World War 1 Diary of Franklin A. Treece 37th "Buckeye" Division, 1917 – 1918



This is the war diary of my grandfather, known to his family and friends as "Doc." Shortly after he was born an uncle came to the house and asked to see the baby by saying "Where's the doc?" No one is quite clear why he called the baby "Doc," but the name stuck. Grandpa grew up on a small farm near the town of Continental, Ohio and I believe his wartime experiences were his introduction to the world outside of Ohio. He had an older brother who served under General "Blackjack" Pershing during the Mexican Punitive Expedition of 1916, so he was not totally unfamiliar with the military. (His brother was nicknamed "Doby" after the adobe huts he encountered during that campaign.)

My grandmother saved this diary for me when they sold their house to move to Florida. She knew I was interested in World War 1, but my grandfather was going to throw it away because he remembered there was an entry about getting drunk on captured German liquor and he would have been embarrassed for me to read about that. Out of respect for him, I never read the diary until after he died. When I did read it I discovered Grandpa kept a very terse diary and didn't mention details like moving into the front lines or going into battle. Fortunately my grandfather bought a two-volume book of "The 37th Division in the World War" (with maps) and I was able to fill in some of the details by correlating his diary with that book. The book also helped me correct his spelling of the names of French cities and villages, although in many cases Grandpa had corrected the names himself, probably after reading the book. I did not correct his initial spelling of "rigiment," and similar words because they indicated these words were new to him. Grandpa also did not record his emotions in his diary. My mother once told me that during an attack he saw a man clutching at the stump of his leg, crying for his mother. That image haunted Grandpa for the rest of his life, but he didn't record it in his diary. I have not made any attempt to add emotion to his diary. The reader will have to rely upon his imagination for that.

Diary

Sept 25th 1917: Joined M Co. 2nd Ohio Rigiment (sic)

Sept 31st 1917: Started for camps

Oct 2nd, 1917: Arrived at Camp Sheridan [note: Camp Sheridan was in Montgomery AL.]

In Dec 1917 was transferred to M. Co. 146'th Infantry

May 11th 1918: was transferred to M.G. Co., 146'th Infantry [note: M.G. stands for "Machine Gun." The first demonstration of a Browning machine gun was given to the 37'th on 21 March. Firing practice began on 11 May per book "37'th Division in the World War." The Browning was a heavy, water cooled machine gun typically served by a crew of 6 to 8 men. The US didn't officially adopt the Browning until May of 1917, and very few were produced in time to see service during the war. Grandpa's crew was probably issued a British Vickers water cooled machine gun or a French Hotchkiss air-cooled machine gun during the war.]

May 30th 1918: Left Sheridan

Jun 1st 1918: Arrived at Camp Lee [note: Now Ft. Lee, VA. Camp Lee was a mobilization camp during WW1]

June 12th 1918: Left Camp Lee

June 13th 1918: Arrived on board ship Leviathan [note: Originally built as the SS Vaterland for the Hamburg America line, the Vaterland was seized by the US Government and converted to a troop ship.]

June 15th 1918: Started voyage 11:00 A.M. [per book "37'th Division" the ship left Hoboken NJ at 10:37 A.M.]

June 21st 1918: Arrived in the harbor of Brest France.

June 23rd 1918: Unloaded from the ship and went into camp which was an old prison camp of Napoleon. [Unloading a ship this big and finding billets for all the men took time. Per book "37'th Division" although the 146th Machine Gun Company debarked on June 23rd, debarkation of the Division was not completed until 25 June 1918.]

June 25th 1918: Went to the City of Brest and worked all day digging a ditch.

June 26th 1918: Left Brest for another camp.

June 27th 1918: Rode all day in the box cars. [Probably the infamous "40 & 8's," French boxcars designed for 40 men or 8 horses. (Hommes: 40, Chevaux:8)]

June 28th 1918: Went through the city of Tours.

June 29'th 1918: Unloaded at Bourmont and walked about 7 miles to the city burg (??) of Sommercourt where we camped.

June 30th 1918: Cleaned out our quarters, which was an old barn.

July 1st 1918: Started drilling and cleaning machine guns.

Tues. July 2nd 1918: Was made Agent (?)

Wed. July 3rd 1918: Drilled.

Thurs. July 4th 1918: was day off. Had athletic event. Won tent pitching contest.

Fri. July 4th 1918: Drilled and went on Guard.

Sat. July 6th 1918: Was on guard all day. Walked no. 1 post.

Sunday July 7th 1918: Wrote letters.

Mon. July 8th 1918: Drilled.

[Note: Per book "37'th Division" the daily routine at Bourmont was:

Reveille	5:30 AM
Assembly	5:45 AM
Mess	6:30 AM
Sick Call	7:00 AM
Drill	7:30 AM
Mess	12:00 Noon
Drill	1:30 PM
Mess	5:30 AM
Retreat and Inspection	6:30 PM

Call to Quarters 9:15 PM

Taps 9:30 PM]

Tues. July 9th 1918: Drilled.

Sun. July 14th 1918: Was down at M. Co. 146 Infantry.

Mon. July 15th 1918: Drilled.

Tues. July 16th 1918: Went on Guard.

Wed. July 17th 1918: On Guard.

Thurs. July 18th 1918: Drilled and signed the payroll. Turned in 2 blankets & Overcoat.

[Note: Per book "37'th division" gas masks were issued on July 20th and from then on the soldiers needed to wear them at least an hour a day during drill, gradually increasing until they were wearing them for three or four hours a day. Also as of July 21st all men were ordered to carry steel helmets and gas masks and to wear cartridge belts filled with ammunition when more than twenty-five feet away from billets or barracks.]

Sun. July 21st 1918: Went to Catholic Church.

Tues. July 23rd 1918: Entrained at Bourmont for another camp. Passed through the city of Nancy.

[Note: Per book "37th Division" training came to an abrupt halt on July 21st with the receipt of an order for the division to depart for an unnamed location, departure to begin on July 22nd. The 146th Infantry Machine Gun Company departed Bourmont at 3:32 PM on July 23rd.]

Wed. July 24th 1918: Landed at Rambervillers where we were quartered. [Per book "37th Division" this was in the Baccarat Sector, just north of the Vosges.]

Thurs. July 26th 1918: Policed up our quarters.

Sun. July 28th 1918: Rained all day. Rested.

Mon. July 29th 1918: On detail at Rambervillers. Aireal (sic) Raid about 11:00 in the evening.

Tues. July 30th 1918: Worked in town areas. Rain about 10:30 P.M.

Wed. July 31st 1918: Rested and washed clothes. Up town in evening, saw Wollan, Myers, Winters and Counters.

Thurs, Aug 1st 1918: Drill.

[Note: Per book "37th Division" the Machine Gun Company of the 146th Infantry moved into the front lines of the Baccarat sector on the night of August 2-3 1918. This was considered to be a quiet sector, which made it a good place for the troops to learn trench warfare first hand.]

Sat. Aug 10th 1918: Hiked to Vacqueville Woods.

[Note: Neither current maps nor the "37th Division" book show Vacqueville Woods. The town of Vacqueville is located just behind what was the second line trenches during World War 1. The 146th Infantry occupied the front line trenches just north of Vacqueville, near the village of Sainte Pole. There

are many woods in that area, but none are labeled Vacqueville Woods. Either Grandpa didn't note in his diary when they moved into the front lines, and on Saturday August 10th they moved back to the second line at Vacqueville or the date is wrong in his diary and this "hike to Vacqueville Woods" took place on Saturday August 3'rd when they hiked from Rambervillers to Vacqueville, a distance of roughly 24 km.]

Tues. Aug 13th 1918: On Gas Guard.

Thurs. Aug 15th 1918: On Guard.

Fri. Aug 16th 1918: Got shelled.

Tues. Aug 20th 1918: Aerial raid at Bacarat. Casual (sic) list.

Wed. Aug 21st 1918: Fired at bombing planes. Lots of liquor.

Thurs. Aug 29th 1918: M Company fight with German patrol. Kerner, Gerke, and Wop Killed. Kline wounded.

[Note: "37th History" describes an attack by a German patrol the previous night in which Privates Kerner, Gerke, Gerouvis, and Cline were wounded while a Private Fain was taken prisoner. The appendix lists Kerner and Gerke as killed, no date given, so perhaps they died as a result of the wounds they suffered during this attack. There was no mention of "Wop," but presumably that was a nickname for Gerouvis who apparently recovered from his wounds as he's not listed as having died during the war. (I suspect Grandpa had not heard the term "Wop" before the war, as that's not a common word in Midwestern farm towns.) The history records many other patrols, trench raids, and casualties during their operation in the Bacarat sector but Grandpa probably noted this particular attack in his diary because it involved a Company in his regiment and the attack may have occurred near his position.]

Aug 3^{rd} 1918: Deloused at Indian Village. [Note: Date in error? Probably Aug 30^{th} or 31^{st} . Indian Village was the name of a delousing station constructed by the Americans, not a French town. There is a photograph of it in the " 37^{th} History."]

[Tues. Sept 10th 1918: Grandpa wrote a letter to his Aunt Alice about "rats as big as horses" which was printed in a local paper. A copy of that letter is provided at the end of this text.]

Sat. Sept 14th 1918: Hike to Anglemont. [Anglemont was behind Bacarat. This was the beginning of the 37th Division's withdrawal from the Bacarat sector, headed for an as yet unnamed new assignment.]

Sat. Sept 14th 1918: Arrived at Anglemont.

Wed. Sept 18th 1918: Hiked to Bacarat and entrained.

Thu Sept 19th: Started 48 kilometer hike to Bazencourt in heavy rains. [Today this is called Bazincourt-sur-Saulx.]

Fri. Sept 20th 1918: Arrived and rested 'till afternoon, then took Chink trucks. [The "37th History" describes the transport as "Annamese trucks," i.e. trucks with Vietnamese drivers. "Chink" was probably another term Grandpa learned during the war, as it also is not a common word in Midwestern farm towns. I also suspect Grandpa had no idea the words "Chink" or "Wop" could be considered derogatory, as I never heard him use terms like that during my lifetime.]

Sat. Sept 21st 1918: Hike to woods in rain. [The "37th History" states that the 146th Infantry was bivouacked in the Bois de Recicourt, which is in the Argonne sector east of Verdun.]

Wed. Sept 25th 1918: Moved forward in eve. Barrage started at 11 PM. Zero hour 5.

[Note: From 26 Sept to 30 Sept Grandpa fought in the Battle of the Argonne Forest. The Argonne Forest was actually on the left flank of the American attack, which centered on Montfaucon Woods. The 37th Division was in the center of this attack, and the 146th Infantry was in the center of the 37th Division. The History doesn't specify what the 146th Machine Gun Company was doing, but the 146th was alternately leading an attack and serving as initial reserves throughout this period. Rations were seldom, if ever, delivered, it rained almost continuously, gas attacks and heavy shellfire were frequent, and sleep was nearly impossible. The 37th Division suffered 3,460 casualties during this period, one of whom may have been Grandpa. He said he "swallowed a little gas" during the war, but I never heard him say when or where this occurred. Fortunately many of the gas casualties were only lightly gassed and returned to duty in a day or two, according to the 37th History. One of the other casualties, not a gas casualty, haunted Grandpa for the rest of his life. At some point during this battle Grandpa left the shelter of his trench and went "over the top" with the rest of his unit. He saw an American soldier lying on the ground in front of him, holding onto the bloody stump of his leg, and calling for his mother.]

Mon. Sept 30th 1918: Relieved by 32nd.

Tues. Oct 1st 1918: Hiked 15 kilo. Damn near dead. [Not surprising given the ordeal he'd just been through.]

Wed. Oct 2nd 1918: Hiked to Recicourt.

Thurs. Oct 3rd 1918: On trucks all nite.

Fri. Oct 4th 1918: Unloaded at Aviation Field. [Near Hamonville.]

Sun. Oct 6th 1918: Hiked to French camp in woods. [Here they loaded into trucks which took them on the Menil-la-Tour-Ansanvill road to Bouillonville by way of Bernecourt, Flirey, and Essey. About 18.5 km,]

Tues. Oct 8th 1918: At Bouillonville. [Note: This is near Saint-Mihiel, where Americans had fought a major battle just before the battle of the Argonne Forest.]

Tues. Oct 8th 1918: Holding Metz sector. Got 9 meals in ten days. Cold soup at that, some physic. [The sector was actually called the Pannes sector, and the146th Machine Gun Company was in an outpost of the Xammes sub-sector. Metz was the nearest city, but it was in German hands. They were holding territory recently captured during the Saint-Mihiel battle. The Division did not go on the offensive in this sector, but suffered several casualties and had some men taken prisoner due to German bombardments (up to 2,000 shells per day), gas attacks, and patrols.]

Fri. Oct 18th 1918: Entrained for somewhere in Flanders.

Sun. Oct 20th 1918: Unloaded at Ypres in rain. [Ypres is in Belgium, and in this operation the 37th Division was attached to the 30th French Army Corps in Belgium, placed at the disposal of the King of Belgium. Ypres had been the site of several major battles between the British and the Germans, including the first gas attack (chlorine) during the 2nd Battle of Ypres in April, 1915, and the horrific British attacks of Aug – Sept 1917 known as the 3rd Battle of Ypres or "Passchendaele."]

Tue. Oct 22nd 1918: Hiked 40 kilos to St Joseph. [This route took them through the desolation of abandoned trenches and rusted tanks left from the Battle of Passchendaele. There were traces of rubble where villages had once been. The route then took them into territory only recently abandoned by the Germans.

Wed. Oct 30th 1918: Leave for front. 12 kilos to deserted town. Found lots of German liquor.

Thurs. Oct 31st 1918: Supposed to go over the top but didn't. All too tite. (sic)

This is the last entry Grandpa made in his diary. The incident of his Company not being able to go over the top must have been a very temporary condition, as it's not even mentioned in the 37th Division History. The 37th Division, including Grandpa's 146th Regiment, advanced thirteen kilometers during the first two days of that attack. They continued to push the Germans back until 4 November. The Germans were falling back, but it was a fighting withdrawal and the 37th suffered casualties from shells, gas, enemy aircraft, and machine guns. Gasses used included mustard gas and arsene, a relatively new arsenical smoke designed to penetrate Allied gas masks. Fortunately the artillery shells used to deliver it did not produce the fine particles generated in lab tests so it did not penetrate the masks. The Germans destroyed bridges as they withdrew, forcing the 37th engineers to construct pontoon bridges which the infantry crossed, all while under fire.

The 37th Division was relieved on 3 and 4 November. The 146th Machine Gun Company was relieved on 3 November and marched to Applehoek. On November 9th the 37th Division received orders to march back to the front to be in position for an attack to begin at 10:00 AM on 11 November. The attack was to begin with a river crossing under fire. The Division suffered 9 killed and 56 wounded on 10 November moving into position and constructing pontoon bridges for the crossing. At 1:00 A.M. on 11 November the Division received word that an armistice had been signed and hostilities would cease at 11:00 AM that day. Amazingly, some American units continued to attack right up to 11:00 AM, but fortunately the 37th Division received orders at 8:45 that morning to call off the scheduled attack.

After the war ended, the 37th Division remained in Belgium awaiting orders to return to the US. King Albert of Belgium visited the 146th Infantry on 17 November 1918. The 37th Division was represented by officers and men from several regiments when King Albert returned to capital city of Brussels on 20 November, but the 148th Machine Gun Company was not among the participating units. On the 21st of November the 37th Division marched to the town of Nazareth, the first in a series of marches and train rides that eventually brought them to the port of Brest. The 37th History does not provide details on all the regiments, but instead documents the 145th Infantry as an example. From Nazareth the 145th marched to a series of camps, including one march of 42 kilometers. They spent Christmas 1918 billeted in several villages in the vicinity of Dunqerque. On New Year's Day their commander informed them the Division would sail for home on 30 January, but that proved to be optimistic. The unit arrived in Brest in early March, and departed on the "Great Northern" on 20 March. The sea crossing was extremely rough, but they docked in Hoboken on 27 March. They returned to Ohio on 9 April and marched through Cleveland, Zanesville, and Marietta. They then proceeded to Camp Sherman, arriving on 13 April, and by the first of May the last man had been discharged.

Grandpa's demobilization was probably similar. I believe he returned to the US on the U.S.S. Siboney, a much smaller ship than the Leviathan which was under construction when the US entered the war and commandeered for use as a troop ship. The U.S.S. Siboney could carry up to 3,000 troops. Grandpa remembered the crossing as being very rough, particularly in comparison to his trip to France aboard the Leviathan, a ship which was 5 times the displacement, carried 14,000 troops, and crossed during calm weather. Grandpa won \$1,000 playing craps one day during the return trip (worth about \$14,000 in 2015 dollars) but lost it in another craps game the following day. Not surprisingly, Grandpa's family thought he was a confirmed bachelor. They were very surprised when he married a widow with a 10-year old daughter (my mother) in 1934.

Addresses in front of diary:

Raymond Yintzer 1230 Paxton St Toledo, Ohio

Ancel Dennison Spencerville Ohio

Simon L. Morse 65 Cook St Akron, Ohio

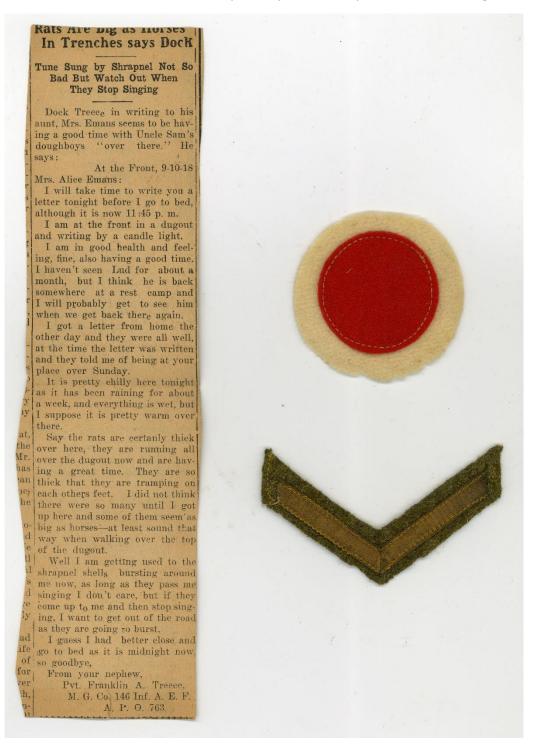
Harris Wheeler Ripley Ohio

Arthur Bsidelschies (??) 119 East Crawford St Upper Sandusky, Ohio

Scratched Out: Pistol No. 225217 [Note: According to Colt this is an Army Model 1911 .45 automatic manufactured in 1918. I'm assuming he scratched out the serial number in his diary when he turned in the pistol.]

Photos

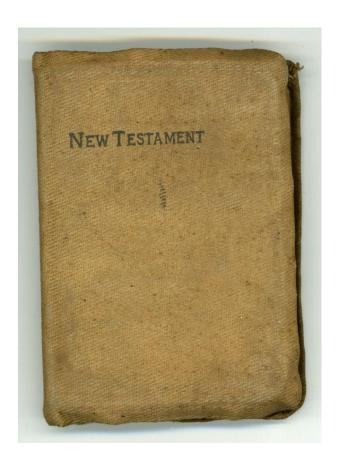
The following photos are of Grandpa's uniform, patches, New Testament, and diary. The cover photo is of his World War 1 Victory medal, with bars for his service in Ypres-Lys (Belgium), Meuse-Argonne, and a Defensive Sector. (Baccarat? Saint-Mihiel was probably considered part of the Meuse-Argonne sector.)



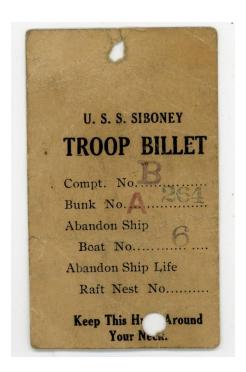








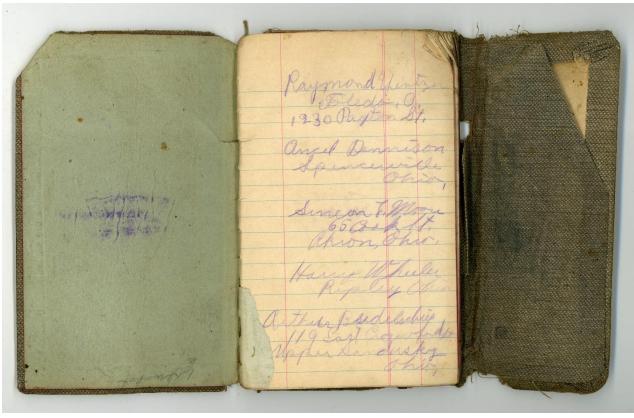
Sermon on the Mount	Name:
MATTHEW, Chapters 5, 6 and 7	Name:
The Beatitudes	Franklin A. Tiece
MATTHEW, 5:2-12	
The Lord's Prayer	************************
MATTHEW, 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4	Address:
The Golden Rule	Continental Oh
Matthew, 7:12	al . C. L.
The Little Gospel JOHN, 3:16	
The Psalm of Love	Service:
I Corinthians, 13	
Courage	
Јони, 14	
Practical Advice	
JAMES, 1:22	Remarks:
A Prayer for a Soldier	
Keep me, O Heavenly Father,	
straight and pure and true. Protect my	
dear ones at home. Whatever comes, help me to do my duty in Christ's	
name. Amen.	************************
一种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种种	

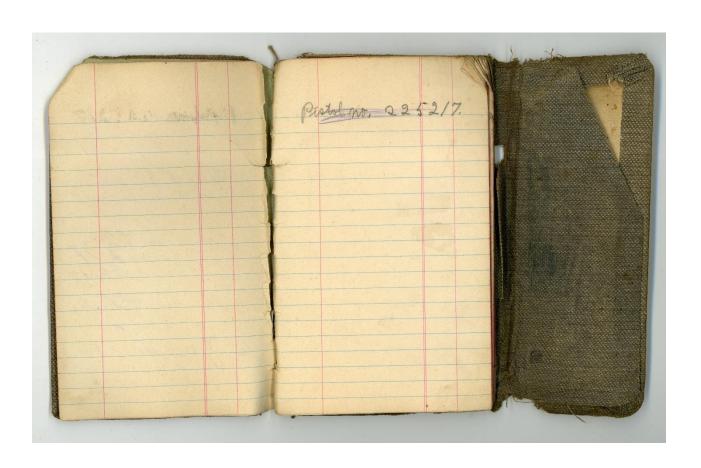


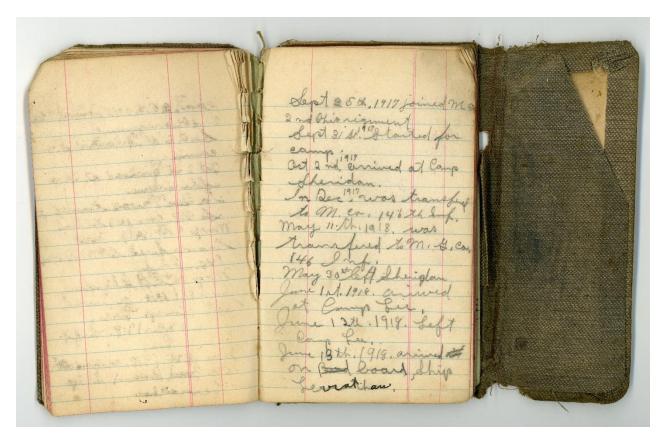


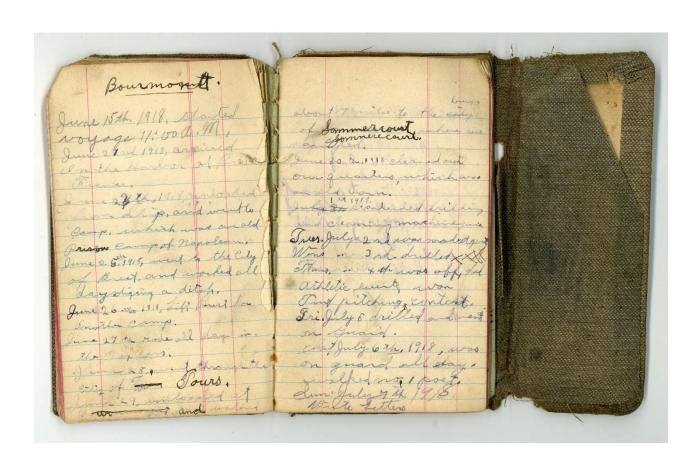
INSTRUCTIONS 1. There is one mess hall for troops, which it and will be four sittings. Your, mercard shows plainly where and at which sitting. White other men are eating, stand vie by your quarters and do at congethe passage ways to the last the table than is necessary to the last the table than is necessary to the last the places provide an another mess hall. 3. Do not look its card.

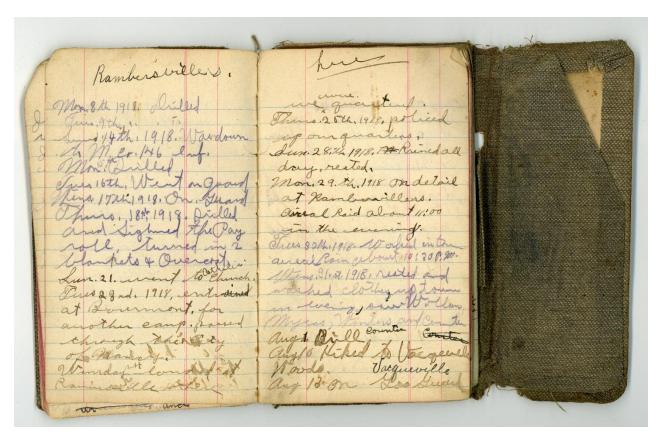




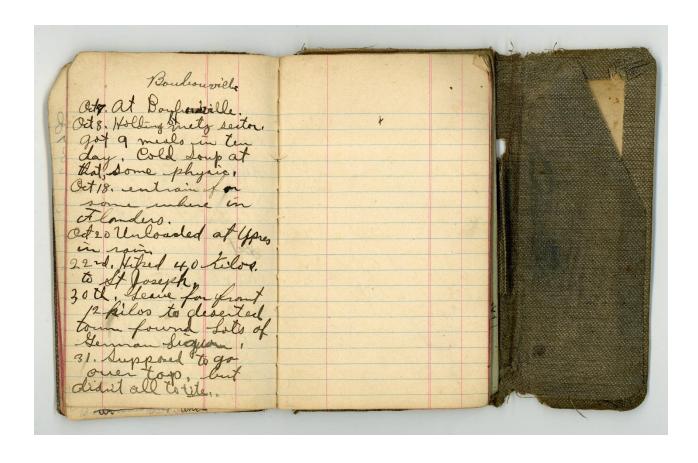


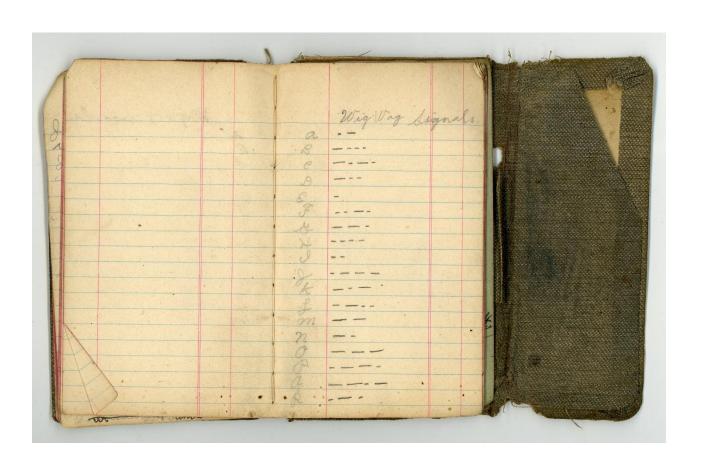


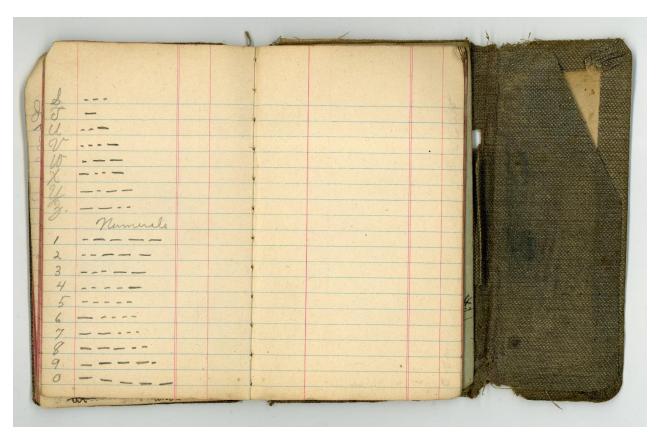




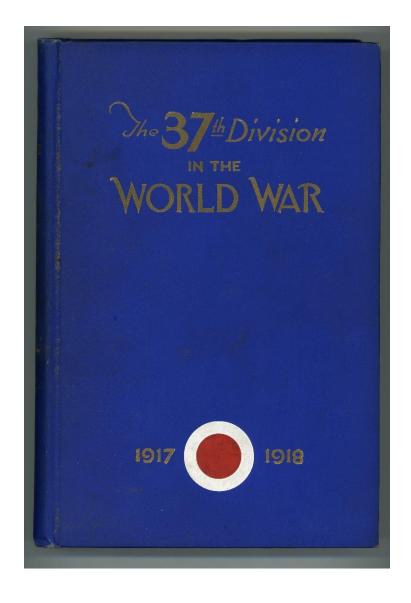
ang 15. an Swand. rested till afternome the ang 16. Fort shelled took Chink trucks in sheet 21. Aske to woods in sheet 21. Aske to woods in sheet 21. Aske to woods in sheet 22. Nothing to eat planes. Let a fragmen. 25. Mothing to eat planes. Let a fragmen. 25. Mothing to eat planes. When the start and started at 11 PM. Wood. Remain Started at 11 PM. Wood. Related to Mother Started by Willing sheld week of dradger of the history. The hast to Brown and the Repair of the started and the history of the started at 12 the hast a Repaired. In the to Bosenson of the the started at 12 the had to French that to Bosenson on the started to the started and the started the started and the started the started and the started the started to make a like to Bosenson on the started to make a like to Bosenson on the started to make a like the started to the started to make a like the started to the started to make a like the started to the started to make a like to be started to the sta

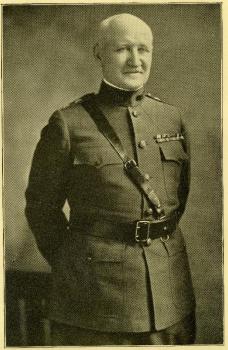












Major General Charles S. Farnsworth.

THE THIRTY-SEVENTH DIVISION IN THE WORLD WAR 1917-1918

RALPH D. COLE
Division Historian
W. C. HOWELLS
Assistant Division Historian

Published by
THE THIRTY-SEVENTH DIVISION
VETERANS ASSOCIATION

COLUMBUS, OHIO 1926