

KEYSTONE ENGINEERS HAD FIRST CASUALTIES

Colonel F. A. Snyder, of Philadelphia, Commanding Unit That Just Returned, Writes Graphic Story of Regiment's War Record for Archives of the War Department

The 103d Engineers, in which a number of Philadelphia soldiers are enlisted, have just returned to this country with an enviable record of overseas service.

Colonel F. A. Snyder, of this city, who commanded the unit, furnished, with the assistance of his staff officers, a complete record of the regiment's activities from the time it left this country until its arrival home.

We have the distinction of having been the first unit in the Iron Division to suffer casualties," said Colonel Snyder today.

His story of the regiment's war record, written in diary form for the War Department archives, follows:

"On May 18, 1917, the regiment left Camp Mills and proceeded aboard the steamship Metagama, leaving the dock at about 2 p.m. and proceeded to the lower bay.

"On May 19 the convoy proceeded across seas, arriving at Liverpool, England, on May 31. The organization debarked and proceeded by train to Dover, England, arriving late in the evening of May 31 and early in the morning of June 1. On the afternoon of June 1 the regiment and train, except Company D, left Dover, arriving at Calais, France, that afternoon and proceeded to rest camp No. 8.

"On June 2 Company D left Dover, arriving at Calais that afternoon. Between June 2 and June 4 the regiment and train turned in their rifles, extra clothing, barracks bags, etc., and received 303 rifles and ammunition, gas masks and had gas masks fitted.

Trained by British

"On June 4 the organization, except Company D, left Calais by train and proceeded to Desverres. The organizations were billeted at Alencon, Cremerest and Bellebrune, Company D arriving on June 6.

"June 5 to 21 the regiment was trained in close order, extended order, bayonet, physical drill, gas mask drill, games and practice marches. The train was drilled and instructed in the handling of British animal transport. All under-commissioned officers of the Eighteenth Northumberland Fusiliers (Tyndale) pioneers, Thirty-fourth British Infantry Division.

"June 8 the British rifles were turned

Charly bridge to Rudenolse, to Montregny, the left bank of the Thirty-ninth French Division, Thirty-eighth French Corps, Sixth French Army. The (lower) Companies A and B, 103d Engineers, Company C, 109th Machine Gun Battalion (Twenty-eighth Division), Company 26, French Engineers, and one battalion Twenty-third Territorial Infantry, French. This position was under heavy shellfire for several days.

"On July 14, the First Battalion, Companies A, B and C, transferred by buses from Charly and Pavant to the vicinity of Conde en Brie. They were attached to the Fifty-fifth Infantry Brigade, Twenty-eighth Division, July 16. This battalion occupied the front-line trenches in Bois Rouge, where they resisted the attacks of the Germans (Prussian Guards) from Stalgann.

"On July 17, they moved to the second line trenches. July 18, at 5 p.m. the battalion was relieved and retired to the woods near Grande Fontaine. During the three days this battalion was in action, they served as infantry, serving with the 106th and 110th Infantry, and assisted greatly in resisting the heavy attacks from the Germans. This was the high water mark of the German offensive south of the Marne and the troops of the Twenty-eighth Division broke the attack of the Germans. The battalion of engineers, while serving as infantry, fought without automatic rifles, machine guns, mortars or trenching tools. The losses in these three companies were very heavy. July 22 to 25, worked on roads at Moulins, Courthouy, Chavenay, south side river Marne, work executed under heavy shellfire and bombing from German planes. July 25 to 27, marched to wards Charly, ordered to concentrate near Charlevaux, attached to the 110th Infantry as support. Marched to Forest la Fere, July 28, late in the p.m. the regiment was concentrated near Laucharmel.

"Second Battalion—Companies D, E and F

Suffer Heavy Casualties

"July 11 to 20—Companies E and F occupied second-line trench, first position southeast of Chateau Thierry. During this time these organizations were under very heavy shellfire, high explosives and mustard gas. Casualties were very heavy.

"On July 21 Company D built a pile trestle bridge across the Marne river at the east end of Chateau Thierry. Companies E and F worked on roads from Aulnois through Essennes and Chateau Thierry.

"July 21 to 26—Road work Chateau Thierry to Mount St. Pierre under heavy shellfire.

"July 27—Joined the 109th Infantry as support and marched to near Fresnes.

"July 28—In support of the 109th Infantry in the fight near Fresnes, recon-

naissance made by different officers for bridges across the Ourcq river. Late in the evening the regiment concentrated near La Charrel to again function as engineers.

"Regimental casualties, July 14 to July 27—Killed, 17; wounded, 116; gassed, 130; shell-shocked, 28; total, 291.

"Regiment, July 28 to August 3—Road work, safety position near La Charrel.

"August 4—Road work south of Fresnes, bridges built across the Vesle across the Vesle and at Fismes across the Ardre river and across the Vesle. A safety position was organized and fully constructed, consisting of wire entanglements, group of combat trenches, constant shellfire, high explosive, shrapnel and mustard gas. The work on the Vesle river was under shellfire and machine gun and rifle.

"September 4 to 8—The advance over the Vesle river. Fourteen bridges built and machine gun bridges between Courcy and east of Fismes. The roads in this vicinity were cleared of wire entanglements, barricades, shellholes were filled in and the roads made passable for artillery, etc. The different companies also carried wounded from the front line to dressing stations, carried ammunition to the front-line trenches and buried the dead. All of this work was done under heavy artillery fire, the men were bombed by air plane at 6 a.m. September 8 the regiment was relieved by the engineers of the Sixty-second Infantry Division, French. This regiment 103d Engineers was under constant shellfire from June 28 until September 8. During that time the different classes of engineer work was carried on day and night.

Sent to Rear for Rest

"The regimental casualties, July 28 to September 8, thirteen killed, eighty-five wounded, 137 gassed, six shell-shocked, one missing, total, 242.

"Orders were then received that the division was to be sent to the rear for reorganization, replacements, and for at least five months' rest and training.

"Between September 8 and September 12 the regiment marched from the Vesle river to near Eperny and took buses to Bettancourt, staying at Bettancourt from September 12 to September 16. On September 16 the First Battalion moved by buses to Les Islettes, arriving on the 17th, September 18 to September 20 the Second Battalion and train marched by night from Bettancourt to Les Islettes in the Argonne Forest.

"September 20 to September 25, Ar-

gonne forest—repaired the roads, construction of detour around mine crater north of Neuvilly within one kilometer of the boche lines, in preparation for the attack in the Argonne. The officers and men of this command arrived in the Argonne virtually played out, but they did their work as if they had had complete rest.

"September 26 to October 9—Argonne forest—north of Neuvilly to Chateau Thierry—details furnished infantry for wire cutting, detours built around mine craters north of Neuvilly and south of Yvernes, roads repaired, bridges built at Pointe Bourneilles. A company was detailed to assist the Fifty-third Artillery Brigade, bridges were built with the tanks. On October 4, the regiment served as infantry reserve near La Forge. October 4 to October 6, Companies A and B served as reserve for Fifty-sixth Infantry brigade at La Chene Tendu, suffering heavy casualties.

"October 14 to 16—The regiment at Ville Issey, Aulnois and Vertusey, Toul

sector, for reorganization and training. On October 16-17 the regiment moved to the Thiaucourt sector, occupying the line from July to west of Naumont.

"From October 17 to November 11 the regiment worked on roads, bridges, wire entanglements, entrenchments, building of machine gun emplacements and building of a safety position, deep dugouts, being constantly under shellfire and machine-gun fire. Several raids were made on enemy strong points, dugouts being blown up by high explosives. Several times platoons and companies assisted the infantry in attacks.

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May 15, 1919

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"(Signed)

"JOHN P. CROZER."

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