At the road junction near Médéah Farm, turn right.**

(35.5 m 57.2 km) **At the next crest,** the road crosses the eastern end of Blanc Mont Ridge along which the infantry advanced.

(36.4 m 58.6 km) **A short distance beyond the first pronounced right bend in the road,** the tour leaves the zone of action of the 2d Division Infantry Brigade.

(38.1 m 61.3 km) **Upon reaching the next village, Sommepy, turn sharp left toward the village of Manre.**

(39.9 m 64.2 km) **About 1½ miles farther on, to the right** is seen a small monument commemorating two French regiments. A German concrete machine-gun emplacement is located close to it.

(41.9 m 67.5 km) **Beyond the next wood, to the right front on the hillside across the valley** are seen (1937) many traces of German artillery emplacements.



German Infantry Advancing With a Machine Gun, July 1918. © G

(42.1 m 67.8 km) **At the next cross-roads, turn to the right.**

(43.7 m 70.4 km) **Continue through the next village, Manre, toward Séchault.**

There is a fine observation point on the high ridge south of Ardeuil where most of the ground fought over by the regiments of the 93d Division can be seen. For those who are especially interested in that fighting or who wish to enjoy an extensive panorama, turn right at near edge of Ardeuil and follow road toward Gratreuil until top of ridge is reached. Length of detour—2½ miles. Time required—30 minutes.

(45.8 m 73.7 km) **At far side of next village, Ardeuil, turn to the right toward the village of Séchault.**

(46.3 m 74.5 km) **Beyond this turn, about ½ mile farther on along the road, at the first crest, STOP.**

Face down the road, which direction is approximately southeast.

This point is near the middle of the area of operations in the Champagne region of the 369th, 371st and 372d Infantry Regiments of the 93d Division.

The village seen to the left front is Séchault and the high ridge seen ahead to the right of the road is Bellevue Signal Ridge. The direction of advance of the units fighting near here was from the observer's right front to left rear.

If the tourist is not familiar with the account, given earlier in this chapter, of the operations in this region of the regiments of the American 93d Division it should be read at this time.

The near edge of the Argonne Forest is seen on the sky line beyond Séchault.

When the American First Army made its attack on the other side of the Argonne Forest on September 26, the French

Fourth Army advanced in this direction from its front line which was then about 4 miles away to the right front.

With this French Army were three infantry regiments of the American 93d Division. These regiments had been incorporated into two French divisions, the 369th being part of the French 161st Division and the 371st and 372d being part of the French 157th Division.

On September 26, when the French 161st Division jumped off, the 369th Infantry was in support. During the day it entered a gap in the front line and captured the town of Ripont, about 3 miles from here, over the ridge to the right front. It continued to advance in this direction until September 28 when, after hard fighting, it established itself on the far side of Bellevue Signal Ridge.

On the 28th the French 157th Division entered the battle line to the right of here and both the 371st and 372d Infantry Regiments were engaged with it in the fighting. Attacking in this direction they advanced about 600 yards to this side of the ridge seen to the right. On that night the 371st was close to the crest of that ridge and the 372d on the near slopes of it. Two companies of the 372d lost direction and became separated from their battalion. Parts of these spent the night just this side of Séchault. Bussy Farm, seen to the right front, was occupied by the 372d Infantry after dark.

The French 161st Division, of which the American 369th Infantry was a part, on the morning of September 29 completed the capture of Bellevue Signal Ridge and the hill, Mont Cuvelet, seen to the left of it. About 2:45 p. m. the 369th Infantry launched an attack

from those heights against Séchault and took the town, digging in just beyond it. During this advance the members of the 372d Infantry who had spent the night just this side of town were rescued from their exposed position.

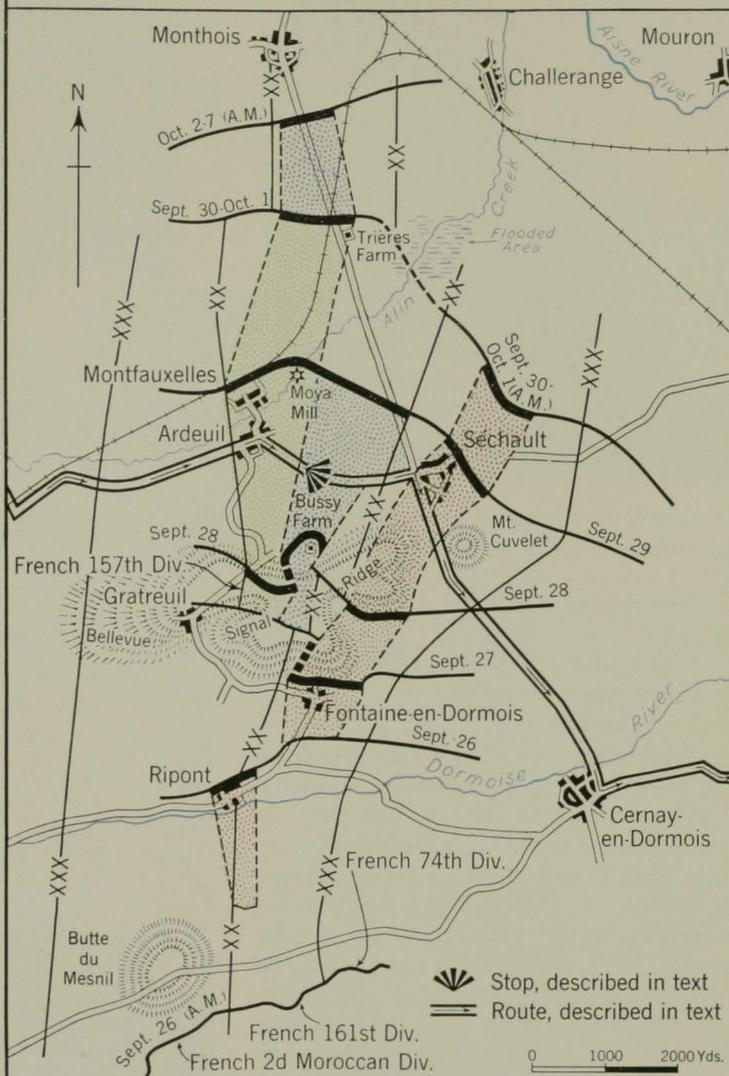
On September 29 the French 157th Division formed at the foot of the slopes seen to the right front for an attack at 10:00 a. m. Part of the 372d Infantry advanced toward Séchault, which was outside the zone of action assigned its division. At 1:00 p. m. patrols of the regiment entered the town but were driven out by hostile machine-gun fire. Later in the day, after the town had been captured by the 369th Infantry, troops of the 372d mopped up part of it. During the evening the 372d was withdrawn from the line and reorganized near Bussy Farm.

The 371st Infantry attacked from near Bussy Farm at 10:00 a. m. on September 29, passed over the ground in rear of here, captured Ardeuil, seen to the rear, and that evening established its front line about 1 mile to the left rear of this point.

On the 30th the 369th attacked in the morning and by afternoon had advanced about 1/2 mile from

Séchault. During the night it was relieved and moved to Bellevue Signal Ridge where it remained until October 7, when the division to which it was attached was taken out of the front line.

369th, 371st and 372d Infantry Regiments (93d Division) with French Fourth Army September 26-October 7, 1918



- American Front Line
- Ground gained by 369th Infantry
- Ground gained by 371st Infantry
- Ground gained by 372d Infantry
- French Front Line
- Corps Boundary
- Division Boundary

remarkable courage and tenacity at critical times, he was the only officer of his battalion who advanced beyond the town, and by clearing out machine-gun and sniping posts he contributed largely to the success of his battalion in holding its objective. His example of bravery and fortitude and his eagerness to continue with his mission despite severe wounds set before the enlisted men of his command an admirable standard of morale and self-sacrifice.

On September 30 the 371st advanced over a mile in the direction to the left rear from here and captured Trières Farm. On October 1 it was relieved by the 372d and reorganized near this point. The 372d advanced about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile on October 2 and, after repulsing a German attack on the 5th, was relieved from the line on October 7.

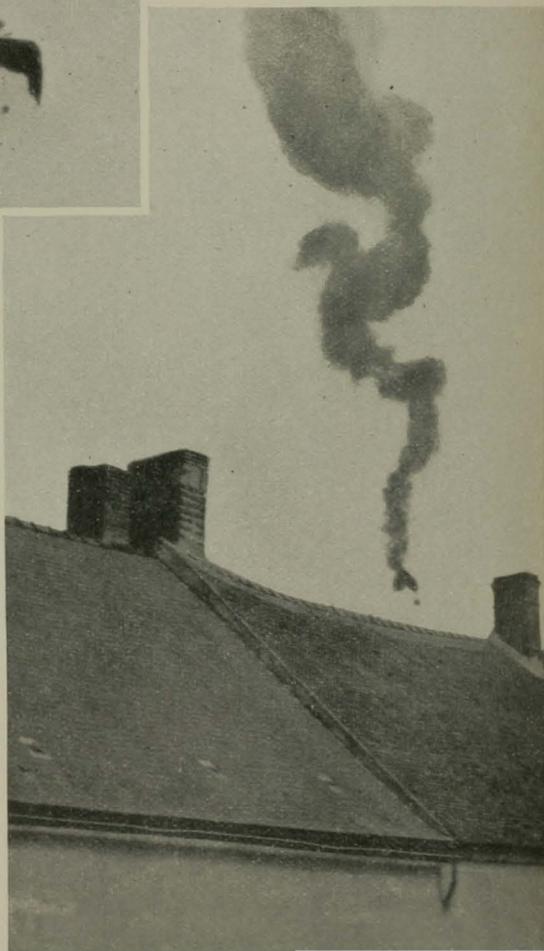
On the slopes of the nose of the heights to the right of here is a small

The Balloon Coming Down in Flames



Observers Dropping From Observation Balloon After Attack by German Aviator

It was during the fighting near Séchault on September 29 and 30 that First Lieutenant George S. Robb of the 369th Infantry performed the deeds for which he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. During the attack he was severely wounded by machine-gun fire while at the head of his platoon. Refusing to go to the dressing station for treatment until ordered to do so, he returned within 45 minutes and remained on duty throughout the day and night, inspecting the lines and establishing outposts. Early the next morning he was again wounded and later that day was struck by fragments of a bursting shell that killed three officers of his company. He at once assumed command and took a leading part in preparing the new position for defense. Displaying





Monument to 371st Infantry Near Ardeuil

monument, see picture above, to the 371st Infantry. It is inaccessible by automobile.

EN ROUTE SOUTHEAST OF ARDEUIL TO
NORTHEAST OF BINARVILLE

About 2½ miles north of Séchault along the main road is located a small monument to the 372d Infantry. To visit, turn left toward Monthois at next main crossroads. Length of detour—5 miles. Amount of time required—25 minutes.

(47.2 m 76.0 km) At near edge of the next village, Séchault, turn right.

(48.3 m 77.8 km) Beyond next bend in road, after passing first crossroad, to the right can be seen the edge of the heights along which the 369th Infantry fought on September 27 and 28. The Argonne Forest can be seen covering the hills on the sky line to the left front.

(50.3 m 81.0 km) Just after entering the next village, Cernay-en-Dormois, turn to the left.

(50.9 m 81.9 km) Beyond the town, at the first pronounced crest, about 100 yards to the left of the road are located (1937) the remains of a number of German concrete battery positions. Although close to the road but little of them

can be seen from it. A visit to these gun positions will prove most interesting.

(54.8 m 88.2 km) Continue through next village, Condé-les-Autry.

Beyond town, at first road junction, just before turning there is a fine view to the left rear of the ground recently passed over on the tour. Bellevue Signal Ridge can be easily identified.

(55.4 m 89.2 km) At road junction, turn to the right.

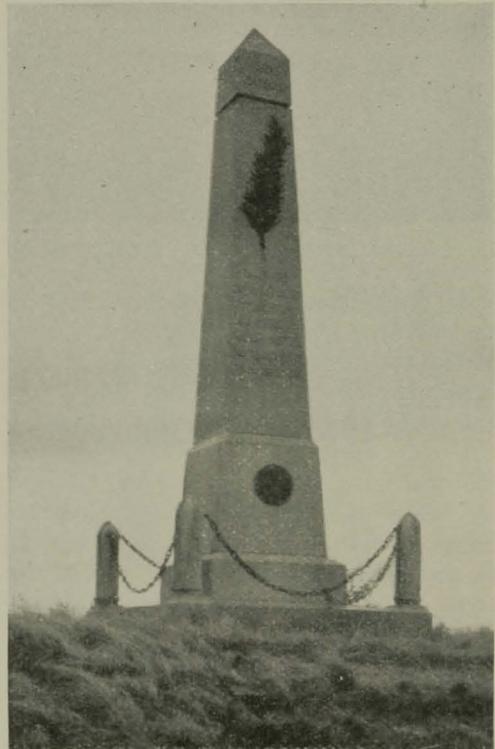
(57.2 m 92.1 km) At next main road junction, marked by a monument to the French 9th Cuirassier Regiment, turn sharply to the left.

(57.9 m 93.2 km) Some distance farther on, while descending steep hill, to the right along the bank can be seen (1937) several entrances to former German shelters and dugouts.

(58.2 m 93.7 km) At foot of hill, the pond crossed is that of Charlevaux Mill. During the war that part of it to the right of the road did not exist.

(58.3 m 93.8 km) Beyond the bridge, to the right across the valley is soon seen

Monument to 372d Infantry South of Monthois



the small ravine by means of which the troops of the "Lost Battalion" advanced to this vicinity on October 2.

(58.6 m 94.3 km) Just beyond the first LEFT bend in the road, at the small stone marked "Lost Battalion", located near the right edge of the road, STOP.

Face to the right, which direction is approximately south.

This point is in the Argonne Forest. One of the most heroic defenses of the war was made on the steep bank just below where the tourist is now standing.



Road Marker Indicating Site of "Lost Battalion"

If the reader is not familiar with it, he should read the account of the "Lost Battalion", given on page 337 of this chapter. The sketch on the next page should be consulted from time to time.

On October 1 the 77th Division was stopped by a strongly organized German defensive line about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile in front of here and the French troops were held up to the right of here, about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile northwest of the road junction at which the monument to the French 9th Cuirassier Regiment was recently pointed out.

On the morning of October 2 the 77th Division launched an attack all along its

front in an attempt, which proved unsuccessful, to capture the ridge back of here. About noon one of its brigades ordered a second attack with this road as its objective. In that attack the units were directed to push forward without regard to the progress of adjoining units, as it had been erroneously reported that the French had made a deep advance north of Binarville and it was believed that the German resistance in front of here was weakening. During the course of this brigade attack, six companies of the 308th Infantry and parts of two companies of the 306th Machine Gun Battalion made a deep advance through an unoccupied portion of the hostile line, the German troops having moved over to repel French attacks on their right. This small American force, meeting little opposition, came into this valley through the ravine, to the right of here, recently pointed out, and about 6:00 p. m. took up a position, which extended from this vicinity about 350 yards to the left, on the slope below the road. This position was immediately organized for all around defense and attempts were made to secure liaison with adjoining troops.

During early evening a battalion of the 307th Infantry attempted to join the force here, but in the darkness the companies lost contact and only one, the leading company, succeeded in advancing through the hostile wire. It took up a position about 300 yards from here, to the right front on the near slope of the hill across the valley, where it remained during the night of October 2 in close communication with the troops on this side.

During the night the enemy troops closed the gap in their line and cut off the American force in this vicinity.

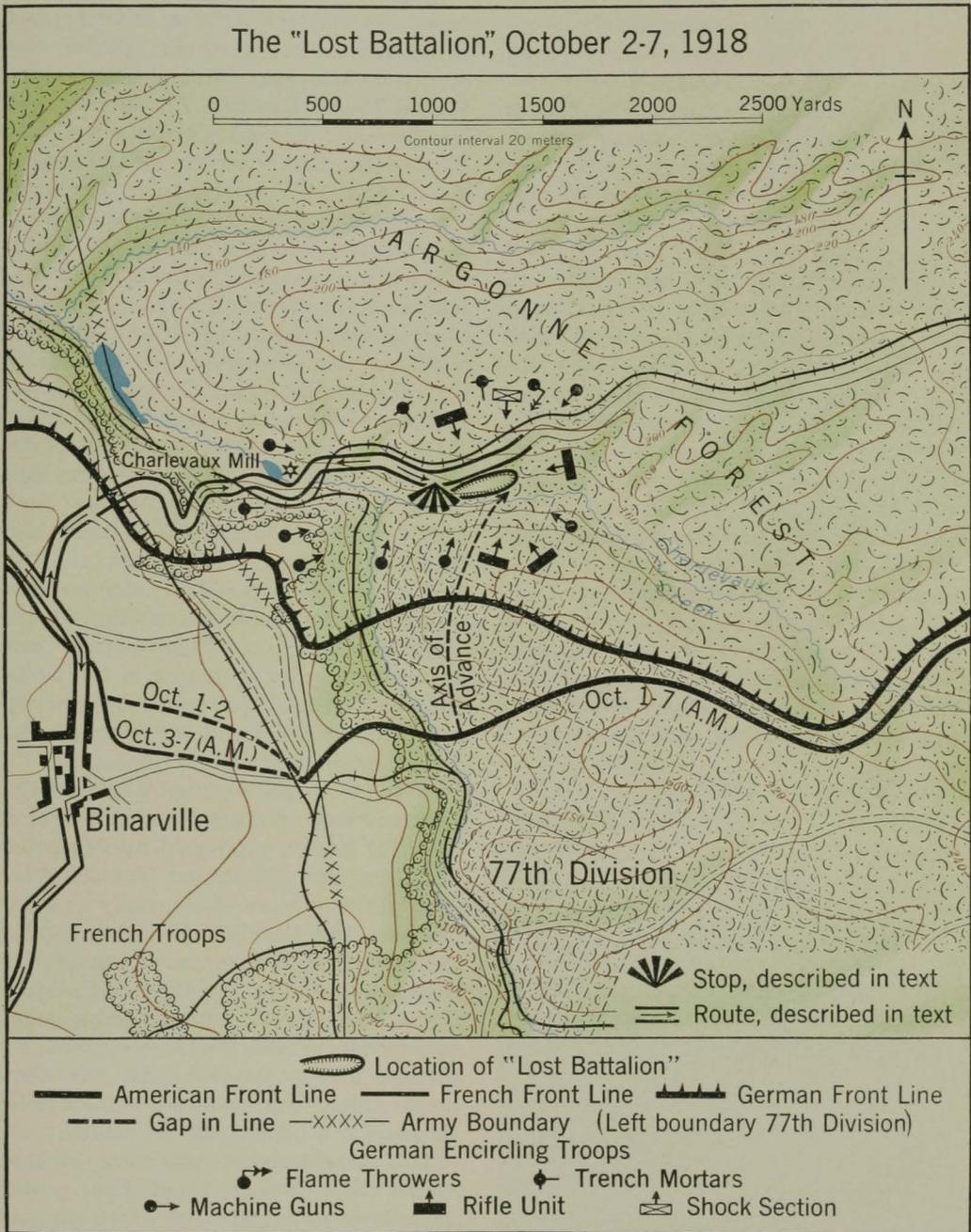
On October 3 all efforts of the 77th Division to relieve its so-called "Lost Battalion" failed. Early that morning the company across the valley moved to this side and took up a position on the left of the force here. Shortly thereafter one company was sent to clear a way back up the ravine which had been followed in reaching this spot. It ran into heavy

hostile fire and returned, reporting the gap closed. Shortly thereafter another company crossed the valley to the left of here in an attempt to secure contact with

it able to return. That marked the last attempt of the troops here to fight their way back to the lines of their division.

The position organized by the "Lost

The "Lost Battalion," October 2-7, 1918



the remainder of its division. This unit was attacked on both flanks with such energy that only with great difficulty was

Battalion" on the steep slope below here was in the form of an elongated oval more than 350 yards in length, with an average

width of about 75 yards. The machine gun companies were placed on the flanks. The position had one great advantage in that this slope was so steep that German artillery, located in rear of the observer was unable to fire on the men who occupied it. The force dug in and prepared as best it could to withstand a siege.

During October 3 and 4 homing pigeons were used to send six messages back to division headquarters, giving by map coordinates the exact location of the force and describing its critical situation.

In the meantime, the enemy had completely surrounded the "Lost Battalion". The Germans on the hills to the left and front greeted every movement with rifle fire while heavy machine guns emplaced on the hill to the right front delivered plunging bursts that swept the full length of the American position. Trench mortars, located to the right beyond the mill, and to the rear of the observer, added their fire to the deluge of projectiles which was being poured on the position of this beleaguered force.

The food available was equal to but one day's supply for four companies and that was consumed by noon of October 3. There was no medical officer, and medical supplies were scarce. As the starving

Hillside Where the "Lost Battalion" Was Surrounded for Five Days Near Charlevaux Mill



troops were prevented from getting adequate supplies of water by the intense machine-gun fire sweeping the valley, their condition soon became serious.

Airplanes were dispatched with messages and food, but such as were dropped fell each time out of reach. During one of these attempts, Second Lieutenant Harold Ernest Goettler, Air Service, and his observer, Second Lieutenant Erwin R. Bleckley, Field Artillery, were brought down by hostile machine-gun fire from the ground. They were posthumously awarded Congressional Medals of Honor.

For the next four days the 77th Division tried unsuccessfully to break through to its isolated force, which in the meantime was performing prodigies of valor in withstanding the German attacks which were launched against it daily.

On the afternoon of October 7 the Germans sent a captured American soldier to the commander of the "Lost Battalion", with a message advising him to surrender, and stating that a white flag displayed in the American position would be considered as a sign of his intention to do so. This message was answered only by gathering in the white panels which had been used for signalling American airplanes and which lay on the ground at the foot of this slope.

At the time the message was sent, the Germans were on the point of launching a powerful attack, supported by five flame throwers and additional trench mortars. Failing to receive a reply to their message, the Germans placed a terrific trench-mortar bombardment upon the Americans and sprayed them with liquid fire. However, this brave force, summoning all its strength, rose up from its shelters and counterattacked the Germans, killing the operators of the flame throwers and beating off the attack.

This small force of Americans isolated behind the German front line, which refused to surrender and which so persistently avoided capture, was a source of considerable comment among the Germans and in their official communications it was referred to as the "Amerikaner nest."

As a result of the successful flank attack by the American I Corps near the edge of the Argonne Forest to the left of here, the Germans were forced on October 7 to withdraw their front line in this vicinity. About 7:00 p. m. troops of the 77th Division, after a sharp fight in overcoming machine-gun resistance, reached this valley and rescued the "Lost Battalion", which in six days had its effective strength reduced from more than 600 to 194 men, all of whom were in a severely weakened condition.

Illustrative of the heroism of this defense are the gallant exploits for which Major Charles W. Whittlesey, the commander of the detachment during the fighting, Captain George G. McMurtry and Captain Nelson M. Holderman were awarded Congressional Medals of Honor.

Major Whittlesey displayed marked ability and indomitable spirit in his conduct of the defense, frequently visiting under fire all parts of the position and encouraging the men by his cool demeanor and calm assurance. On the fifth day he received from the Germans a written demand to surrender which he treated with contempt, although at that time his command was out of rations, had suffered a loss of more than 50 per cent and was entirely surrounded by the enemy.

Captain McMurtry commanded a battalion of this force. Although wounded in the knee by shrapnel on October 4 and suffering great pain, he continued throughout the entire period to encourage his officers and men with an irresistible optimism that contributed largely toward preventing panic and disorder among the troops. On October 4, during a heavy barrage, he personally directed and supervised the moving of the wounded to a protected place before himself seeking shelter. On October 6 he was again wounded in the shoulder by a German grenade, but continued personally to organize and direct the defense against the German attack until it was defeated. After assistance had arrived he refused relief and personally led his men out of the position on October 8 before permitting himself to be evacuated to the hospital.

Captain Holderman commanded one of the companies. He was wounded on October 4, on October 5 and again on October 7, but throughout the entire period, although suffering great pain and subjected to fire of every description, he continued personally to lead and encourage the officers and men under his command with unflinching courage and with distinguished success. On October 6, in a wounded condition, he rushed through enemy machine-gun and shell fire and carried two wounded men to a place of greater safety.

The individual rifle pits used by the men of the "Lost Battalion" can be seen (1937) by climbing about 30 feet down the steep slope leading from the road.

The tour from here retraces itself to the road fork at the French 9th Cuirassier monument. At that point the zone of action of the 368th Infantry of the 92d Division is entered. Before leaving this stop the tourist should consult the map which appears on the next page and, if not already familiar with it, read the account of the operations of the 368th Infantry given on page 339 of this chapter.

EN ROUTE NORTHEAST OF BINARVILLE TO NORTH OF VIENNE-LE-CHÂTEAU

As the road here is (1937) too narrow to permit turning, proceed to road junction about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile ahead, turn around there and retrace route to the monument to the French 9th Cuirassiers recently passed.

(60.8 m 97.9 km) Upon reaching the monument, continue straight ahead.



Major Charles W. Whittlesey,
77th Division,
October 29, 1918

the right side of the road, are located a number of German shelters which are (1937) being preserved.

For the next $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, this road and the area to the left of it were the scene of considerable movement back and forth by the units of the 368th Infantry. Part of the area was taken on September 26 but given up. On the 27th in spite of considerable confusion it remained definitely in the hands of the regiment.

(63.4 m 102.8 km) **Beyond next crest, at far side of wide shallow valley, about halfway up the hill, STOP.**

Face back down the road, which direction is just west of north.

During most of the World War this point was near the French front line. The ground immediately in front was in no man's land and the German trenches were close to the bottom of this slope.

On September 26 the 368th Infantry jumped off from the trenches near this point on a $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile front, mainly to the right of here, with the mission of feeling out the enemy, maintaining contact with the units on its flanks and aggressively following up any retirement of the Germans. The attack was made at 5:25 a. m., with poor artillery support. It finally developed into separate movements by three different groups. The one nearest here had worked its way by dusk into the German trenches in the valley ahead. The other two groups had penetrated the German lines for a considerable distance but later in the day retired to a position about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile behind the line from which they had started.

On the 27th, the units here attacked and advanced over the next ridge. On that day the whole regimental line moved forward about 1 mile.

Those who desire to return to Reims or spend further time on the battlefields in the Champagne region should turn right at next road junction toward Servon, and follow route to Souain shown by a double black broken line on the map opposite page 368. The region in the vicinity of Hurlus is most interesting as no reconstruction work has been done there and



Gas Mask Drill

the nature of the soil is such that the war-time trenches, dugouts and various other field fortifications are relatively well preserved at this time (1937).

All roads through the French artillery training camp, which is shown enclosed in dotted lines on the map opposite page 368, are blocked at certain times when the artillery of the French Army is firing.

(64.3 m 103.5 km) **A short distance beyond next road junction** are seen a French World War monument and cemetery.

(65.1 m 104.8 km) **In next village, Vienne-le-Château, turn left at church.**

(66.1 m 106.4 km) **While approaching the next village, La Harazée, to the left front across the valley** can be seen a French World War military cemetery.

The left boundary of the American 77th Division on September 26 included the village of La Harazée.

(66.5 m 107.1 km) **In the village, La Harazée, at the road fork near the church, bear to the right toward Le Four de Paris.**

92d Division Soldiers Stringing Wire South of Binarville



(67.0 m 107.8 km) **Beyond town, to the left of road, along the steep bank** can be seen the remains of many French wartime shelters in excellent condition (1937). The battle line for several years was only about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile away to the left but the steep bank here gave these shelters full protection from hostile artillery fire.

(67.9 m 109.3 km) **The next road junction is the one called Le Four de Paris where this tour comes to an end.**

The quickest automobile route to Paris is straight ahead via Le Claon, Ste. Menehould, Châlons-sur-Marne and Montmirail.

The tourist going to the area of the American Meuse-Argonne offensive should turn left here and cross the Argonne Forest. The front line from which the 77th Division jumped off on September 26 is crossed about 300 yards from this road junction. The two most interesting features on side roads off the main road through the forest are the Ossuaire de la Haute Chevauchée (see the reference to Hill 285 on page 322) and Champ Mahaut (see page 316). Both of these are pointed out by signs along the road. Just beyond the forest is located the town of Varennes.

ADDITIONAL PLACES OF INTEREST IN THE CHAMPAGNE REGION

IN addition to the places described in the itinerary, there are several other places in the Champagne region where there now exist features of special interest or which are of sufficient historical importance to warrant special mention in this text. For reference purposes and for the benefit of the tourist who travels in the area, these places have been recorded below.

Camp of Attila. Near the village of La Cheppe, 8 miles northeast of Châlons-sur-Marne, is located a large, oval-shaped embankment, about 40 feet high, enclosing about 60 acres. This is an ancient entrenchment said to have been the site of a Roman camp or Gallic town. Some accounts state that it was constructed by Attila and used by him as a camp after the battle of Châlons in 451 A. D.

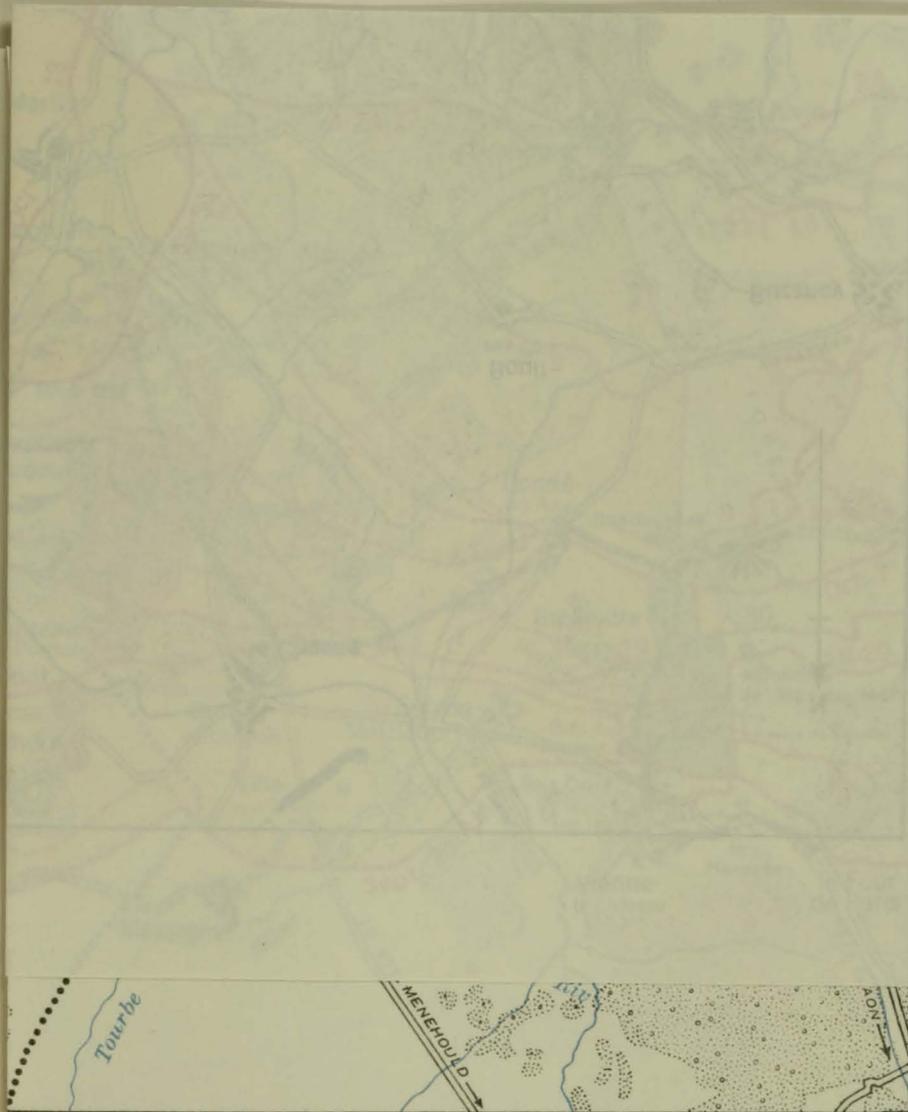
Châlons-sur-Marne. Known to the Romans as Catalaunum, this city is mentioned in history as early as the 3d Century. Between here and Troyes, Attila the Hun was defeated by the Romans and their allies in 451 A. D. Since then the city has been the scene of many battles. It was unsuccessfully attacked by the English in 1430 and again in 1434. The town was occupied by the Prussians in 1814 and by the Russians during the following year. The Germans occupied it in 1870 and again in August and September, 1914. It was one of the principal objec-

tives of the German Armies during the offensive of July 15, 1918, but was not taken. In the city is an interesting cathedral dating from the 13th Century and containing fine stained-glass windows.

Rethel. This ancient town of Roman origin was within the German lines from 1914 until the last days of the war. It contains an ancient church, part of which dates from the 13th Century, and several buildings dating from the 17th Century.

Ste. Menehould. This city, picturesquely located at the junction of the Aube and Aisne Rivers, controls one of the passes through the Argonne Forest and has figured in many campaigns in this region. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, while fleeing from the French revolutionists in 1791, were recognized here by the postmaster, Drouet, who then rode through the Argonne Forest by an unfrequented road and caused the arrest of the royal fugitives when they stopped at the village of Varennes.

Valmy. This village, about 5 miles west of Ste. Menehould, was the scene of one of the decisive battles of the world when in 1792 the French Revolutionary Army under General Kellermann defeated the Prussians under the Duke of Brunswick. On the battlefield south of the village of Valmy is a statue of Kellermann, Duke of Valmy, who died in 1820.



ENGINEER REPRODUCTION PLANT, U. S. ARMY, FORT HUMPHREYS, D. C. 12703
1937

Colored areas except as indicated below show ground gained
by American units with the French Fourth Army
September 26–October 27



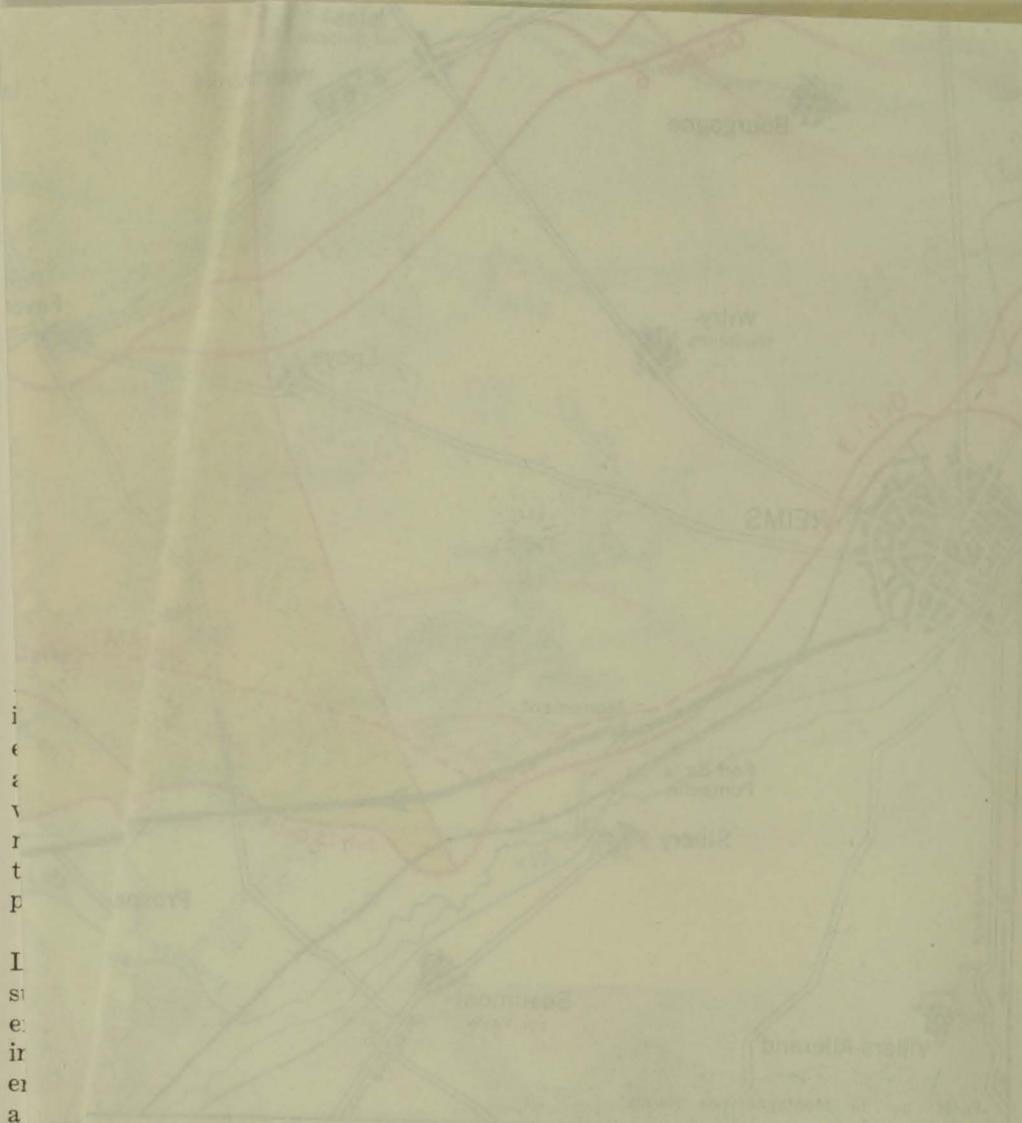
Ground gained by French divisions of French Fourth
Army September 26–October 27



Large circled numeral in a colored area indicates
the American division which fought there



Small circled numeral indicates part of American
division which fought attached to another division



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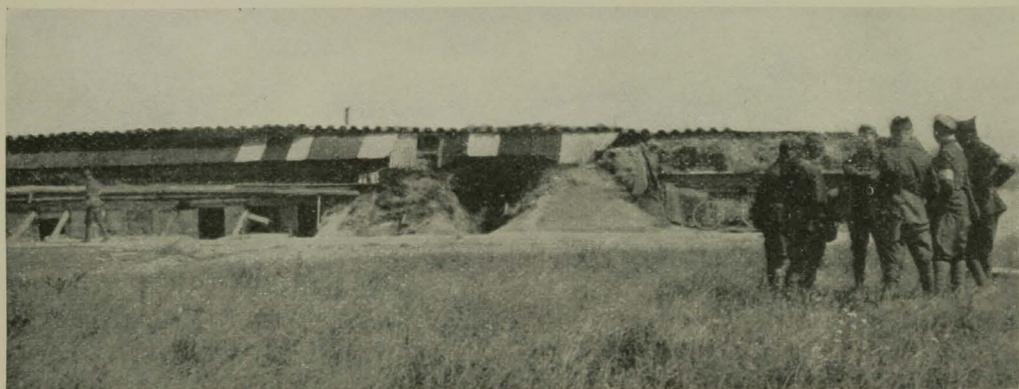
- Route, described in text
- Return route
- Stop, described in text
- Highway
- Front line for date shown
- Front line held by 432 Division July 15-18
- Front line July 15 (AM) at start of Champagne-Marne Defensive
- 20 Position held by 432 Division July 15-18

SUMMARY OF COMBAT SERVICE OF AMERICAN DIVISIONS
IN THE CHAMPAGNE REGION

<i>Name of Div.</i>	<i>Period of Service 1918</i>	<i>Character of Service</i>	<i>Location of Service General vicinity of—</i>	<i>Army to which Attached ¹</i>	<i>Corps to which Attached ¹</i>	<i>Casualties ²</i>
2	Oct. 2-10.....	Battle.....	North of Sommepey, Blanc Mont and St. Etienne-à-Arnes.	Fourth.....	XXI.....	4, 821 (1,506)
36	Oct. 10-28.....	Battle.....	Machault, west of Atigny and Forest Farm.	Fourth.....	XXI until Oct. 18, then XI.	1, 009 (50)
42	July 15-18.....	Battle.....	Souain and St. Hilaire-le-Grand.	Fourth.....	XXI.....	1, 590
	July 19.....	Sector.....	Souain and St. Hilaire-le-Grand.	Fourth.....	XXI.....	11
92 (368th Inf. only)	Sept. 25.....	Sector.....	Northeast of Vienne-le-Château.	Fourth.....	XXXVIII.....	4
	Sept. 26-Oct. 1.	Battle.....	Binarville and to the south.	Fourth.....	XXXVIII.....	266
93 (369th Inf. only)	Apr. 8-July 3..	Training in Line and Sector.	Ville-sur-Tourbe.....	Fourth.....	VIII.....	41
	July 15-18.....	Battle.....	Massiges.....	Fourth.....	VIII.....	45
	July 19-Aug. 19	Sector.....	Massiges.....	Fourth.....	VIII.....	82
	Sept. 11-16.....	Sector.....	Massiges.....	Fourth.....	XXXVIII.....	10
	Sept. 26-Oct. 1.	Battle.....	Séchault.....	Fourth.....	IX.....	785
93 (371st Inf. only)	Sept. 28-Oct. 1.	Battle.....	Ardeuil.....	Fourth.....	IX.....	882
93 (372d Inf. only)	Sept. 28-Oct. 7.	Battle.....	South of Monthois.....	Fourth.....	IX.....	579

¹ All armies and corps are French.

² Casualties are for period in line only. Figures in parentheses give casualties for units temporarily attached. Add figure in parentheses to the one above in order to obtain the total casualties during the entire operation.



42d Division Machine Gun Battalion Headquarters
North of St. Hilaire-le-Grand



91st Division Engineers Repairing Tracks Blown Up by the Germans Near Waereghem, Belgium, November 1, 1918

Bapaume, March 17, 1917. © B

